

Europe's New Political Engine

*Germany's role in the
EU's foreign and security policy*

Niklas Helwig (ed.)



FIIA REPORT 44

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ULKOPOLIITTINEN INSTITUUTTI
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THE FINNISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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Language editing: Lynn Nikkanen

Graphic design: Nordenswan & Siirilä Oy / Tuomas Kortteinen

Layout: Kaarina Tammisto

Printed by Grano Oy

The Finnish Institute of International Affairs

Ulkopoliittinen instituutti

PL 400

00161 Helsinki

Finland

www.fia.fi

ISBN 978-951-769-481-0 (web)

ISBN 978-951-769-482-7 (print)

ISSN 2323-5454

The Finnish Institute of International Affairs is an independent research institute that produces high-level research to support political decision-making and public debate both nationally and internationally. All manuscripts are reviewed by at least two other experts in the field to ensure the high quality of the publications. In addition, publications undergo professional language checking and editing. The responsibility for the views expressed ultimately rests with the authors.

Acknowledgments

This Report has been prepared as part of FIIA's trans-European research task force "Towards a German EU foreign policy?" and in cooperation with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. We are especially grateful for the support of the Riga office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and would like to thank Elisabeth Bauer and Katrin Ridder-Strolis for their fruitful collaboration. The Report has benefitted greatly from insights and feedback given during a workshop in Helsinki in June 2015. The authors of this Report would like to thank the other participants of the workshop: Toni Alaranta, Robert Cooper, Petri Hakkarainen, Michael Haltzel, Mikael Mattlin, Wolfgang Mühlberger, Kristi Raik, Ulrich Speck and Funda Tekin. We also like to thank Simon Bulmer and Hubert Zimmermann for their valuable comments on our research given during a project panel at the UACES 45th Annual Conference in Bilbao in September 2015. Last but not least, we would like to extend thanks to Johannes Lehtinen for his practical assistance during the project.

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Executive Summary

At the beginning of this decade, the EU's foreign and security policy was leaderless to a large extent. The traditional Franco-German engine stuttered, the United Kingdom looked inwards, and a Brussels-led foreign policy continued to be more vision than reality. At the same time, several crises erupted simultaneously around Europe and put the European Union under pressure to stay united and provide solutions. These parallel developments at the European and international level forced the economically strong Germany to learn how to lead the EU's foreign and security policy and to become Europe's new political engine. The way in which Germany took up its new and unusual role as a foreign policy leader and the implications that German leadership has for the EU's foreign and security policy are thoroughly analysed in this report.

Germany fulfilled a leadership role that it never applied for. In the Ukraine crisis, Germany pushed for a diplomatic solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine and led the sanctions policy of the West. With regard to the war in Syria, Germany not only followed the French call for military assistance after the Paris attacks, but is also heavily engaged in diplomatic efforts to solve the conflict. Apart from immediate crisis management, Germany is central to the development of broader EU policies, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy. Berlin is in the driver's seat when it comes to relationships with key international actors, such as Russia, Turkey and the US.

Germany's approach to leadership is diversified, but under pressure. Germany does not see leadership merely as a display of power, but also as a mix of institution-building and consensus-fostering. Despite the engagement in Syria, Germany remains more confident in demonstrating its economic rather than its military power. Germany is better at shaping institutions than at driving action. While the building of the EU's institutional framework was a landmark success for Germany, the current crises show that Germany has to invest heavily

in Europe's resilience. In addition, diplomatic approaches aimed at fostering consensus within the EU as well as with third countries often face limits. It becomes more and more difficult for Germany to root for win-win solutions in a world that is increasingly perceived as a zero-sum game. Berlin obviously has to continue reaching out to its main partner in Paris, but also has to ensure variable pre-consensus with member states in Europe's South, hit hardest by the recent crises, and East, in need of reassurance as former Soviet satellite countries.

Germany adheres to its foreign policy tenets, while shouldering more international responsibility. Despite some setbacks and divisions in recent crises, Germany's European vocation pushes the country to preserve and foster the EU's unity and to counteract centrifugal forces. Berlin's *Ostpolitik* of seeking dialogue and keeping channels of communication open with Russia continues to be a driving force, but became more realistic as well as contingent on Moscow's respect for international law. Towards the West, Germany's commitment to the transatlantic partnership has not wavered and has been marked by close cooperation throughout the recent crises. Germany continues to see military force as the last resort based on its historical experiences and on a genuine belief in the primacy of diplomacy. However, Berlin learned that it may be better to be an active part of a Western alliance than to stand on the sidelines with little political clout. Consequently, Germany is set to increase its defence spending and became unexpectedly involved in the Syrian war.

The drivers of German foreign policy change are located at the top in Berlin. The recent crises have sparked a broad foreign policy debate, but the learning process flows from the top down rather than the other way around. Think-tank publications and choreographed speeches by top politicians paved the way for more international responsibility. Business interests did not undermine the primacy of politics and Germany's firm position on Russia's violation of international law. The party debate on the military engagement in Syria was controversial, but its impact on the parliament's mandate to assist France remained limited. Decision-makers in the government and opinion-makers in think tanks and the media are the real drivers of German foreign policy change and they adhere to the traditional German foreign policy tenets as their navigation system. It is to the advantage of the foreign policy elite that they can base their actions on a more permissive domestic audience.

Germany pushes for a stronger, but more decentralized European foreign and security policy. Acting European does not mean working only through the EU framework and its community institutions. As the Ukraine and Syria diplomacy showed, Germany became more comfortable in operating in less formal formats and in mini-lateral cooperation with key member states. Berlin also emphasizes the role of the OSCE to generate trust in Eastern Ukraine and the role of NATO as the backbone of European defence. A close network of and an increasing interoperability between EU structures, other international organizations as well as national foreign policies and defence capabilities is a crucial objective for Germany.

For now, Germany has become an unlikely and unusual foreign policy leader, which still differs in various aspects from traditional foreign policy powerhouses. It leads through institutions and diplomacy rather than military power. It seeks European solutions rather than national ones. It is firmly based in the “West”, while keeping the door open to the “East”. Berlin is largely driven by deep-rooted policy lines, rather than by short-term gain and electoral pressures. However, the success and sustainability of Germany’s approach depends on securing Europe’s unity and resilience in the face of crises in the neighbourhood and the effects of globalization.

Introduction:

Germany – rising to the challenge, while maintaining the balance

Niklas Helwig

It is no exaggeration to say that the EU's foreign and security policy has had a rough couple of years. The European Union had hopes that a fresh institutional setup provided by the 2009 Lisbon Treaty would make common European action more visible and would reinvigorate the recently sluggish Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). Instead the crisis in Libya as well as the prelude to the crisis in Ukraine, revealed that the European Union was either divided or lacking the right strategy for action. At the core of the leaderless Union was Germany. German power and willingness to show leadership was apparent during the economic and financial crisis. Still, in foreign and security policy matters, the country that generates more than a fifth of the total gross domestic product of the EU remained the "reluctant hegemon".¹

German policy-makers were forced to recognize that Germany's new power brought new responsibility with it. A country that benefitted immensely from globalization needed to show more leadership and play the role of a "shaping power".² The start of the current German grand-coalition government in 2013 gave fresh impetus to Berlin's foreign and security policy debate at the highest level. The coordinated speeches of the German President, Foreign Minister and Defence Minister during the Munich Security Conference in early 2014 all articulated the need for increased international responsibility. President Joachim Gauck conceded that Germany "could take more resolute steps to uphold and

1 Paterson, W. E.: 'The Reluctant Hegemon? Germany Moves Centre Stage in the EU', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 49, 2011, pp. 57-76.

2 Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) and the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF): *New Power, New Responsibility. Elements of a German foreign and security policy for a changing world*, Berlin, 2013.

help shape the order based on the European Union, NATO and the United Nations”. At the same time, “Germany must also be ready to do more to guarantee the security that others have provided it with for decades”.³

Berlin did not have to wait long to demonstrate its commitment towards a deeper engagement in international affairs. During the onset of the crisis in Ukraine in early 2014, Chancellor Angela Merkel and her Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, became key protagonists in Western efforts to find a common line in brokering a political solution to the conflict.⁴ At the same time, Germany had to rethink its policies towards Russia, which had traditionally been marked by economic interdependencies and political engagement.⁵ While the crisis in the Eastern Neighbourhood was still ongoing, the stability in the Southern Mediterranean and the Middle East further destabilized in 2015, resulting in a high number of refugees crossing into Europe. Again, attention quickly turned to Berlin, as Merkel decided to adopt a proactive and welcoming approach to the refugees and consequently led efforts to find European solutions to the humanitarian challenges and the root causes of the migration.

Germany is duly learning how to lead on foreign and security policy matters. This report analyses the drivers and effects of this difficult learning process. The leadership role does not come naturally to Berlin. International crises directly affected Germany’s interests, while at the same time leadership by traditional powerhouses in Europe, especially France and the UK, was lacking. As the expectations heaped on Germany mount, its domestic debate is still ongoing and has to get up to speed with the new realities. While Germany’s new role as a key international player was sometimes applauded abroad, decision-makers and politicians in the country were faced with unsuitable structures and political positions that led to some soul-searching. How assertively can we pursue our interests in the world? Is it acceptable to act outside of the EU institutional framework? Is the (signalling of the) use of military force a legitimate course of action? In order to bridge the gap between outside expectations and domestic capabilities, Germany’s foreign policy debate intensified.

With expectations on Germany mounting and debates intensifying within the country, it is high time that Germany’s approach to EU

3 Gauck, J., Speech to open 50th Munich Security Conference, Munich, 31 January 2014, <http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/EN/JoachimGauck/Reden/2014/140131-Munich-Security-Conference.html>.

4 See chapter by Liana Fix in this Report.

5 See chapters by Tuomas Forsberg and Marco Siddi in this Report.

foreign policy was revisited. While we acknowledge that the EU is by far not the only foreign policy framework for Germany, an analysis of Berlin's stance on how to secure a stable outside world would not be possible without taking the EU dimension into account. German and EU foreign policy are closely intertwined. Indeed, building a common EU foreign policy was to a large extent a project centred around Germany: on the one hand driven by Germany in order for the country to play a role on the world stage without provoking fears in its European neighbours, on the other promoted by France and other European partners to keep Germany in check and make use of its resources for a European approach to foreign policy in a multipolar world. Germany's new leadership role is a crucial factor in determining how the EU foreign policy project will develop in the future and how the balance of power might change on a continent that had previously been marked by a stable and equal Franco-German engine.

Germany's new role has caught the attention of scholars not just in Germany, but also elsewhere in Europe, including Finland. This report is the result of a collaboration between Finnish, German and other European researchers who wanted to understand what the recent developments mean for German and European foreign policy. Germany's new foreign policy role seemed important to explore not only in terms of the substance of the particular international challenges, but also in order to understand a potentially new power balance in European foreign policy that emanates from Berlin.

FROM NO POWER, TO ECONOMIC POWER, TO POLITICAL POWER GERMANY

Over 25 years ago, a Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA) report on the implications of German reunification pointed out that "Germany is now a democratic, stable and cooperative European state, so there is little reason to expect it to embark on a course of its own. However, the role of a great power brings certain obligations with it that are related to hard power politics, and predicting where such developments might lead is not easy".⁶ On the one hand, it is remarkable how little has changed in this quarter-century. Not only is Germany still struggling to cope with its "great power obligations",

6 Visuri, Pekka & Forsberg, Tuomas: *Saksa ja Suomi. Pohjoismainen näkökulma Saksan kysymykseen*, Helsinki: W. Söderström, 1992, p. 182.

making predictions about its future development has not become any easier. On the other hand, German and security policy have undergone transformative experiences in the last decade, which are key to understanding how it acts now.

Starting with the 1990 “Two-Plus-Four Agreement” between the uniting parts of Germany and the four victors of WWII, which granted full international sovereignty to Germany for the first time, it took the country 25 years to develop its contemporary foreign policy profile. We can roughly identify three periods. In the first period throughout the 1990s, Germany was preoccupied with the challenges of reunification and faced the first debates on the use of military force as well as alliance solidarity. At this time, it reaffirmed that a reunited and sovereign Germany also wanted to be part of a strong European Union. By the end of the 1990s, Berlin had taken decisive foreign policy decisions, one of which was the first military combat mission in Kosovo.

The second period, the first decade of the new millennium, was largely characterized by foreign policy disengagement. The Iraq war catapulted Europe into deep disagreements, which the joint Franco-German opposition to the US invasion could not gloss over. With the notable exception of participation in the war in Afghanistan, Germany’s key concern at the time was to reform its weak economy and foster its global export industry. By the end of the decade, Germany had impressively caught up economically, while remaining weak on its foreign and security strategy. Germany’s abstention during the 2011 UN Security Council vote on a no-fly zone in Libya was widely seen as a consequence of this missing foreign policy compass.

The critique of the poor handling of the Libya crisis and the change of government in 2013 reactivated the foreign policy debate in Germany and marked the starting point of the currently ongoing third period. The strong condition of the German economy underpinned the ability as well as the necessity for increased international engagement. When the crises in and around Europe erupted, Germany’s economic power was its strongest leverage. During the eurocrisis, the country’s healthy budget meant that Berlin could greatly influence the fiscal rules for crisis-hit countries. In the stand-off with Russia over Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, Germany’s sizeable trade share with Russia put it in the driving seat of the Western sanctions policy. When the refugee crisis escalated in 2015, Germany became the most attractive destination in Europe for migrants, which, in turn, left Berlin with little choice but to lead the main efforts in finding a European and international solution to the challenge. It was the strength of “Economic power Germany”

that pushed it to become “Political power Germany” as well. The extent to which this transformation succeeded and what it means for the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) is examined more closely in this Report.

THE APPROACH: OPENING THE “BLACK BOX” BERLIN

The Report opens up the “black box” Berlin. International attention often focuses on the most visible figures. As an example of how the media tends to approach politics, *Time* magazine put Merkel on the cover of its December 2015 issue with great pathos, calling her the “Chancellor of the free world”. Our analysis does not deny the crucial role played by certain personalities in international diplomacy. For example, during the Ukraine crisis Merkel’s personal relationship with President Vladimir Putin – marked by some degree of distrust, but also by rather smooth-functioning lines of communication – shaped Western diplomacy with Russia. However, apart from those in the spotlight, key advisors as well as politicians and public personalities who are little known abroad are often decisive in shaping Germany’s foreign policy.

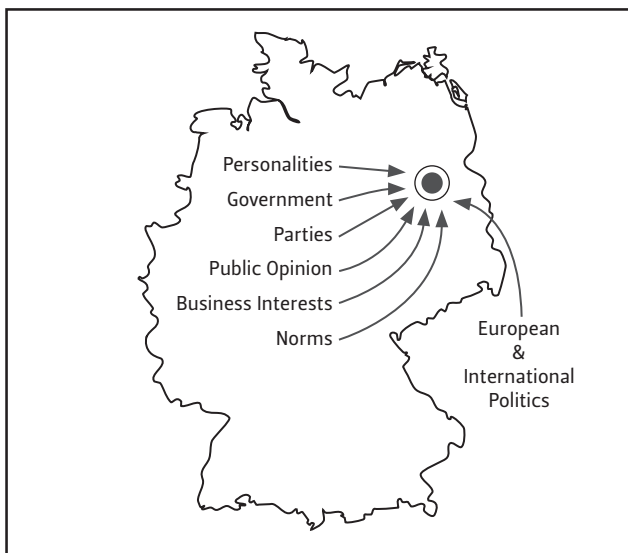


Figure 1.
Black box Berlin: drivers of Germany’s foreign and security policy.

The German government as the executive of foreign policy is also scrutinized throughout the Report. Despite the *Kollegialprinzip* (principle of collegiality) of the cabinet and the *Richtlinienkompetenz* (authority to set guidelines) of the German chancellor, the government is far from a homogeneous actor and not without its turf wars. Ministers possess authority over their portfolio (*Ressortprinzip*) and are interested in getting their preferences through in the debate. Controversies are further elevated in a grand coalition government like the one presiding in Germany today. It is thus logical to highlight dividing lines between ministries on certain EU policy issues. For example, the Federal Foreign Office tends to be more enthusiastic about promoting a strong role for the EU institutions, such as its Brussels counterpart, the European External Action Service. However, the Chancellery stresses that decisions with repercussions for national economic and security interests are firmly in the hands of heads of state and government either within or outside of the formal format of the European Council.

Aside from the executive, political parties shape the foreign policy debate in the German parliament and beyond. Foreign policy is subject to a broad debate in Germany and a contested subject between parties. The importance of foreign policy for elections became apparent, for example, when Gerhard Schröder's vocal opposition to the Iraq war helped him to prolong his chancellorship in 2002. While European integration is viewed positively by most parties represented in the Bundestag, views on its substance diverge, for example on the legitimacy of using military force as well as on relations with Russia. Parties such as 'the Greens' and 'the Left' largely represent the strong pacifism that characterizes the German debate. The 'Alternative für Deutschland' party (AfD) is thus far on course to join the Bundestag in the 2017 general elections. While the AfD's views on European and foreign and security policy issues have not been consolidated to date, the party will most likely voice more extreme anti-European and anti-American stances in the debate.

A thorough analysis of German foreign policy would not be complete without taking into account the broader mood, including business interests as well as public opinion. Industry, for instance, has been concerned about the decaying peaceful European post-war order and the worsening business environment. Consequently, it reluctantly and only partially backed sanctions against Russia – at least for some time – even though the sanctions hurt the export business. In line with a trend that can be observed in many countries, substantial parts of German society missed out on the benefits of globalization,

and harboured strong feelings of insecurity instead following the terror attacks in Paris, for example. Grassroots movements like PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident) tap into these emotions and provide a stage for rather crude anti-European, anti-American and anti-elitist rhetoric. Yet public opinion paints a much more diversified picture, not least due to the number of people with an immigrant background. The traditionally strong preference for the non-interference of Germany in international politics and security matters is another robust element in the public discourse and stands in contrast to the latest calls for Germany to shoulder more responsibility in the world.

History, and the foreign policy norms it helped to create, play a key part in understanding contemporary German foreign policy. The traditional German foreign policy norms developed as a reaction to the traumatic experiences of the Nazi regime and WWII. As a consequence, Germany's foreign policy has long been shaped by its self-perception as a "civilian power" and its strong commitment to multilateralism, European integration and military restraint. Despite significant transformations in German foreign policy, such as the first participation in a combat mission in Kosovo in 1999 and Afghanistan from 2001 onwards, these norms remain influential.

Finally, notwithstanding Germany's scepticism towards assertive foreign policy, it is influenced by international and European politics in an almost unparalleled way compared to other big states. Seen as a potentially harmful "giant in the middle", Germany has tried to pay particular attention to the sensitivities of European allies, avoiding any moves that might upset its neighbours. Due to its historical legacy, Germany's direct diplomacy vis-à-vis Russia in the Ukraine crisis in the Normandy format (also including France and Ukraine) raised eyebrows in some Baltic and Central European capitals. While German leadership is increasingly seen as desirable by its neighbours, Berlin has to, or is expected to, pay special attention to the European dimension.

BERLIN DEBATES WORTH FOLLOWING

The heightened role of German foreign policy has triggered old and new debates on how to respond to the challenges that Europe is currently facing. Berlin has a rather clearly defined understanding of the overall goal it wants to achieve, mainly a stable, rule-based international order in which fundamental principles of the rule of law, democracy

and human rights are respected. It also adheres to the traditional key principles of its foreign and security policy, namely its European vocation and transatlantic alignment. However, the recent crises on the European Union's doorstep have pushed Germany to rethink some of the priorities and modalities of its international action. To this end, below are four debates that are closely examined throughout the report and that will be worth following also in the future:

Restraint versus responsibility: Defined by its post-war identity, Germany has a persistent culture of military restraint. Even though the German Bundeswehr has been increasingly active in military operations abroad, for example in Kosovo in the late 1990s as well as in Afghanistan, the use of force is often seen as the very last resort or even strictly ruled out from the start. The abstention from the UN resolution establishing a no-fly zone over Libya in 2011 was seen as the latest stark example of this culture of restraint. As Nicole Koenig writes in her chapter on Germany's role in EU crisis management in Libya and Syria, "the abstention continued to haunt Germany's political elite in the years that followed" and "became a symbol of the growing tension between external demands for leadership and internal preferences for restraint". Tuomas Iso-Markku explains in his contribution that restraint has led to an ambiguous role for Germany in the Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU: "Germany seems more interested in developing common structures than in reflecting upon how, and to what end, these structures could be used." Yet he notes a shift in public opinion regarding the use of force, as a recent survey showed that "the majority of the population accepts military operations and military cooperation as possible means as well". Koenig concludes: "Germany did not depart from its culture of restraint, but chose the middle ground between responsibility and restraint, as illustrated by the cautious and restricted nature of its military engagements".

Ostpolitik versus Frostpolitik: The most notable German foreign policy change of recent years has occurred in its relations towards Russia. The question that Tuomas Forsberg addresses in his chapter on the German domestic debate is to what extent Germany's idea of Ostpolitik continues to be a relevant factor. Germany-Russia relations resembled a cooperative partnership after the end of the Cold War with the aim of modernizing Russia's economic and social landscape through engagement and close trade ties. The Neue Ostpolitik was a stable

feature of German foreign policy despite changes in government. With the Russian annexation of Crimea and the turmoil in Eastern Ukraine, Germany's Russia policy took a sharp turn, as Berlin played a decisive role in implementing Western sanctions against Russia. Yet Forsberg's analysis of the German debate shows that the change was not as dramatic as it might appear. While Germany remained firm in its criticism of the Russian violation of international law, "the change in Germany's policy towards Russia is not total, but the idea of partnership and cooperation is still seen as a desirable objective". The remnants of Germany's Ostpolitik might play a key role in the EU's approach to Russia in the future, as Marco Sidi points out in his chapter on German foreign policy towards Russia: "German policies during the crisis suggest that a new type of Ostpolitik, more focused on diplomacy and respect for norms, has gained momentum and will remain prominent in the foreseeable future. Within this context, deeper engagement and economic partnership are mostly conditional on Russia's respect for international law".

Global versus European reach: One of the stable features of German foreign policy is its European vocation. Global challenges should be approached through European solutions and, if possible, organized within the framework of the European Union. However, the EU has not always been the most effective level for problem-solving of late. This was most conspicuous in Germany's efforts to find a solution to the Ukraine crisis, as Liana Fix points out: "In the manner of a global power, Germany has picked and chosen the partners, institutions and instruments it deemed necessary for the implementation of its crisis-management framework, with a marginal role for EU representatives, institutions and mechanisms apart from the intergovernmental CFSP process for a common sanctions policy". Niklas Helwig concludes in his chapter on Germany's new approach to EU institutions: "The German foreign policy paradox is that Berlin needs to shoulder more responsibility, sometimes unilaterally, at a time when common EU action is more needed than ever in a contested world". As a consequence, Berlin increasingly strives for deeper cooperation with European partners instead of deeper integration of the EU. As Tobias Bunde analyzes in his contribution, the partnership between the US and Germany has become a key axis in transatlantic relations, predetermining the EU's ability to play a global role: "In a way, the contemporary US-German bilateral partnership today is to the Western community what the Franco-German tandem used to be to

the European Union: the indispensable duo that usually represented quite different visions but could foster a broader consensus when they were able to agree”.

Values versus interests: Finally, Germany is not immune to the traditional dilemma of foreign policy actors. Values and interests often go hand in hand. For example, when Germany promotes a liberal, rule-based global order, it serves its values as well as its interests. Yet, time and again, values and interests clash. The discrepancies have been particularly prominent in Europe’s dealings with its neighbourhood. Under the pressure of a high number of refugees, Germany’s weighing of priorities in relation to countries in the EU’s southern neighbourhood has shifted towards stability and away from the promotion of European values. As Anna-Lena Kirch writes: “It is therefore foreseeable that the German government will shift its focus in the Southern neighbourhood further towards the stability dimension [...] The likely result will be a more pragmatic and less value-based approach towards countries in the Southern neighbourhood, flanked by German development aid and the engagement of German civil society organizations”. Particularly in Germany’s relations with Turkey, the migration crisis and the war in Syria have posed further challenges to what was already a difficult relationship to begin with. Is Germany’s strategic interest in the unstable region pushing it to the extent that it is likely to promote a deeper partnership or even EU accession for a Turkey with an increasingly troubling democratic and human rights record? Can Büyükbay and Wulf Reiners discern signs pointing in that direction. As they state in their chapter: “The continuing war in Syria and the emergence of the ‘Islamic State’ have reflected the dominance of a security dimension in the current phase of German-Turkish relations [...] The potentially ongoing mistrust between the partners and existing concerns regarding Turkey’s understanding of democracy, the rule of law and human rights take a back seat as long as the security scenario does not change.”

The verdict of the Report is that Germany has taken up a position of leadership in foreign policy.⁷ As a result, it is becoming more actively involved in finding solutions to the crises and political challenges of our time. Yet, there is often a vagueness in the public debate as to what this leadership actually entails. Far too often the evaluation of whether or not Germany has demonstrated leadership has depended on the political viewpoint. For example, while some commentators lamented the absence of German leadership in the Ukraine crisis as Germany refused any military engagement or weapon deliveries,⁸ others saw the same crisis as proof of German leadership, as Berlin led the Western response on the economic and diplomatic front. In our research, we discovered that Berlin effectively has a diversified approach to leadership. Refraining from using military force does not automatically mean that Germany is not in the lead. Rather, it just chooses different means. While Germany is becoming more comfortable with manifesting power, we also encountered throughout our analysis more subtle – and not necessarily less effective – ways for Germany to achieve a favourable outcome, as described below.

Leadership by power. Germany possesses power resources (economic or military) and uses them as leverage to align others with its position. Both economic and military assets can be seen as ‘hard power’ resources, yet the willingness to use them does not always match. As noted throughout the report, Germany remains hesitant to use military force both because of its pacifist background and because it seldom regards it as the appropriate means to achieve its objectives. Economic power, exerted for example through sanctions, is much easier for Germany to reconcile with its pacifist nature. Yet the leverage of economic means depends on the playing field and is in some cases very limited, such as when confronted with asymmetric threats from the so-called Islamic State.

7 Recently confirmed by the European Foreign Policy Scorecard compiled by the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), where Germany ranked first on the leader board in 8 out of 12 foreign policy challenges. Available at <http://www.ecfr.eu/scorecard>

8 Cohen, Roger: Western defeat in Ukraine, New York Times, 4 June 2015, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/05/opinion/roger-cohen-western-defeat-in-ukraine.html>.

Leadership by consensus. German leadership is not striving to impose a certain position, but rather to mitigate conflict. Germany leads from the middle. European and transatlantic unity is an important goal in itself and Germany actively searches for a common approach with key partners. In the EU, the consensus with France has traditionally been a way to achieve a strong European position. However, since the last enlargement rounds and with the waning power of France, the Franco-German consensus engine is stuttering. In relation to third states, Germany also prefers “cooperation rather than confrontation”.⁹ Berlin often demonstrates restraint and trusts the compromise, rather than demonstrates power and compromises the trust. Yet the limits to this approach are reached as soon as either no compromise is possible or the trust is gone. The difficult diplomatic efforts in the Ukraine crisis exemplified this dilemma in Germany’s approach.

Leadership by institutions. As cooperation and consensus is an important feature in its strategy, Germany invests heavily in the development of institutions and norms of cooperation in and beyond the European Union. The created structures are favourable to German interests in the long term. The monetary union and the enlargement process are the best examples of cases whereby Germany created an environment resembling “a warm bath”¹⁰ in which its interests could flourish. But also in other policy areas, such as the Common Security and Defence Policy,¹¹ Germany’s focus is first and foremost on the design of structures and instruments. Subsequently, they allow Germany to focus on specific aspects, such as civilian crisis management or infrastructure and intelligence support, while more risky tasks weigh on the shoulders of others. Leadership by institutions is not limited to the EU context, which can, for example, be seen in Germany’s efforts to strengthen the OSCE as a framework for dialogue and trust-building.

Leadership by example. Germany goes ahead unilaterally or with a core group of partners to set wide-reaching standards which it wants others to adopt. It also pushes the EU to adopt a proactive approach on the

9 Federal Foreign Office: “Germany’s OSCE Chairmanship in 2016: Building bridges of cooperation”, 13 November 2015, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Aussenpolitik/Friedenspolitik/OSZE/151112_Steinmeier_Bundestag_OSZE_Vorsitz.html.

10 Bulmer, Simon: ‘Shaping the Rules? The Constitutive Politics of the European Union and German Power’, in Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), *Tamed Power: Germany in Europe* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997, pp. 49–79.

11 See Tuomas Forsberg’s chapter in this Report.

international scene and to make ambitious policy proposals based on its values or interests. Instances where Germany “not only talked the talk, but walked the walk” include the sanctions policy against Russia¹² and the refugee crisis. While leadership by example was an effective strategy in the first case, leading to a comprehensive sanctions regime in which membership mostly shared the costs, it seem to fail in the refugee crisis, where Germany’s open border policy was not met with commitments by other member states to receive refugees.

Leadership by default. Oftentimes, Germany is not actively seeking a leading role, but is pushed into this position by circumstances and the unavailability of other guiding actors. In the past, Germany has often been hesitant to fill the leadership vacuum and has sought to share the responsibility. This, however, is less and less the case. Due to its size, geographical location and its current healthy economic state, Germany is increasingly in the default position whether it likes it or not.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The Report is divided into three sections. In the first section, Niklas Helwig, Tuomas Iso-Markku and Anna-Lena Kirch analyze Germany’s role in the development of EU institutions and scrutinize key policies, namely the CSDP and the European Neighbourhood Policy. The second section focuses on Germany’s contribution in two recent cases of EU crisis management. Nicole Koenig examines European efforts in Libya and Syria, while Liana Fix explains Germany’s leadership in the Ukraine crisis. The third and final section is dedicated to bilateral relations with important states. Tuomas Forsberg and Marco Siddi look at Germany’s relations with Russia, taking both the domestic debate and the implications for Berlin’s foreign policy into account. Tobias Bunde examines the transatlantic partnership with the US. Can Büyükbay and Wulf Reiners explain the development of Germany’s relationship with Turkey. The conclusion summarizes the drivers and changes of German foreign policy and the implications for the EU’s foreign and security policy.

¹² See Liana Fix’s chapter in this Report.

EU Institutions & Policies

1

1. Germany and EU foreign policy institutions: from ‘deeper integration’ to ‘deeper cooperation’

Niklas Helwig

Germany has been a key driver behind the creation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the bodies and administrations responsible for its decision-making and policy implementation. The Maastricht Treaty, which created the CFSP in 1993, served the purpose of keeping a strong reunited Germany in check. At the same time, it kick-started the development of a European approach to foreign policy after the breakdown of the bipolar international system. Germany held a pro-integrationist position in the successive treaty reforms. Its answer to the growing number of EU member states and to a more complex external environment was deeper integration and the incremental development of a distinct EU foreign policy driven in Brussels. New actors in Brussels, such as the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the High Representative of the EU were to pave the way to the long-term goal of a political union in matters of foreign policy.

The year 2014 marks the point when Germany’s idea of deeper integration of EU foreign policy was shelved for an indefinite period of time. Germany remains committed to a strong European foreign policy, however. Europe is still the one and only answer for German officials when asked how Germany can ensure stability in the neighbourhood and drive the agenda of a rule-based global order. Yet the idea of *how* a strong EU foreign policy should be organized has changed. The Ukraine crisis, as well as the conflict in Syria and the rise of ISIS, once again revealed the limits of what a Brussels-centralized foreign policy can achieve. Crisis diplomacy called for leadership and engagement that the EU institutions – lacking the foreign policy authority of member states – were unable to provide. The greater direct involvement of Germany was particularly necessary.

As a consequence, Berlin increasingly strives for deeper cooperation with European partners instead of deeper integration in the EU.

The current shift to a more German-driven approach to European foreign policy did not occur overnight. Ever since it stepped up its diplomatic efforts over the Western Balkans in the 1990s, Germany has been acting in a more pragmatic and ‘mini-lateral’ fashion than what its integration rhetoric suggests. The new development is that the Federal Foreign Office is slowly updating its vision for the organization of EU foreign policy. In this policy area Germany is breaking with its traditional integrated vision of the EU. To this end, Germany is becoming more similar to the United Kingdom and France, while still being the most committed to European action in the club of the “big three”.

The argumentation in this chapter proceeds as follows. Germany’s pro-integrationist policy since reunification has become less ambitious in recent years due to growing Euroscepticism among the populations of Germany and the partner countries. At the same time, Germany has had to play a more active role in various international crises. This new responsibility is the reason behind its more pragmatic approach towards EU foreign policy. The shift in thinking among Germany’s foreign policy elite is visible in the latest review of the Federal Foreign Office, which emphasizes bilateral and multilateral European cooperation and networking, while not limiting itself to act through EU instruments. The debate on the future of EU foreign policy cooperation remains fluid as the Chancellery favours intergovernmental arrangements and a strong role for heads of state and government, while the Federal Foreign Office sees a strong EU High Representative and EEAS as being in its interests. Berlin continues with its leadership by institutions and shapes its own administrative setup and the EU institution in such a way that they can contribute to a stable and rule-based order. For the time being, however, this shape is intergovernmental and decentralized rather than supranational and integrated.

THE PRAGMATIC INTEGRATIONIST

Germany’s stance on how to organize EU foreign policy has long been a mix of public proclamations for deeper integration and a more realistic approach in the actual negotiations on treaty reforms. When European states discussed closer cooperation on foreign and security policy matters at the beginning of the 1990s, Germany’s general position was to aim for ambitious integration of Europe’s foreign

policies. The upheavals of 1989/90 triggered a broad discussion on Germany's future role as a regional power. Terms such as 'Major Power Germany', 'Gulliver in the Middle of Europe' or 'Reluctant Global Power' were evoked and reflected the fear of a reunited and possibly soon dominant Germany.¹ In this situation, Germany took the bull by the horns and proactively sought to embed the existing European foreign policy framework, which was known at the time as European Political Cooperation, more deeply within a to-be-created EU.

At the time, the idea of a 'Political Union',² including matters of foreign and security policy, was promoted in German government circles. The far-reaching concept included a number of organizational principles. First, a single institutional framework for community policies (such as trade) and common foreign policy matters. Second, a stronger role for the community institutions, especially the European Commission, in foreign policy matters. Third, the use of qualified majority voting in foreign policy decisions. These 'Political Union' principles should inform Germany's EU reform agenda for the next two decades.

However, even during the following Maastricht Treaty negotiations the German position was significantly constrained by what was politically feasible with its European partners. Germany did not push for deeper integration at the negotiation table. The idea of a political union in matters of foreign policy had to be balanced with the positions of the more sovereignty-minded member states, notably France. In the end, the 1993 Maastricht Treaty established an intergovernmental system for the CFSP as one of the three pillars of the Union.

The German position during the Maastricht episode forestalled what should be one of the key features of Germany as an institutional architect. The strategic thrust towards integration remained constant during the following treaty revisions, but was constantly balanced by the integration-sceptical attitude of France. This led to an incremental strengthening of the CFSP and an increasing convergence with the community institutions in the 1999 Amsterdam Treaty and the 2003 Nice Treaty. Over the course of a decade, the capacities of the Council Secretariat were increased, the European Commission and European Parliament received modest roles in the CFSP, a permanent CFSP representative was created and the Common Security and Defence

1 Schmalz, Uwe: 'Die Europäisierte Macht: Deutschland in der europäischen Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik', in 'Eine neue deutsche Europapolitik? Rahmenbedingungen – Problemfelder – Optionen', Bonn: Europa Union Verlag, 2002, pp. 515–580.

2 Stavenhagen, Lutz: 'Durchbruch zur politischen Union – Vor dem Maastrichter Gipfel', in: *Integration*, 14: 4, 1991, pp. 143–150.

Policy (CSDP), including new bodies for monitoring and planning, was introduced. However, the CFSP continued to be organized in a separate pillar, shielded to a large extent from Commission influence and in full control of member states.

The positive stance on European integration was driven by a strong pro-integrationist consensus among mainstream German parties. Among the parties represented in the Bundestag, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the Social Democrats (SPD), the Greens as well as the Liberals (FDP) all argued for deeper EU integration, leaving only the Left (Die Linke) as a voice regularly expressing concerns over the EU as an agent of neoliberalism and militarism.³ While other elements of Germany's foreign policy were intensely debated, such as the legitimacy of military force,⁴ there was a fundamental agreement between the parties on the question of deeper European integration. In the field of the common foreign and security policy in particular, parties could trust in the support of the public, which constantly saw over 70 per cent of Germans in favour of 'one common foreign policy among the member states of the EU' throughout the 1990s.⁵

The convention on the future of Europe, which discussed possible elements for an EU constitutional treaty, was the next opportunity to push for deeper integration. In his speech at the Humboldt University in 2000, foreign minister Joschka Fischer promoted the idea of an avant-garde group of willing member states forming a 'Kerneuropa' that would pioneer integration in the field of the Common Foreign and Security Policy as well.⁶ However, the integrationist ideas did not travel far during the deliberations of the convention. Some countries, including the BeNeLux countries, Finland and Germany argued for deeper integration and did not exclude integrating the CFSP into the Commission's sphere of competences. Yet an intergovernmentalist camp, consisting inter alia of the UK, Spain and Sweden, was against any transfer of competences to the EU level. They saw the painful divisions over the Iraq war as a sign that Europe was not ready for a truly common foreign policy. France remained sceptical as well, and

3 See Behr, Timo and Helwig, Niklas: 'Constructing a German Europe? Germany's Europe Debate Revisited', FIIA Briefing Paper 99, 2012, available at http://www.fiaa.fi/en/publication/247/constructing_a_german_europe/.

4 See chapter by Tuomas Iso-Markku in this report.

5 According to the Eurobarometer results available at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/.

6 Fischer, Joschka: 'Vom Staatenbund zur Föderation – Gedanken über die Finalität der Europäischen Integration', Speech at the Humboldt University, 12 May 2000, Berlin.

stuck to its traditional line of promoting the role of the European Council in the political decision-making.

Eventually, the creation of a double-hatted EU Foreign Minister (that later became the High Representative of the EU) and the EEAS was a notable success for Germany, which was seen as the father of the idea together with France. While this reform did not abolish the intergovernmental features of the CFSP, it did bring it closer to the community instruments and legally abolished the pillar structure of the EU. It also gave the High Representative a coordinating role in the external relations of the Commission, at least on paper.

When the Lisbon Treaty finally entered into force in late 2009, Germany was notably absent in shaping the implementation of the widely ambiguous treaty. The start of the Lisbon Treaty coincided with a change of government in Germany, bringing the foreign policy novice of the FDP, Guido Westerwelle, to the office of foreign minister. The normal adjustment phase following the handing over of the minister's office, Westerwelle's genuine belief in Catherine Ashton's authority as first EU High Representative in setting up the EEAS, as well as a very active Swedish Presidency of the Council, were all elements that contributed to Berlin taking rather a back-seat in the intensifying discussions on the new common diplomatic service. Little preparation had been done in the member states and Brussels on the question of how the EEAS should work in detail. The negotiations on the final design of the service became the source of turf wars between the member states and the Commission, with the latter trying to preserve most of its prerogatives in the planning of development cooperation instruments and in the neighbourhood policy.

Germany also got off to a bad start in the race to fill the ranks of the EEAS with its diplomats. By the end of 2014, less than 8 per cent of EU delegation heads were German, while Germans constituted 16 per cent of the EU's population.⁷ Things looked better in the Brussels headquarters, where Helga Schmid had been Political Director since 2006 (first in the Policy Unit of the Council Secretariat and later in the EEAS), and the Federal Foreign Office succeeded in filling two high-ranking Managing Director positions for Multilateral issues and the

7 Novotna, Tereza : 'Who's in charge? The member states, EU institutions and the European External Action Service', ISPI Policy Brief No. 228, 2014, available at http://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/pb_228_novotna_2014_0.pdf.

Americas in 2014. Yet other member states were performing better in organizing their network of diplomats in the service.⁸

After the decade-long struggle to create the new institutions of the Lisbon Treaty, Germany's efforts towards deeper integration matters became saturated. For the first time since Maastricht, Germany did not propose any new plans for treaty reform. This was partly connected to the growing Euroscepticism in the country. The Eurocrisis and the controversial public debate on bailouts for crisis-hit countries enabled the creation of a new German party, the Alternative for Germany (AfD), which argued for a transfer of competences back to the nation states. Under attack from this new party on the right side of the political spectrum, Merkel's Bavarian Sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), also sharpened its rhetoric on Europe. With stronger Eurosceptic tendencies in other EU member states, the institutional setup achieved with the Lisbon Treaty seemed to represent what was achievable with the electorate at home and among EU partners. Instead of further promoting the idea of a political union, even as a long-term goal, Germany focused its attention on the coordination role of the EEAS and the High Representative over all EU foreign policy instruments.

Hence, the 2013 review of the EEAS caused Germany to step up its involvement in shaping the EU external action administration as it existed under the Lisbon framework. Foreign minister Westerwelle had just finished a reflection group with ten other foreign ministers, which called for a strengthening of the EEAS and the EU High Representative vis-à-vis the Commission.⁹ Even though the reflection group was marketed as the Future of Europe Group, raising expectations for ambitious reform proposals, its suggestions in the area of EU foreign policy were mostly limited to better implementation of the Lisbon Treaty reforms.

Loosely based on the experiences of the Future of Europe Group, Berlin started work on a more detailed non-paper with more in-depth suggestions for the EEAS review. The non-paper, presented together with 14 member states, was largely composed by the German Federal

8 Adebahr, Cornelius: Germany: The Instinctive Integrationist, in Rosa Balfour, Caterina Carta and Kristi Raik (eds): *The European External Action Service and National Foreign Ministries*, Ashgate, 2015, pp. 107-120.

9 Final Report of the Future of Europe Group of the Foreign Ministers of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Spain, 17 September 2012, available at http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Europa/Aktuell/120918-Zukunftsgruppe_Warschau_node.html.

Foreign Office as the main coordinator.¹⁰ Germany reiterated its position that the HR should be in charge of the EU's external representation, also extending to the European Neighbourhood Policy. The EEAS should facilitate the coordination of the external action aspects of the European Commission. In addition, the EU delegation network should be more efficient, with a clear leadership responsibility for the Head of Delegation from the EEAS (most often a member state diplomat).

The start of the Juncker Commission and Federica Mogherini's turn as EU High Representative in 2014 coincided with a worsening of the stability in the immediate neighbourhood, especially in Syria and Ukraine. Consequently, the focus shifted from administrative fine-tuning of the EU structures towards crisis management. At the same time, Germany needed to get directly involved in European diplomacy, partly bypassing the newly-created institutions. In the Ukraine crisis, for example, early diplomatic negotiation rounds in Geneva, with High Representative Catherine Ashton as the only European representative present, failed and gradually a new format with France and Germany as European counterparts was developed.¹¹ German diplomats clearly expressed that there was little appetite for further integration across Europe and that Berlin wanted to concentrate on using the untapped potential of the Lisbon Treaty instead. The use of permanent structured cooperation and qualified majority voting as well as the creation of a permanent Civilian-Military headquarters are seen as possible steps, but nothing that 'smells of deeper integration' is to be put on the table before the question of the UK's EU membership is settled in a referendum in 2016.

NEW RESPONSIBILITY, NEW UNDERSTANDING OF THE EU?

The prominent role that Germany has played in shaping the institutional framework of the EU is an expression of its post-war identity as a 'civilian power'¹² with its focus on Europe and on effective multilateralism. The lessons from the first half of the 20th century demanded Germany to play an active part in shaping the common

10 Non-Paper: Strengthening the European External Action Service by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, 1 February 2013.

11 For a detailed discussion, see chapter by Liana Fix in this report.

12 Harnisch, Sebastian and Maull, Hanns (eds.): *Germany as a Civilian Power? The Foreign Policy of the Berlin Republic*, Manchester, 2001.

institutional framework of the European Union. EU integration as a whole can be read as an answer to a structural problem in Europe. German power is necessary to manage the challenges of the continent, yet time and again it provokes the fear of neighbours. By transferring powers to supranational institutions in which Germany is underrepresented and smaller member states are overrepresented, the balance on the continent was supposed to be maintained.

The CFSP is different in so far as foreign policy has always remained largely driven by member states. Yet even here Germany developed a strong commitment to deepening EU foreign policy cooperation. For Germany, a strong EU foreign policy is not just an option; it is – as German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier put it recently – in the German DNA.¹³ This partly explains Germany's love affair with institutional issues and its constantly reaffirmed involvement in the EU's institutional reforms.

The crises of recent years have put even more pressure on Germany to think through the organization of EU foreign policy. During the 2014 Ukraine crisis, Germany had to play a key role in managing Europe's response.¹⁴ The refugee crisis led to a large number of people coming to Europe from Syria, with Germany as the main destination for many. The UK was at the centre of a debate on leaving the Union. France seemed to be slowly losing its foreign policy relevance and has – since the Paris attack in late 2015 – been embroiled in the 'war against terror'. Thus, it was eventually up to Germany to assume more responsibility.

The idea of new responsibility for Germany was part of a slowly growing debate in the country on the necessity for more assertive international engagement. A 2013 high-level report on German foreign and security policy saw the need to develop Germany's 'shaping power', the ability to create compromises and solutions internationally through ideational, political and economic resources.¹⁵ The debate was picked up and amplified at the Munich Security Conference in early 2014, when several speakers in a coordinated approach took up the theme of responsibility, including German President Joachim Gauck. Representatives from academia joined the debate by arguing that

13 Steinmeier, Frank-Walter: 'The DNA of German foreign policy', 25 February 2015, available at <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/german-foreign-policy-european-union-by-frank-walter-steinmeier-2015-02>.

14 See chapter by Liana Fix in this report.

15 Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) and the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF): *New Power, New Responsibility. Elements of a German foreign and security policy for a changing world*, Berlin, 2013.

Germany represented a ‘power in the middle’¹⁶ that could best mediate the deviating positions of member states around Europe, especially between the North and the South, but also with regard to the refugee crisis with the Eastern member states.

The pressure on Germany to shoulder more responsibility in the world had two effects. First a unilateral effect, in the sense that Germany increasingly sought to act directly with states outside of the EU and engage in crisis diplomacy with Russia, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and many more with only loose coordination with the official EU structures. Second, a multilateral effect because Germany also played a key role in bringing EU member states together, for example in the case of the Russia sanctions. As the German high-level report noted in 2013, it remains the ‘paradox of Germany’s post-unification foreign policy’ that Germany gained its international sovereignty ‘at a time when hardly a foreign policy challenge can be solved anymore by one nation acting unilaterally’.¹⁷

Germany’s new leadership task fitted increasingly uneasily into the classical German idea of creating a political union in foreign policy. Instead, Germany’s outlook on EU foreign policy became more pragmatic. In his speech in Brussels, Steinmeier outlined the main ideas: Germany is expected to lead, its foreign policy only works in and through Europe and the EU toolbox needs to be expanded within the scope of the Lisbon Treaty.¹⁸ German diplomats point out that the new responsibility demanded that Berlin does not sit on its hands and wait for EU consensus if European action is required. Germany thus started to feel comfortable acting on its own account together with key partners such as France and the US. Hence, the EU’s institutional framework was increasingly used as a toolbox and platform for German leadership.

16 Muenkler, Herfried: *Macht in der Mitte. Die neuen Aufgaben Deutschlands in Europa*, Hamburg: edition Körber-Stiftung, 2015.

17 Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) and the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), see above.

18 Steinmeier, Frank-Walter: ‘Germany – Looking Beyond its Borders’, Speech by Federal Foreign Minister Steinmeier at ‘Carnegie Europe’, Brussels, 16 March 2015, available at http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Infoservice/Presse/Reden/2015/150316_BM_Carnegie.html.

In order to make German foreign policy fit for purpose, a review of the Federal Foreign Office's own organization was necessary. After taking up office, Steinmeier started the 'Review 2014'. Its main results were: crises are the new normal and have to be better addressed; Germany needs to step up its role in shaping the multilateral international order; and Germany's relationship with the EU and European partners needs to be closely incorporated in all planning by the ministry.¹⁹ With a clearer picture of Germany's key challenges, the results mainly triggered organizational changes in the house. For example, two new directorate-generals were created for 'Crisis Prevention, Stabilisation and Post-Conflict Reconstruction' and for 'International Order, the United Nations and Arms Control' to address crisis management and global issues in a more comprehensive manner.

A more challenging task was the creation of a 'European Reflex' – for deeper integration of the European perspective into the work of the foreign ministry. The 'European Reflex' concept was developed during the review in Berlin as well as during consultations in Brussels. The increase in Germany's role in foreign policy matters had also resulted in growing frustration with Berlin among other EU member states. German initiatives – such as considering highway tolls, phasing out nuclear energy, or opening the borders to refugees – had not always been transparent, although their effects were directly felt by Germany's partners. With the stepped-up engagement in crisis diplomacy following the Ukraine and Syria crises, the risk of failing communication or coordination with European partners grew even bigger. The foreign ministry's idea was that by factoring in the European dimension of its activities from the start, Germany could save the costs of disgruntled European partners or missing synergy effects at the EU level.

The in-house reforms foresaw that every planning process should include an evaluation of the EU-level implications. The use or disregard of EU instruments needed to be justified. The reform was still underway at the time of writing. Other measures considered included increasing the number of EU representatives across units, a stronger role for the CFSP Unit and the Europe department in the coordination of policies,

19 German Federal Foreign Office: Review 2014: Krise – Ordnung – Europa, Berlin, 2015, available at http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/699336/publicationFile/202933/Review_Abschlussbericht.pdf.

as well as stronger coordination with other EU member state embassies in third countries. More ambitious and wide-ranging ideas included the creation of a State Secretaries Committee on foreign affairs and an imperative for a European evaluation in every decision of the Cabinet. However, as the Federal Foreign Office has little power over the dealings of other ministries, expanding the scope of the 'European Reflex' to all government bodies seems unlikely anytime soon.

The 'European Reflex' is a commitment to a strong European perspective on foreign policy. However, the Federal Foreign Office is now also more practical and more self-confident in its outlook. It concentrates on better coordination with EU institutions and European partners, not on deeper integration towards a political union in foreign policy. It acknowledges the leadership role of Germany, which needs to be better communicated to its partners, instead of promoting a leadership role for the EU. Notably, the focus is also on 'Europe', not the 'EU'. The Reflex is to work with European partners as much as necessary and as far as possible. This should, but need not, include the EU institutions. The 'European Reflex' of the Federal Foreign Office is thus also an update of the ministry to match the working methods that Germany has been following in the Ukraine crisis.

FOREIGN OFFICE VERSUS CHANCELLERY

The Federal Foreign Office also reviewed its organization in response to the growing importance of the Chancellery in foreign policy. It is obvious that Berlin is not a unitary actor in foreign policy matters. Despite an extensive coordination effort between the Chancellery and the Foreign Office, there is still a struggle between both government bodies for the driver's seat on specific portfolios. Competition is especially pronounced during Grand Coalition governments, as the junior partner in the Federal Foreign Office seeks a stronger profile.²⁰ Lately, the Federal Foreign Office got the short end of the stick. The Ukraine crisis, as well as the diplomacy around the Syrian and refugee crises, called for the involvement of Chancellor Angela Merkel, with the Federal Foreign Office mostly playing second fiddle.

The division of the Chancellery and the Foreign Office has repercussions at the European level. The Chancellery under the Merkel

20 Paterson, William: 'Foreign Policy in the Grand Coalition', in: *German Politics*, 19: 3–4, 2010, pp. 497–514.

government is more suspicious of a strong role for EU institutions, especially for the Commission. The more intergovernmental-oriented tonality of Merkel's office was articulated in her 'Union Method' as opposed to the supranational 'Community Method'. Merkel made the case for more flexibility: the EU should act supranationally when possible, but intergovernmentally when needed.²¹ The crises of recent years only consolidated her belief that the Commission is not always up to the task of handling pan-European problems. Merkel and finance minister Schäuble eyed the Commission's brokering efforts during the Greek debt crisis with distrust, as ultimately the financial liability would fall back on the member states. In the Ukraine crisis, the Commission's technocratic running of the neighbourhood policy was partly blamed for the initial build-up of tensions. Whether justified or not, the Chancellery increasingly felt that some portfolios had to be run by able member states and backed up by European Council decisions. This more intergovernmental approach reflects the standpoints of influential people working for Merkel, especially those of her recent and current EU advisors, Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut and Uwe Corsepius.

The outlook for Europe is very different in the Federal Foreign Office. Strong Brussels institutions present an opportunity for the Federal Foreign Office and represent a means of obtaining a stronger profile on European and foreign policies in general. A strong High Representative and EEAS as able partners in Brussels are in the best interests of the foreign office. They underline the traditional foreign policy work of the foreign ministries, rather than the top-down crisis diplomacy of the heads of state and government. The Federal Foreign Office is much more open to a stronger role for the Commission (coordinated by the High Representative) and the extension of capabilities in Brussels. While the finance and interior ministries are already on safe ground in Brussels, the foreign ministry wants to extend its clout.

A call for 'more Europe' in foreign policy is a way to strengthen the profile of the ministry. In his speech in Brussels in March 2015, Steinmeier again called for a strong role for the EEAS and also for the Foreign Affairs Council in shaping an EU foreign policy: 'We need

21 Merkel, Angela: Speech by Federal Chancellor at the opening ceremony of the 61st academic year of the College of Europe, Bruges, 2 November 2010, available at <http://www.brussels.diplo.de/contentblob/2959854/Daten/>.

to strengthen the global perspective in European politics'.²² Berlin insiders claim that Steinmeier is looking for a European initiative that can be pushed by his house. So far, however, the ball has either been in another ministry's court (the financial crisis) or that of the Chancellery (the Ukraine and migration crisis).

Still, it would be unfair to say that a call for 'more Europe' is only a strategic move to raise the profile of the Federal Foreign Office. Thomas Bagger, head of the policy planning unit and an influential thinker in the Foreign Office, outlined a new vision for the future role of diplomacy.²³ As digitalization and globalization increase the complexity of the international environment and reduce the boundaries between domestic and international politics, diplomacy has to be understood as 'networked diplomacy'. A more interdependent world requires looking at a broad set of policies usually in the hands of several line ministries to forge a diplomatic solution or address international challenges. The Foreign Office has to become a platform for integrating the network of external actors into a common approach and for complementing the work of the various line ministries.

The new image among Berlin's Foreign Policy community of Germany as a shaping power that influences a networked world has obvious effects on how the future of EU foreign policy is seen. On the one hand, the EEAS is perceived at the EU level as a potential platform for organizing the different spheres of EU external actorness. On the other hand, the High Representative, the EEAS and the European Commission are themselves subject to the networking of the Foreign Office. In any case, with the parameters set by the Lisbon Treaty and the crises pushing Germany into a leading position, the focus in the Federal Foreign Office has shifted. The traditional reflex of transferring competences to Brussels has been replaced by an attempt to interweave different national and supranational actors and to actively manage this resulting network.

22 Steinmeier, Frank-Walter: 'Germany – Looking Beyond its Borders', Speech by Federal Foreign Minister Steinmeier at 'Carnegie Europe', Brussels, 16 March 2015, available at http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Infoservice/Presse/Reden/2015/150316_BM_Carnegie.html.

23 Bagger, Thomas: 'Netzwerkpolitik: In einer veränderten Welt wachsen dem Auswärtigen Dienst neue Rollen zu', in: Internationale Politik, 2013: 1, pp. 44–50.

CONCLUSION

Not so long ago, Germany was referred to as an ‘economic giant, but political dwarf’. During the 2011 Libyan crisis in particular, Berlin was seen as not living up to its responsibility.²⁴ With its involvement during the Ukraine and Syrian crises, Germany has considerably stepped up its engagement in international diplomacy. This is a long-term trend. Ever since the conflict in the Balkans and its involvement in the Iran nuclear talks together with the permanent UN Security Council members, Germany has been undergoing a process of developing a more assertive foreign policy. In all aspects apart from the military dimension it is now unjustified to refer to Germany as a ‘political dwarf’.

This has consequences for Germany’s perspective on EU foreign policy. Previously, as a country unable or unwilling to have a strong foreign policy profile, the commitment towards deeper integration was logical. Germany did not have to worry about losing its own international influence (which had been marginal) and could develop a strong foreign policy profile with its European partners, thereby not engendering too much disapproval from the pacifistic-minded German people. The well-intended outsourcing of foreign policy finally reached its limits when Germany could not avoid stepping up its engagement in 2014.

The German foreign policy paradox is that Berlin needs to shoulder more responsibility, sometimes unilaterally, at a time when common EU action is more needed than ever in a contested world. Germany has to combine an active foreign policy with its inherent obligation for European cooperation. The difficulty is obvious. Diplomatic initiatives, such as Merkel’s visit to Turkey at the height of the refugee crisis in the autumn of 2015, are raising eyebrows among European partners. In order not to be seen as dominant in Europe, Berlin has to reach out more effectively to the other capitals.

Berlin is thus promoting a strong role for the EEAS and the High Representative (including possible enhancements such as a permanent military headquarters), closer interaction among member states in the Council and on the ground amongst European embassies, as well as unanimous decision-making in the CFSP that reflects the unity of the EU. The surprising and domestically controversial German engagement in Syria in late 2015, after the French activation of the 42(7) TEU mutual assistance clause, was another expression of Germany’s commitment

²⁴ See chapter by Nicole Koenig in this report.

to the Lisbon Treaty and European cooperation. Germany seeks to play the role of a shaping power by leading through institutions, thereby shaping its own administrative setup and the EU institutions in a way that increasingly conforms with Berlin's idea of a closely-knit foreign policy network.

2

2. Germany and the EU's Security and Defence Policy: New role, old challenges

Tuomas Iso-Markku

A high-level report published in February 2015 singled out the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) as the weakest link in the European integration project.¹ In the context of austerity, Western intervention fatigue, growing Euroscepticism and persistent strategic divergences, the member states have struggled to commit themselves to further integration in this policy area and to turn the EU into an effective security provider – in spite of continuously stressing the benefits of a stronger CSDP.²

When analysing the past evolution, present state and future prospects of the EU's security and defence policy, it is essential to take a closer look at Germany's role. Although not on a par militarily with France and the United Kingdom, Germany has been among the key players in the EU's security and defence policy from the start. Germany's approach towards the CSDP – and towards security and defence policy in general – has largely been shaped by its attempts to manoeuvre between the often conflicting demands that result from the country's firm commitment to multilateralism on the one hand and German society's deep-rooted anti-militarism on the other. In practice, Germany has constantly expressed strong principal support for the CSDP, viewing it as an important contribution to the overall process of European integration. Meanwhile, Germany's reticence to use military force has been a permanent source of disappointment to

1 S. Blockmans & G. Faleg, *More Union in European Defence: Report of a CEPS Task Force*, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels, 2015.

2 See e.g. European Council, *European Council 19/20 December 2013*, EUCO 217/13.

its closest partner, France, and one of the reasons behind the slow erosion of the CSDP since 2010.

At present, Germany's role is in flux. Having emerged as the EU's political powerhouse, Germany is facing unprecedented external – and internal – pressures to increase its engagement also in the area of security and defence. Correspondingly, the last two years have seen key figures in the German government speak out in favour of a more active German security and defence policy. In this context, pledges to give new impetus to the CSDP, and to substantially advance Europe's defence integration, have also been made, although Germany's main initiative in this field focuses on NATO.

Despite its evolving role, it will be challenging for Germany to take the lead in developing the EU's security and defence policy. To do so, Germany would need, above all, strong partners and a compelling vision to 'sell' to them. However, it is questionable whether the country currently has such a vision. As in the past, Germany seems more interested in developing common structures than in reflecting upon how, and to what end, these structures could be used.³

This chapter proceeds as follows. The first section discusses the basic determinants of Germany's security and defence policy, as these are the key to understanding the country's approach towards the EU's security and defence policy, which will be briefly outlined in the second section. The third section concentrates on Germany's role in the EU's security and defence policy during the last five years, providing the backdrop against which sections four, five and six analyse the current and potential future developments in German security and defence policy. The final section sums up the main findings of the chapter.

3 The same argument has been made by J. Gotkowska, 'Germany's idea of a European army', *The Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW)* [website], 25 March 2015, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2015-03-25/germanys-idea-a-european-army>, accessed 7 Jan 2015.

Germany's security and defence policy is often described as being shaped by two strong politico-cultural traditions, anti-militarism and multilateralism.⁴ Both initially developed as counter-reactions to Germany's role in the Second World War and the atrocities committed by the Nazis and the *Wehrmacht*. German anti-militarism long rested on the simple principle that Germany should never again fight a war ('*nie wieder Krieg*') and continues to find expression in a deep-seated scepticism within German society towards the use of military force (culture of military restraint) and in the idea that Germany has a particular responsibility to advance peace and peaceful conflict resolution (Germany as a civilian power).

Germany's adherence to multilateralism, on the other hand, has grown out of the determination to prevent the country from ever again turning against its neighbours and partners ('*nie wieder allein*'). This tradition manifests itself most visibly in Germany's steadfast commitment to the European Union, NATO and the United Nations as well as the country's efforts to present itself as a reliable partner within these institutional settings.

Ever since the Cold War period, anti-militarism and multilateralism have formed the frames of reference for all German debates about security and defence policy. Although the influence of both traditions is pervasive in German society, they have been weighed differently across the political spectrum.⁵ Traditionally, the political left and the centre-left have attached more importance to the anti-militarist tradition, whereas the centre-right has emphasised multilateralism.⁶ However, during the Cold War era it proved relatively easy to reconcile the two

4 See e. g. J. Duffield, 'Political Culture and State Behaviour: Why Germany Confounds Neorealism', *International Organization*, vol. 53, no. 4, 1999, pp. 765–803; A. Dalgaard-Nielsen, 'The Test of Strategic Culture: Germany, Pacifism and Pre-emptive Strikes', *Security Dialogue* 36:3, 2005, pp. 339–359; S. Becker, *Germany and War: Understanding Strategic Culture under the Merkel Government*, Institut de Recherche Stratégique de l'Ecole Militaire, Paris, 2013; R. Baumann and G. Hellmann, 'Germany and the Use of Military Force: 'Total War', the 'Culture of Restraint' and the Quest for Normality', *German Politics*, 10:1, 2001, pp. 61–82.

5 Dalgaard-Nielsen, op. cit., p. 344.

6 The anti-militarist tradition has been particularly important to the Social Democratic Party, the Greens and, later, to the Left Party. The importance of multilateralism has been stressed by the Christian Democratic Union and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union. The position of the third major centre-right party, the Free Democratic Party, has been more ambivalent in this respect.

traditions, as Germany's room for manoeuvre in security and defence policy was limited and the *Bundeswehr* focused solely on defending the territories of (West) Germany and its NATO allies.⁷

The underlying tensions between anti-militarism and multilateralism started to surface more frequently after the end of the Cold War, as Germany's partners pushed the reunified country to play a more active role in military operations outside the NATO area. Under these conditions, the successive centre-right governments of Chancellor Helmut Kohl began to stress the responsibility that grew out of Germany's membership of the UN, NATO and the EU, gradually pushing the limits of what was perceived by society as acceptable German engagement. Germany's adherence to multilateralism was thus intentionally, and successfully, used by the political leadership as an argument against some of the constraints posed by the anti-militarist tradition.⁸

The actions of the Kohl governments led to a re-interpretation of the German Basic Law. Until the early 1990s, the Basic Law had been seen to prohibit the deployment of the *Bundeswehr* outside the territories of the NATO allies, but in 1994 the German Constitutional Court declared that out-of-area operations in support of collective security systems – such as the UN, NATO and, potentially, the EU – were in accordance with the Basic Law.⁹ However, in its ruling, the Court also stressed that any decision concerning the participation of German soldiers in an out-of-area operation that involved the risk of armed conflict had to be taken by the *Bundestag*. This practice was formalised in 2004 with the adoption of the so-called Parliamentary Participation Act, which now forms the legal basis of the deployment of German soldiers abroad.¹⁰ Although the *Bundestag* has so far never rejected a request by the government to deploy *Bundeswehr* soldiers, the government has to pay close attention to the views of the members of parliament when

7 Dalgaard-Nielsen, loc. cit.

8 Ibid., pp. 345–346; Baumann and Hellmann, op. cit.; Johannes Bohnen, 'Germany', in J. Howorth and A. Menon, *The European Union and National Defence Policy*, Routledge, London/New York, 1997, pp. 49–65.

9 BVerfGE, *Verfassungsrecht* [website] <http://www.servat.unibe.ch/dfr/bv090286.html>, accessed 8 Jan 2015.

10 Margriet Drent, *Sovereignty, parliamentary involvement and European defence cooperation*, Clingendael Report, The Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, The Hague, 2014.

contemplating German military engagement.¹¹ The *Bundeswehr* is thus generally known as a ‘parliamentary army’ (*Parlamentsarmee*).

The debate about the right balance between military restraint (anti-militarism) and Germany’s international responsibilities (multilateralism) continued throughout the 1990s, with the Srebrenica massacre representing an important turning point in the discussion. The fact that diplomatic means and economic sanctions failed to avert the massacre led many German pacifists to rethink their position. The Germans’ historically grounded aversion to war (*‘nie wieder Krieg’*) was partly overridden by the argument that Germany, due to its history, had a responsibility to protect civilians from human rights violations even if this required using military means (*‘nie wieder Auschwitz’*).¹² Despite these developments, the juxtaposition of anti-militarism and multilateralism has remained a central feature of German security and defence policy debates.

Finally, partly due to the German electorate’s anti-militarist attitudes, security and defence policy has constantly had a fairly low status in German politics, as the related political gains are considered to be small and the potential political losses sizeable.¹³ Germany thus seldom belongs to the forerunners in this policy field and there is little debate in the country about strategic questions.¹⁴ Germany’s investments in defence capabilities have also been limited and its defence budget, measured as a percentage of gross domestic product, small compared to the budgets of France, Poland and the United Kingdom.¹⁵

11 See Barbara Kunz, ‘Deploying the Bundeswehr: more transparency, more flexibility, but Parliament’s consent remains key: The Rühle Commission’s final report’, *Actuelles de l’Ifri*, Institut français des relations internationales, Paris, 2015.

12 Dalgaard-Nielsen, op. cit., pp. 347–348.

13 See e. g. Tom Dyson, ‘The reluctance of German politicians to take a strong line on defence policy poses a security risk for Europe’, *EUROPP Blog*, London School of Economics, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2013/09/05/the-reluctance-of-german-politicians-to-take-a-strong-line-on-defence-policy-poses-a-security-risk-for-europe/>, accessed 3 Dec 2015.

14 J. Tschau, ‘No Strategy, Please, We’re German – The Eight Elements That Shaped German Strategic Culture’, in C. M. Schnaubelt, *Towards a Comprehensive Approach: Strategic and Operational Challenges*, NATO Defense College, Rome, 2011, pp. 69–93, here pp. 90–93.

15 Between 2000 and 2010, the average size of the German defence budget measured as a percentage of the country’s gross domestic product was 1.4 per cent, dropping to 1.2 per cent in 2014. See Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Military Expenditure Database* [online database], http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database, accessed 4 January 2016.

THE CSDP AS A CENTRAL CONTRIBUTION
TO THE INTEGRATION PROCESS

The basic determinants of German security and defence policy have decisively influenced Germany's approach towards the EU's security and defence policy. First of all, due to its strong commitment to multilateralism and the European Union, Germany has been a staunch supporter of the idea of an EU security and defence policy from the very beginning. While the CSDP (originally known as the European Security and Defence Policy, ESDP) started as a Franco-British initiative, the policy was officially incorporated into the EU framework in 1999 when Germany held the presidency of the Council.

Germany was also closely involved in the establishment of the EU's military rapid response instrument, the EU Battlegroups. Again, the initial idea came from France and the United Kingdom, but Germany was taken on board early on and the Battlegroups concept was presented to the other member states as a joint initiative of the 'Big Three'. To underline its support for the Battlegroups concept, Germany agreed to participate in more Battlegroups than any other member state.¹⁶

In addition to Germany's principal commitment to the European integration process, the country's anti-militarism and its self-conception as a civilian power have formed the second decisive element in its approach towards the CSDP. While rhetorically supporting both the civilian and the military dimension of the CSDP, Germany itself has focused particularly on the civilian side of the policy as well as on the possibilities to combine civilian and military means in the framework of the so-called comprehensive approach.¹⁷

For Germany, the EU's ability to mobilise a wide range of different instruments is important in itself, but also because it is what distinguishes the CSDP from NATO. Due to Germany's strong attachment to both the EU and NATO, the country has striven to develop the CSDP and NATO as complementary frameworks. Thus, NATO continues to

16 Becker, *op. cit.*, p. 31–33.

17 L. Simón, *Geopolitical Change, Grand Strategy and European Security: The EU-NATO Conundrum*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2013, pp. 178–180; C. Würzer, 'A German Vision of CSDP: "It's Taking Part That Counts"', in F. Santopinto & M. Price (eds.), *National Visions of EU Defence Policy: Common Denominators and Misunderstandings*, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels, 2013, pp. 27–46.

form ‘the centrepiece’¹⁸ of German defence and has constantly been the country’s preferred framework for robust military engagement. The CSDP, by contrast, has been developed more along the lines of the idea of the comprehensive approach or its German counterpart, ‘networked security’ (*vernetzte Sicherheit*).¹⁹

The tensions between Germany’s strong commitment to the EU’s security and defence policy on the one hand and its anti-militarist tradition on the other have, unsurprisingly, been most pronounced when decisions concerning military CSDP operations have been taken. In such situations, German governments have often been torn between the expectations of Germany’s partners and the sceptical attitudes of the German public. However, the governments have also been able to play off the different pressures against each other. Thus, Germany’s traditional adherence to multilateralism and the EU has been used to legitimise German military engagements, as in the case of EUFOR RD Congo in 2006. However, Germany has often also fended off the demands of its partners on the basis of its culture of military restraint and its preference for diplomacy and civilian means.²⁰ The country has been particularly wary of being drawn into conflicts in Africa, which is a priority region for France, but has long been of limited importance to Germany.²¹

Generally speaking, the development of the EU’s security and defence policy has from the German point of view been an end in itself. In other words, Germany has often viewed the EU’s security and defence policy more as a contribution to the overall process of European integration than as a practical instrument of EU foreign policy.²² Accordingly, despite its substantial contributions to civilian CSDP operations, Germany has invested more in the institutional and political than in the operational aspects of the CSDP.²³ Traditionally, Germany’s approach towards the CSDP therefore entails strong elements of ‘leadership by institutions’.

18 German Ministry of Defence, *Defence Policy Guidelines: Safeguarding National Interests – Assuming International Responsibility – Shaping Security Together*, German Ministry of Defence, Berlin, 2011.

19 Würzer, op. cit., 28.

20 O. Schmitt, ‘Strategic Users of Culture: German Decisions for Military Action’, *Contemporary Security Policy*, 33:1, pp. 59–81.

21 Barbara Kunz, *Defending Europe? A Stocktaking of French and German Visions for European Defense*, IRSEM Étude no. 41, Institut de Recherche Stratégique de l’Ecole Militaire, Paris, May 2015, pp. 52–61.

22 Würzer, op. cit., 29.

23 See R. Kempin, ‘From Reluctance to Policy: A New German Stance on the CSDP’, in: Daniel Fiott (ed.), *The Common Security and Defence Policy: National Perspectives*, Egmont – The Royal Institute for International Affairs, Brussels, 2015, pp. 33–34.

Taken together, Germany's reticence to use military force, its lack of strategic vision for the CSDP and its limited interest in African security have proved to be a major frustration for the country's closest partner, France, which has long visualised a strong and autonomous EU defence. Due to the differences in the approaches of the two countries,²⁴ the Franco-German axis has thus far failed to become a driving force in the area of security and defence, although Germany has continuously underlined its willingness to work with France.

The 2010 Lancaster House Treaties that aimed at intensifying the bilateral security and defence cooperation between France and the United Kingdom, and were clearly presented as being separate from the CSDP framework, were a noteworthy sign of France's disappointment with the EU's security and defence policy outlook and the partnership with Germany.²⁵ The treaties presented a great challenge to Germany, which demanded that they be opened to other interested member states, but in vain.²⁶

Concerned about the erosion of the EU's security and defence policy and its own dwindling influence, Germany attempted to rekindle the member states' interest in the EU framework. In November 2010, the country joined forces with Sweden and published a thought paper on pooling and sharing military capabilities. In the context of the eurozone crisis, the initiative managed to firmly place the concept of pooling and sharing on the EU agenda, but the practical results proved modest and Germany itself was blamed for not investing sufficiently in the implementation of the concept.²⁷

There were also attempts to push the CSDP forward through trilateral cooperation between Germany, France and Poland (together forming the 'Weimar Triangle'). In December 2010, the foreign and defence ministers of the three countries sent a joint letter to High Representative Catherine Ashton, urging her to improve EU-NATO

24 For an overview, see Kunz, *Defending Europe?*, op. cit.

25 M. Muniz, 'France: The Frustrated Leader', in F. Santopinto & M. Price (eds.), *National Visions of EU Defence Policy: Common Denominators and Misunderstandings*, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels, 2013, pp. 6–26.

26 R. Formuszewicz and M. Terlikowski, 'Willing and (un)able. New Defence Policy Guidelines and Reorientation of the Bundeswehr', *PISM Policy Paper* No. 11, The Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw, 2011, pp. 4–5.

27 C. Major and C. Mölling, 'German Defence Policy in 2014 and beyond: Options for Change', *Note du Cerfa* 113, Institut français des relations internationales, Paris, 2014, p. 7.

cooperation, create permanent civil–military planning and conduct capabilities, develop the EU Battlegroups and enhance Europe’s civilian and military capabilities.²⁸ However, the impact of the letter remained limited.

Germany’s position within the EU’s security and defence policy was further compromised by its refusal to support the military intervention in Libya in 2011. Germany’s decision, partly motivated by concerns that a military operation would harm the prospects of the governing parties in crucial regional elections, dashed hopes of joint EU action in the crisis.²⁹ Moreover, it prompted Germany to withdraw its personnel serving in the Mediterranean as part of NATO’s multinational AWACS fleet. This is often seen as having decisively harmed Germany’s reputation as a potential partner in pooling and sharing projects, raising serious questions about the availability of German capabilities in crisis situations.³⁰

While Germany went to some lengths to regain its reputation after the Libya controversy, its cautious attitude towards military CSDP operations continued throughout the term of Chancellor Angela Merkel’s second government, being one of the reasons for the limited EU response to the crisis in Mali. Between 2010 and 2013, the German government was also more concerned about the eurozone crisis than about security and defence matters.

Although security and defence policy did not rank high on the German political agenda in the early 2010s, Merkel’s centre–right government was nevertheless criticised by both the Social Democratic Party and the Greens for its meagre track record in developing the CSDP. In a motion submitted by the Social Democratic Party to the *Bundestag* in October 2011, the government was blamed particularly for its lack of commitment and for its unreliability as a partner.³¹ In the motion, the Social Democrats also presented their own ideas for reinvigorating the EU’s security and defence policy, calling for the establishment of a pioneer group of the Weimar Triangle countries and the Nordic countries, for more pooling and sharing, for a new European

28 Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Ministers of Defense of France, Germany and Poland, Letter to Ms. Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 6 December 2010.

29 See U. Speck, *Pacifism unbound: Why Germany limits EU hard power*, FRIDE Policy Brief no. 75, FRIDE, Madrid, 2011.

30 Drent, *op. cit.*, p. 12; Kunz, *Defending Europe?*, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

31 Deutscher Bundestag, Antrag, Gemeinsame Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik weiterentwickeln und mitgestalten, Drucksache 17/7360.

Security Strategy, for a European White Book on security and defence, for common military planning, and for a common armaments policy. However, security and defence policy played only a marginal role in the debates preceding the elections to the *Bundestag* in September 2013.

A MORE ACTIVE AND MORE RELIABLE GERMANY?

Although little pointed to a change in the German approach towards security and defence policy prior to, or shortly after, the September 2013 elections, some significant developments have taken place since Angela Merkel's third government – a grand coalition between the Christian Democratic Union, the Christian Social Union and the Social Democratic Party – assumed power in December 2013. Of course, many of these steps had been prepared in German administrative and political circles in advance.³²

The most widely noted expression of change in German security and defence policy was a series of coordinated speeches by German foreign policy leaders at the Munich Security Conference in January–February 2014. In their speeches, President Joachim Gauck, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen stressed Germany's responsibility to make a more substantial contribution to preventing and managing crises in and beyond the EU's neighbourhood. While the role of military means was not highlighted by any of the speakers, all three argued that a more active German policy might require greater German military engagement. This is the part of the speeches that has since received most attention, both nationally and internationally, and which spawned an unusually intense foreign, security and defence policy debate in Germany.

In many respects, the debate that started with the speeches in Munich resembles the debates that took place in Germany in the early 1990s. Back then, the reunification and the growing expectations of Germany's partners were used as an argument in favour of taking greater international responsibility and loosening some of Germany's self-imposed constraints in the area of security and defence. At present, Germany is again facing growing expectations: in the course of the eurozone crisis, it has emerged as the EU's political leader, which the other member states turn to for solutions. As in the 1990s, Germany's

³² Major and Mölling, *op. cit.*, pp. 6–7.

‘new power’ is argued to bring a ‘new responsibility’ with it.³³ And again, as in the 1990s, the demands of this new responsibility are juxtaposed with Germany’s anti-militarist tradition.

Much of the debate thus continues to be about striking a balance between Germany’s multilateral orientation and its culture of military restraint. Accordingly, as part of Germany’s new approach towards security and defence policy, the governing parties set up the so called Rühle commission,³⁴ which was tasked with investigating whether and how the German Law on Parliamentary Participation should be adapted to better fit the country’s commitments as part of the existing or developing structures of military integration within NATO and the EU. Although the principal assignment of the Rühle commission was to look into how the extensive rights of the *Bundestag* could be safeguarded against the backdrop of advancing military integration, its establishment also suggests that Germany is more willing than before to address the often-expressed concerns about the country’s reliability as a partner.

The political sensitivity of the matters dealt with by the Rühle commission is demonstrated by the fact that the two opposition parties, the Greens and the Left Party, refused to participate in the commission, fearing that it would be biased in favour of weakening the parliamentary control over the deployment of German troops.³⁵ This reflects the overall mood in Germany, where the response to the government’s push for a more active German role has been mixed, with critics blaming the government for trying to ‘militarise’ German foreign policy.³⁶ In the end, the proposals made by the Rühle commission were not very radical and serve as proof of the continuing centrality of the Law on Parliamentary Participation for German security and defence policy.

The government’s next major national initiative in the field of security and defence will be the publishing of a white book on security and defence. The white book, the first since 2006, is due in the course

33 Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) and the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), *New Power New Responsibility, Elements of a German Foreign and Security Policy for a Changing World*, https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/projekt_papiere/GermanForeignSecurityPolicy_SWP_GMF_2013.pdf, accessed 11 Jan 2016.

34 Named after Volker Rühle, former German defence minister, who was elected as the committee’s chairman.

35 Kunz, *Deploying the Bundeswehr*, op. cit., 2.

36 See Arvid Bell, ‘Die Nebelkerze der internationalen Verantwortung’: Ein Schlagwort, drei Lesearten, *Review 2014 – Aussenpolitik weiter denken* [website], <http://www.aussenpolitik-weiter-denken.de/de/blog/article/die-nebelkerze-von-der-internationalen-verantwortung.html>, accessed 7 Jan 2016.

of 2016 and will ensure that security and defence policy remains on the political agenda.

In line with its rhetoric about a more active approach, the government has also announced that it will increase Germany's defence spending. An initial increase of 1.32 billion euros for the year 2016 was approved by the *Bundestag* in November 2015. In January 2016, Defence Minister von der Leyen upped the ante, proclaiming her plan to spend a total of 130 billion euros on defence equipment by 2030. The plan is partly motivated by the widely publicised problems of the *Bundeswehr*, with equipment either defective or lacking and a shortage of spare parts. At the same time, the plan is overshadowed by a report blaming both the German defence ministry and the German defence industry for repeated failures in past procurement processes.³⁷

A GERMAN PUSH FOR EUROPEAN DEFENCE INTEGRATION

As part of its new take on security and defence policy, Germany has gradually intensified its efforts to advance Europe's defence integration. Promoting defence integration was mentioned by Defence Minister von der Leyen in her Munich speech as a central objective of the country. According to von der Leyen, integration would pave the way for more equal European and transatlantic burden-sharing and thereby strengthen both the EU and NATO.

To date, Germany's focus has largely been on NATO. Germany's main initiative in the field of defence integration, the so-called Framework Nations Concept (FNC), was already launched during the previous government's term and officially approved at the NATO summit in Wales in 2014. The idea of the Framework Nations Concept is that bigger states with a broader range of military capabilities, like Germany, act as the backbones of multinational military clusters, allowing the smaller states within the clusters to concentrate on a more limited set of capabilities. This way, the clusters as a whole should be able to preserve a wider variety of capabilities than the individual member states alone, despite the limits imposed by the current economic conditions.

37 Christian Mölling, 'Germany's Defence Budget Increase: Analytically Wrong, but Politically Right', *Transatlantic Take*, *The German Marshall Fund of the United States* [website], 28 January 2016, <http://www.gmfus.org/blog/2016/01/28/germany%E2%80%99s-defense-budget-increase-analytically-wrong-politically-right>, accessed 2 Feb 2016.

In addition to presenting the Framework Nations Concept, Germany has pushed forward its bilateral cooperation with individual member states, especially France, the Netherlands and Poland. A symbolically significant step was the full integration of the 11th Dutch Airmobile Brigade in the German Rapid Forces Division in June 2014. Unlike France and the UK, Germany plans to embed the different forms of bilateral cooperation and integration into a broader European framework, viewing them as the nucleus of a more integrated European defence. In this sense, Germany strives to 'lead by example'.

While NATO is Germany's primary framework for defence integration, the country has continued to express strong support for the EU's security and defence policy as well. When the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, proposed the establishment of a European army in March 2015, the response by the German government was very positive, with Defence Minister von der Leyen, Foreign Minister Steinmeier and even Chancellor Merkel affirming Germany's commitment to the idea of a European army as a long-term objective.³⁸

However, in practical terms, the German approach towards the EU's security and defence policy has been less clear. Germany's most concrete recent initiative under the umbrella of the CSDP is the Enable and Enhance Initiative (E2I), which was officially unveiled at the December 2013 European Council meeting on security and defence. The initiative foresees a stronger role for the EU in enhancing the capacity of partner countries and organisations, such as the African Union, to prevent and manage crises on their own. On the one hand, the E2I initiative thus suggests an increasing German interest in responding to crises and conflicts around and beyond the EU's neighbourhood (most notably in Africa), corresponding with the government's rhetoric about Germany bearing more responsibility. On the other hand, the initiative testifies to Germany's continuous unwillingness to be directly involved in combat.³⁹ It is thus in line with Germany's traditional idea of the CSDP as a framework for non-combat or low-intensity operations. At the 2013 security and defence summit, Germany also presented ideas to make the EU Battlegroups more flexible and more civilian in nature.⁴⁰

38 Gotkowska, *op. cit.*

39 Henning Riecke, 'Germany's Tough Hike from Summit to Summit', *Dossier Stratégique: Sécurité globale et surprises stratégiques en Europe: Les Répercussions sur l'OTAN et l'UE*, La letter de l'IRSEM, N°8, Ministère de la Défense, IRSEM, Paris, 2014.

40 *Ibid.*

Ahead of the European Council of June 2015, the defence ministers of France, Germany and Poland voiced their intention to make defence a priority within the EU, reiterating the main objectives set by the summit of December 2013, that is, the need to jointly develop Europe's military capabilities, strengthen Europe's defence industrial base and enhance the effectiveness and visibility of the CSDP. As in 2010, the three countries also sent a joint letter to the EU's High Representative, making some general proposals in view of the June summit.⁴¹ However, in the end, the June 2015 European Council was largely hijacked by other issues and its conclusions regarding security and defence policy turned out to be extremely sparse, diminishing the political impact of the Weimar Triangle venture.

As far as contributions to military operations are concerned, Merkel's third government's approach has so far not been radically different from that of its predecessors. Following the Munich speeches, Germany decided to strengthen its presence in the EU's training mission in Mali, increasing the upper limit of its contingent from 180 to 250. However, Germany's participation in the CSDP operation in the Central African Republic, established in spring 2014, was very limited, with the government committing only transport capacities.⁴² On the other hand, Germany has been one of the strongest supporters of the CSDP operation to combat human trafficking in the Mediterranean.

After France requested the activation of the EU's mutual assistance clause in the wake of the terrorist attacks in Paris, Germany has also tried to heed French calls for more burden-sharing, pledging more soldiers to the UN operation Minusma in Mali and, more controversially, deciding to participate in the air campaign against ISIS in Syria, although not directly performing combat tasks. Germany's recent engagement signals a determination on the part of the government to live up to the ambitions stated in Munich. However, the domestic discussions surrounding the operations also show that the government will have to work hard to mobilise the necessary political support for its more active security and defence policy.

41 'Berlin, Paris und Warschau fordern "Europa der Verteidigung"', EurActiv [website], 31 March 2015, <http://www.euractiv.de/sections/eu-aussenpolitik/berlin-paris-und-warschau-fordern-europa-der-verteidigung-313388>, accessed 4 Feb 2016.

42 Major and Mölling, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

MORE EUROPE IN SECURITY AND DEFENCE –
BUT WITH WHOM AND TO WHAT END?

As far as Germany's medium- and long-term plans for the EU's security and defence policy are concerned, much remains unclear. However, papers published by the country's main parties, the Christian Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party, give some indication of where Germany is headed. In the face of the ongoing defence budget cuts made in all big EU member states, the Social Democratic Party paper underlines the party's continuous commitment to the goal of Europeanising national military forces, repeating the Social Democrats' earlier calls for a more coordinated approach towards the development and maintenance of European military capabilities.⁴³ Moreover, while emphasising the primacy of NATO for dealing with high-intensity conflicts, the Social Democrats argue that the EU possesses better instruments for dealing with low- and medium-intensity conflicts.

The Christian Democratic Party paper, published in August 2015, takes a somewhat different approach, pleading for the establishment of a European defence union as NATO's European pillar.⁴⁴ According to the Christian Democrats, the defence union would enhance the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and, simultaneously, serve to incorporate the multiple islands of military cooperation and integration across Europe into a single framework, thereby representing a step towards Germany's long-term goal of a European army. The Christian Democrats also highlight Germany's position as Europe's primary economic power and the country's indispensable military capabilities, arguing that Germany should act as a responsible leader within both the EU and NATO.

While the objectives set by the Christian Democratic Party in its paper are more ambitious than those of the Social Democrats, the practical measures proposed by the two parties in their papers are very similar and can thus be expected to feature, in one form or another, on the German CSDP agenda in the coming years. These measures include the establishment of an operational headquarters for the EU, an independent Council formation for the EU's defence ministers

43 SPD Bundestagsfraktion: Arbeitsgruppe Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik, *Positionspapier zur Europäisierung der Streitkräfte*, 2014.

44 *Auf dem Weg zur Europäischen Verteidigungsunion*, Beschluss des Bundesfachausschusses Außen-, Sicherheits-, Entwicklungs- und Menschenrechtspolitik unter der Leitung von Roderick Kiesewetter MdB sowie des Bundesfachausschusses Europapolitik der CDU Deutschlands unter der Leitung von Elmar Brok MDEP vom 20. August 2015.

and a fully-fledged committee for security and defence affairs within the European Parliament.

Both the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats also speak in favour of drafting a European white book for security and defence to complement the strategic document that is being prepared by High Representative Federica Mogherini. There is also substantial interest in Germany in the instrument of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), which has so far remained fully unused.⁴⁵ Permanent Structured Cooperation could represent a further vehicle alongside the Framework Nations Concept and different bilateral formats for advancing European defence integration.

In order to realise these plans, Germany will, however, need strong and willing partners. Although the relationship with France has not been without its problems, the country remains Germany's most important partner, followed by Poland and the Netherlands. The crucial question in view of the EU's security and defence policy is whether Germany's current ideas will be of interest to these countries and other potential partner countries in Europe.

One of the potential difficulties is that, as in the past, Germany puts considerable weight on the establishment of common structures ('leadership by institutions'), but reflects little upon how, and to what end, these structures are to be used. Apart from stressing the importance of the comprehensive approach and hinting that a stronger CSDP could benefit the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, the papers by the Christian Democrats and the Social Democratic Party, for example, offer little in terms of strategic thinking. No ideas are presented about what kind of a role the CSDP or Europe's more integrated military capabilities should have in dealing with the various conflicts in and beyond the EU's neighbourhood or in the overall context of the EU's foreign and security policy.

At the moment, it seems questionable whether Germany's idea of military integration as such will suffice to convince France – with its concerns about African security and terrorism – and Poland – fearful of Russian military activity – of the need to substantially advance the CSDP or the German plans for defence integration. Of course, Germany's upcoming white book could shed more light on Germany's strategic visions and help in formulating a more compelling vision for

45 Apart from the Christian Democrat paper, see also *Verteidigung europäisch gestalten: Deutschland ist der Schlüssel bei der Stärkung kollektiver Sicherheit in Europa* by MPs Roderick Kiesewetter and Dietmar Nietan.

the EU's security and defence policy. Some impulses could also be provided by the ongoing strategic reflection process within the EU, to be completed by June 2016. Additional challenges to Germany's efforts are currently presented by the political weakness of the French government and the outspoken Euroscepticism of the Law and Justice government in Poland.

CONCLUSION

Germany's position as the EU's leading member state has encouraged the German government to initiate a debate which aims at reviewing and, possibly, redefining the balance between the basic determinants of German security and defence policy, anti-militarism and multilateralism. This debate is significant from the point of view of Germany's role in the EU's security and defence policy, as it is linked to Germany's efforts to rebuild its reputation as a reliable partner within the EU and NATO, and to advance Europe's defence integration. However, the outcome of the debate, and of Germany's current initiatives, is still unclear.

Despite the controversial discussions that have been triggered by the government's recent rhetoric and actions, the German electorate seems to agree with the government's argument that Germany should take more international responsibility. A recent survey suggests that two-thirds of Germans are in favour of a more active German role in international politics compared to only 42 per cent in 2012.⁴⁶ The preferred instruments for playing such a role are diplomacy, development cooperation and economic sanctions, but the majority of the population accepts military operations and military cooperation as possible means as well. Even more strikingly, the majority of the population now also supports increases in German defence spending. The changes in public opinion could give an additional boost for Germany's more active role in security and defence policy. Despite these changes, it is unlikely that Germany will radically break

46 Data from the as yet unpublished annual survey *Sicherheits- und verteidigungspolitisches Meinungsklima in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* of the Zentrum für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften der Bundeswehr (ZMSBW) can be found in T. Wiegold, Mehr internationales Engagement Deutschlands gewünscht – aber vor allem Diplomatie, Augengeradeaus Blog [website], 15 November 2015, <http://augengeradeaus.net/2015/11/mehr-internationales-engagement-deutschlands-gewuenscht-aber-vor-allem-diplomatie/>, accessed 21 Dec. 2015.

with its anti-militarist past, as too bold steps in security and defence policy could easily provoke a backlash in the population. It also remains to be seen whether security and defence policy will be debated in the campaigns preceding the *Bundestag* election of 2017 and to what extent the election will impact this policy field.

As far as the concrete development of the EU's security and defence policy is concerned, Germany's position seems somewhat unclear. So far, Germany has concentrated on furthering European defence integration under the umbrella of NATO and in bilateral settings. Nevertheless, recent proposals by Germany's governing parties suggest that Germany sees the EU framework as an additional vehicle for realising its objective of a more integrated European defence. Germany is also likely to propose other measures to strengthen the EU's security and defence policy. However, a major challenge for the country will be finding like-minded partners to work with.

3

3. Germany and the European Neighbourhood Policy: Balancing stability and democracy in a ring of fire¹

Anna Lena Kirch

In 2004, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was launched to create ‘a ring of friends’ at the external EU border. From today’s perspective, the policy has failed. The EU’s Eastern and Southern neighbourhood is destabilised by civil war, regional conflicts and terrorist networks, fuelling irregular migration to the EU and exacerbating threats from organized crime and terrorism. Like many other EU member states, Germany has come to feel the consequences of the many crises in the European neighbourhood, be they the impact of the war in Ukraine on Europe’s security order, which has revitalized the debate on German responsibility and leadership, or the huge number of refugees from the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa) who hope to find asylum in Germany. Achieving an effective and efficient ENP policy that reduces security risks for Germany and the EU and improves living conditions in the ENP countries is thus at the core of German national interest.

Germany’s economic and political strength, which has proved relatively resilient to the financial and economic crisis in Europe, has put the country in a default leadership position on many ENP-related aspects which it had left to EU member states like Poland, Sweden, France or Italy and the European Commission in previous years. Up to the Arab Spring and the Ukraine crisis, Germany’s role in the ENP was limited to a few initiatives, mainly related to the Eastern neighbourhood. In the recent, more politicized and crisis-driven context, Germany has engaged more visibly in the conceptional ENP review, reinforced

¹ This article is to a large extent based on confidential interviews with German and EU officials and policy analysts, which were conducted between June and December 2015.

bilateral humanitarian assistance and dialogue in the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood and, together with France, has taken on a leading position in the crisis management with Russia and Ukraine.

Apart from tackling pressing security needs and stabilizing the European neighbourhood, German policy-making on the ENP has always been driven by economic interests and a moral responsibility to promote European norms and values. Naturally, the goals of security, economic welfare and democracy have been in conflict in Germany as in many other EU member states, the main question being how to apply conditionality in order to best achieve the intended results. The numerous failed democratic transformation efforts in the East as well as the South have led to a more pragmatic approach in most EU member states, which has been confirmed by the results of the 2015 ENP review process. This chapter will, firstly, outline Germany's main initiatives and positions on the ENP and, secondly, elaborate on the determinant factors of Germany's approach and its current role in the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood.

FROM RESTRAINT TO CRISIS-DRIVEN LEADERSHIP

Germany's preoccupation with the East

For historical, geopolitical and economic reasons, Germany was a key driver of the Eastern EU enlargement that took place in 2004 and shifted the external EU border towards Russia and Eastern European countries like Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. Even prior to the big enlargement round in 2004, the question on how to stabilize and build closer ties with the countries in the European neighbourhood had triggered a debate among EU and future EU members. Poland led an Eastern coalition together with Lithuania, Slovakia, Hungary, Sweden, Austria and Germany, which shared the conviction that, going forward, the Eastern European countries deserved special attention and support from the EU.² With the considerable widening of the EU and stretching of EU institution capacity in sight, Germany and the majority of the 'old' EU member states saw a strong need for political and institutional accommodation to the new size and heterogeneity of the EU. Germany has thus welcomed the idea of offering countries in the European neighbourhood incentives similar

2 K. Böttger, *Die Entstehung und Entwicklung der Europäischen Nachbarschaftspolitik: Akteure und Koalitionen*, Nomos, Baden-Baden, 2010.

to those in EU accession negotiations but without an automatic EU membership perspective – “sharing everything with the Union but institutions” as Romano Prodi, former President of the European Commission, put it in 2002.³

The fact that the first position papers on a common neighbourhood policy were only targeted towards Eastern Europe raised strong opposition from Southern EU member states, mainly France, Spain and Italy. They feared that the EU would allocate too many resources to the East and underestimate the strategic importance of the Southern Mediterranean. In order to address those concerns, the ENP was extended to the Southern Mediterranean and finally included 16 countries⁴ when adopted by the European Council in June 2004.

Even though Germany has supported the ‘Eastern coalition’ in their promotion of a European policy that would focus solely on the Eastern neighbourhood, since the early 2000s Germany has left the actual policy entrepreneurship mostly to the Visegrád countries (Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary), Lithuania and Sweden.⁵ This approach of outsourcing leadership on the East to other countries and the European Commission also enabled Germany to preserve its good diplomatic and trade relations with Russia. The first German initiative on the issue was launched in 2006 by the Federal Foreign Office. The ‘ENP Plus’ initiative aimed to fill the perceived security policy vacuum between the EU and Russia, which had been reaffirmed in the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine. German policy-makers differentiated between the term ‘European neighbours’, referring to the countries in the East, and ‘neighbours of the EU’, referring to countries in the Southern Mediterranean region, in order to justify the claim that the Eastern neighbourhood deserved greater attention. In order to provide this attention and also to factor Russia in, Germany proposed a regional ENP framework for the East, complementing the bilateral ENP dimension. The initiative failed at the time but many aspects could be found in the subsequent Polish–Swedish Eastern Partnership

3 European Commission, *A Wider Europe – A Proximity Policy as the key to stability*, Speech by Romano Prodi, 5–6 December 2002, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-02-619_en.htm, accessed 13 October 2015.

4 The 16 countries are Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Palestinian territories, Syria, Tunisia, and Ukraine.

5 A. Gawrich & M. Stepanov, ‘German Foreign Policy toward the Visegrad Countries: Patterns of Integration in Central Europe’, *DGAPanalyse*, no. 17, September 2014, <https://dgap.org/de/article/getFullPDF/25926>, accessed 15 August 2015.

(EaP) initiative in 2008 that was supported by Germany, after initial reluctance, and adopted by the European Council in March 2009.

With the onset of the Ukraine crisis and Russia's annexation of Crimea and consequent violation of international law, Germany has taken centre stage in the EU's relationship with its Eastern neighbourhood. It became obvious that the EaP approach had failed and that Germany was misguided by the assumption that the EU-Russian Partnership for Modernization would enable a peaceful convergence between the EU and Russia. Due to Germany's economic and political strength as well as its good diplomatic relations with the Kremlin, the German government adopted a default leadership position in trying to resolve the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which is a manifestation of a far-reaching clash between Russia and the EU. Germany bolstered support for Ukraine, forged an EU consensus on EU sanctions against Russia and facilitated dialogue between Russia and Ukraine, together with France.

Increased German engagement in the Southern neighbourhood

While Germany has only modestly, but nonetheless constantly, been involved in the policy discourse on defining an EU approach towards the Eastern neighbourhood, its engagement in the Southern neighbourhood was for a long time reduced to bilateral diplomatic, trade and energy relations with a strong focus on the conflict between Israel and Palestine. German governments had no strategic interest in the region as a whole and left the policy entrepreneur and leadership role to France, Italy and Spain, which have close economic and diplomatic ties to the Maghreb countries.⁶ Germany was, for instance, not intensely involved in conceptualizing the Barcelona Process, initiated by Spain in 1995, with the exception of declaring its preference for trade liberalization and the inclusion of civil society. This German inaction at the EU level changed with the French initiative in 2007 for a Mediterranean Union outside of the EU legal framework. French President Nicolas Sarkozy envisioned that the Southern Mediterranean Union would only include Mediterranean riparian states, thereby excluding Central and Northern EU countries, while using EU funds to finance the initiative. Chancellor Angela Merkel and Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier strongly disapproved of this exclusive approach because they were afraid it might increasingly

6 I. Schäfer, 'Germany's Mediterranean Policy', in I. Schäfer & J. R. Henry eds., *Mediterranean Policies from Above and Below*, Nomos, Baden-Baden, 2009, pp. 111–136.

disconnect Germany from the region and exclude it from potential energy and trade deals. Before the German Bundestag, Merkel said that “there must not be a Europe of private functions” and “If there are group-specific co-operations within the EU, those have to be open to all member states”.⁷ Germany succeeded in its opposition. The Union for the Mediterranean was finally launched as an EU-led project which quickly lost momentum.⁸

A second key event in the Southern Mediterranean that shifted Germany’s focus to the region was the Arab Spring in 2011 and consecutive civil wars in Syria and Libya – raising awareness of risks and threats spilling over from Northern Africa and the Middle East to Europe. After the protests and uprisings in the region, Germany has been among the first EU member states to support the democratic transition movements in Tunisia and Egypt both financially and rhetorically.⁹ The Foreign Office concluded transformation partnerships with both countries and established government consultations at a bilateral level. At the same time, Berlin called for and supported a joint EU response. With the refugee crisis unfolding in 2015, Germany has further increased its engagement in the Southern Mediterranean in order to avoid further domestic and intra-European divisions, tackle the root causes of irregular migration to Europe and shift part of the crisis management burden onto the Southern neighbourhood. Merkel’s visit to Turkey in order to gain President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s support in containing the refugee crisis and Steinmeier’s trip to the Middle East to look for common ground with states like Iran, Jordan and Saudi Arabia on how to resolve the civil war in Syria, both in October 2015, can be seen as initial signs pointing in that direction.

Call for institutional and strategic reform

In the context of several crises, conflicts and wars destabilizing Europe and its neighbourhood, the Foreign Ministers of Germany, France and Poland presented their assessment of the ENP in its current form in a joint Weimar Triangle statement on April 1, 2014 and thereby

7 Euractiv, ‘Sarkozy’s Mediterranean Union plans irk Merkel’, 13 December 2007, <http://www.euractiv.com/future-eu/sarkozy-mediterranean-union-plans-irk-merkel/article-169080>, accessed 11 December 2015.

8 E. Ratka, *Deutschlands Mittelmeerpolitik: Selektive Europäisierung von der Mittelmeerunion bis zum Arabischen Frühling*, Nomos, Baden-Baden, 2014.

9 I. Schäfer, ‘Nordafrika-Politik zwischen Idealen und Interessen: Deutschland und Frankreich müssen ihre Unterstützung besser aufeinander abstimmen’, *DGAPanalyse*, no. 1, March 2013, <https://dgap.org/de/article/getFullPDF/23459>, accessed 23 September 2015.

triggered a new ENP review process in 2015, led by the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission.¹⁰ In the course of the ENP review process, the Federal Foreign Office remained the main driver of the German position on the ENP while the Federal Chancellery took the lead on more politicized issues like the German approach towards Russia and Ukraine or the refugee crisis. Accordingly, the German discourse that focused explicitly on ENP instruments was kept at a rather technical and bureaucratic level, enriched by policy recommendations from the major think tanks, universities, and political and private foundations. The broader public and political debate touched upon certain aspects of the ENP like the progress of the EaP frontrunners – Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia – with regard to the implementation of their Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs) or the question of whether Ukraine should have an EU membership perspective but, in general, political parties and journalists have preferred to focus on specific crises, conflicts and threats like the Ukraine and refugee crisis or ISIL.

The positioning by the Foreign Office addressed five major points. Firstly, Germany has promoted a stronger politicization of the ENP, linking the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the ENP more closely and making the ENP Action Plans more strategic and flexible. Even in 2013, the German government supported the idea of putting the ENP under the direct control of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. This position acknowledges the failure of the originally envisioned transformative ENP approach and expresses the perceived need for a relative prioritization of security and stability over democratic transformation without fully letting go of the value dimension. Secondly, Germany is calling for stronger differentiation of ENP policies in the form of more tailor-made, bilateral approaches towards individual ENP partner countries in order to accommodate different levels of ambition and capacities to reform. Nonetheless, Germany recognizes the necessity for an overall ENP framework that keeps the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood under one roof and works against the image of ‘cherry picking’, which Germany wants to avoid at all costs. How, and if, a balance between strategic business, energy and security interests,

10 Federal Foreign Office, *Building a stronger compact with our neighbours: A new momentum for the European Neighbourhood Policy – Statement by the Foreign Ministers of the Weimar Triangle*, 1 April 2014, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Infoservice/Presse/Meldungen/2014/140401-Erkl_Weimar.html?nn=473058, accessed 15 October 2015.

on the one hand, and value promotion, on the other, can be struck which is acceptable to all parties involved remains to be seen.

German policy-makers, thirdly, see a need for stronger inclusion of the 'neighbours of the neighbours'. From the German perspective, only a stronger recognition of geographical links and awareness of power equilibriums can result in efficient policies leading to more stability in the European neighbourhood. Fourthly, aware of past incidents of democratic backsliding in Moldova or in the Arab Spring countries, Germany has admonished a stricter adherence to conditionality with regard to the allocation of financial resources from the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) and the implementation of Association Agreements, DCFTAs and mobility partnerships. In the past, the mere announcement of reforms was often sufficient to trigger more financial or technical support, which weakened or even prevented sustainable reforms. Aware of the EU's limited leverage, Germany has particularly supported the idea of strengthening ownership of reforms and transformation efforts in individual ENP countries. As a consequence, Germany has refused to give the EaP frontrunners, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, additional cooperative or financial incentives to stick to their reform path, arguing that the "more for more" approach has shown its limitations and cannot replace the drive for change by the political elites within the EaP countries. As a consequence, German policy-makers have, fifthly, renewed their assessment that the ENP was no instrument of enlargement policy. At the EaP Summit in Riga in May 2015 Chancellor Merkel refused to reassure EaP countries with a clear EU membership perspective, which other EU member states like Poland or Sweden were pressing for.¹¹ Among the German political parties this stance has mostly been a consensus, with only the Greens calling for a membership perspective for EaP countries.¹²

The German government has been very satisfied with the results of the review process that the European Commission and the European

11 Euractiv, 'Merkel tells Eastern partners not to expect too much', 22 May 2015, <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/europes-east/merkel-tells-eastern-partners-not-expect-too-much-314788>, accessed 15 August 2015.

12 M. Sarrazin, 'Die Ukraine-Krise: EU Perspektive und Transformationsagenda zum Erhalt der europäischen Friedensordnung', *Journal of International Peace and Organization*, vol. 89, no. 1-2, 2014, pp. 23-29.

External Action Service (EEAS) published in November 2015.¹³ The Joint Communication outlines the vision for a new political, pragmatic, flexible and differentiated ENP and meets all of Germany's main priorities and suggestions, albeit to a varying degree. Germany welcomes the announcement to involve EU member states more closely in the shaping of ENP objectives and to replace the ENP Action Plans, which it criticized as being too rigid and unresponsive to short-term developments, with more precise and interest-based Partnership Priorities. Further, the emphasis on an even stronger differentiation of cooperation and association offers is very much compatible with German interests. The principle of taking into consideration and including the "neighbours of the neighbours", however, was not as prominently and broadly represented in the final Communication as Germany had hoped. Some EU member states like Sweden or the Baltics have strongly criticized the idea of giving Russia in particular any kind of influence over EaP issues. Accordingly, the principle was mentioned only with regard to limited policy areas like migration, energy and security.¹⁴ Generally, the German position has been that the ENP does not suffer from bad instruments or procedures, but that existing tools need to be used more coherently.

DETERMINANTS OF THE GERMAN APPROACH TO THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD

Germany's competing role – concepts and interests

Germany's foreign policy in the European neighbourhood and its stance on the ENP have been shaped and influenced by various, partly diverging national interests and concepts of power, which proved to be relatively stable over time. The creation of a secure neighbourhood "as part of an open world order (...)" which allows Germany to reconcile

13 European Commission, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*, 18 November 2015, http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/documents/2015/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf, accessed 20 November 2015.

14 European Commission, *Joint Consultation Paper: Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy*, 4 March, <http://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/consultation/consultation.pdf>, accessed 18 November 2015.

interests with fundamental values”¹⁵ has been a core German interest since the end of the Cold War and drove German support for the launch of the ENP. Federal President Joachim Gauck addressed this stable pillar of German foreign policy in his speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2014: “Germany derives its most important foreign policy goal in the 21st century from all of this: preserving this order and system and making them fit for the future”. Beyond the perceived threats from terrorism, organized crime and irregular immigration, the preference and perceived need for a politically and legally stable neighbourhood is closely linked with Germany’s economic strength being based on its status as an export nation. In 2014, Germany was the third biggest global export power after China and the US.¹⁶ Germany’s strong trade performance relies on stable and widening export markets as well as diversified energy imports. Currently, Germany meets around two-thirds of its energy consumption through imports. The most important natural resources in this regard are fossil fuels, mainly natural gas and crude oil.¹⁷ Due to its strong dependence on Russia concerning the supply of natural gas and crude oil, Germany is interested in diversifying its transport and provision structures, also towards the European neighbourhood.

The second core interest in the ENP is the promotion of European norms and values. This aspiration to advance human rights and democracy is based on a feeling of moral obligation deeply ingrained in Germany’s post World War II identity, and resonates well with Germany’s preference for exerting soft power and its hesitancy over the use of military power and the deployment of German troops abroad – its abstention from the vote on the UN Libya resolution in 2011 being just one example.¹⁸ Due to this mix of Germany’s strong dependence on a rules-based and stable international system in order to maintain the

15 Bundespräsidialamt, “Germany’s role in the world: Reflections on responsibility, norms and alliances”, Speech by Federal President Joachim Gauck at the opening of the Munich Security Conference on 31 January 2014 in Munich, http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Reden/2014/01/140131-Muenchner-Sicherheitskonferenz-Englisch.pdf?__blob=publicationFile, accessed 20 September 2015.

16 Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie, *Fakten zum deutschen Außenhandel 2014*, May 2015, <http://www.bmwi.de/BMWi/Redaktion/PDF/F/fakten-zum-deutschen-aussenhandel-2013,property=pdf,bereich=bmwi2012,sprache=de,rwb=true.pdf>, accessed 15 August 2015.

17 European Commission, ‘EU Energy Markets in 2014’, 2014, http://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/documents/2014_energy_market_en.pdf, accessed 15 August 2015.

18 H. Kundnani, ‘Germany as a Geo-economic Power’, *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2011, pp. 31–45.

strong German performance and the focus on soft power instruments, Germany has often been labelled a civilian power. This German approach has been criticized by its European partners and has been up for debate in the domestic discourse, with prominent German politicians questioning the German default position of avoiding military engagement.¹⁹ At the Munich Security Conference in late January and early February 2014, the Federal President, Joachim Gauck, the Minister of Defence, Ursula von der Leyen, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, all emphasized that, going forward, Germany would need to deliver on a more proactive foreign and defence policy and live up to its international responsibility.²⁰ Defence Minister von der Leyen announced that “the Federal Government is prepared to enhance our international responsibility”²¹, while Foreign Minister Steinmeier admonished that “a culture of restraint must not become a German culture of remaining on the sidelines”.²² The decision to support France militarily after the terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015 by joining in the international coalition of states fighting against ISIS gives substance to the announcements from the Munich Security Conference and can be interpreted as a step towards Germany acting as a more reliable and solidary partner in European security and defence policy.²³

In the past, the German interest in a stable and secure neighbourhood and the interest to promote European values have often been at odds and produced contradictory policies at the domestic and EU level. While the German government has, on the one hand, criticized the EU’s lack of adherence to conditionality, which undermined the ENP’s success in promoting European values, it has, on the other hand, not been willing to subordinate its bilateral foreign policy to a joint EU

19 T. Bagger, ‘The German Moment in a Fragile World’, *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2015, pp. 25–35.

20 R. Kempin, ‘From reluctance to policy – A new German stance on CSDP?’, 28 January 2015, <http://www.europeangeostrategy.org/2015/01/reluctance-policy-new-german-stance-cdsp/>, accessed 15 September 2015.

21 Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, ‘Speech by the Federal Minister of Defense, Dr. Ursula von der Leyen, on the Occasion of the 50th Munich Security Conference’, 31. January 2014, https://www.securityconference.de/fileadmin/msc_/2014/Reden/2014-01-31-Speech-MinDef_von_der_Leyen-MuSeCo.pdf, accessed 15 September 2015.

22 Translation from German into English. The original German phrase can be found at Auswärtiges Amt, ‘Rede von Außenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier anlässlich der 50. Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz’, 1 February 2014, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Infoservice/Presse/Reden/2014/140201-BM_M%C3%BCSiKo.html, accessed 15 September 2015.

23 See also chapters by Nicole Koenig and Tuomas Iso-Markku in this report.

policy agenda. Like other EU member states Germany has in the past upheld diplomatic and trade relations with autocratic regimes in the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood without applying conditionality – for instance with Azerbaijan, Algeria, Morocco, Libya or Egypt.

The effectiveness of the ENP has suffered from such inconsistencies between bilateral policies conducted by the EU member states and overall ENP objectives pursued at the EU level. A prominent example of a conflict between transformative ENP objectives and bilateral politics and policies has been the approach of EU member states towards Southern neighbourhood countries before the Arab Spring in 2011. Many EU member states – mainly the Southern EU members but also Germany – have prioritized energy security, stability and containment of migration and terrorism over democratic values and human rights when supporting autocratic regimes, for instance in Libya, Algeria, Egypt or Tunisia.²⁴ They changed their approach only after the Arab Spring, with Germany being one of the first EU countries to support transformative opposition movements in Egypt or Tunisia. This polyphony of action has lowered the appeal of the policy – especially with regard to Southern neighbourhood states where EU membership is not an option and other powers like Iran, Saudi Arabia or China have provided stronger incentives.

With the failure of democratic transformation in the Southern Mediterranean after the Arab Spring, the ongoing Ukraine crisis and the unfolding refugee crisis, which is being fuelled by civil wars, terrorist networks and poverty in the Middle East and North Africa, the focus of EU foreign policy has shifted considerably towards the stability dimension of the ENP, not only in Germany but in the majority of EU member states.²⁵ This shift has found expression in the ENP review, stating that “the new ENP will take stabilisation as its main political priority”. In the German discourse, the conviction has prevailed that the value dimension in the ENP must not be given up and that, at the same time, the refugee crisis or other challenges to national and EU security require pragmatic responses and collaboration with strategically important neighbour states or other regional actors

24 A. Möller, *Bewährungsprobe für das normative Projekt der EU*, in: J. Braml, W. Merkel & E. Sandschneider (Ed.), *Außenpolitik mit Autokratien*, *Jahrbuch Internationale Politik*, Band 30., De Gruyter, Berlin, 2014, pp. 287–292; Ratka, loc. cit.

25 Ratka, loc. cit.

– even if they do not share and implement Western values.²⁶ Dialogue with Russia on Ukraine and cooperation with Turkey, Egypt or Algeria on the refugee crisis and regional security questions can be cited as examples. It's not a 'neither – nor' approach but a balancing act which is affirmed by the general realization that the more ambitious, transformative approach of the ENP which was elaborated in the course of the 2011 ENP review had failed and needed a reality check. However, reservations on the scaling down of ambition concerning the promotion of European values were voiced by German opposition parties in the Left party spectrum. The Green political group in the German Bundestag, for instance, criticized Germany's prioritization of stability over democracy and human rights in the Southern neighbourhood after the failure of the Arab Spring movements, pointing to Chancellor Merkel's "inconsistent" policies in the region: for instance Merkel's meeting with the autocratic President of Egypt, Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, on the one hand, while trying to facilitate diplomatic solutions in Libya, on the other. The Greens have argued that sustainable stability in the region can only be achieved with regimes adhering to the rule of law and human rights, and the inclusion of civil society in the process.²⁷

The increasing flows of irregular migration to the EU have further politicized and strained the EU discourse considerably, with Germany and many Southern EU member states calling for more solidarity within the EU – for instance in the form of binding quota systems to relocate refugees – and many Central and Eastern European states refusing such obligatory mechanisms. But the refugee crisis has also had a very strong effect on the domestic level by challenging the power equilibrium in German politics, the conflict lines running between the municipal and the federal level as well as between different political parties. While Merkel continues to refuse binding upper limits for refugees arriving in Germany, large parts of her own party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), and even more from the CDU's sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), have fiercely challenged her liberal course in the refugee crisis. Vocal protest against the course of the Federal Government has also come from the federal state and municipal level. In October 2015,

26 F.-W. Steinmeier, 'Vorwort von Bundesaußenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier', in: J. Braml, W. Merkel & E. Sandschneider (Ed.), *Außenpolitik mit Autokratien, Jahrbuch Internationale Politik*, Band 30. De Gruyter, Berlin, 2014, pp. 1–7.

27 Deutscher Bundestag, *Kein Frieden und keine Stabilität ohne Menschenrechte und Rechtsstaatlichkeit – Für eine weitsichtige europäische Nachbarschaftspolitik gegenüber den Staaten Nordafrikas*, Drucksache 18/6551, <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/18/065/1806551.pdf>, accessed 15 November 2015.

215 mayors from the federal state North Rhine–Westphalia, for instance, addressed their concerns about the government’s management of the refugee crisis in a letter to Merkel, arguing that municipalities were overburdened and resources depleted.²⁸ In this context, it is to be expected that the EU and Germany will increase their cooperation with the Southern neighbours on mobility and external border control, acknowledging the fact that the EU currently depends more on its neighbours than vice versa when it comes to migration, terrorism or energy security.²⁹ Merkel’s visit to Turkey and Steinmeier’s Middle East tour in October 2015 point in that direction.

Germany’s special relationship with the East

Even though the strategic importance of the Southern Mediterranean has increased with the Arab Spring and the refugee crisis, German policy-makers are bilaterally still more engaged in the Eastern neighbourhood. However, with regard to the ENP, the official German position is that the comprehensive, geographically balanced framework approach should be maintained. Major reasons for the overall prioritization of the East are, on the one hand, the geographical proximity facilitating joint security interests, trade and people-to-people contacts, as well as a common history and perceived cultural proximity, which is especially strong in the former Eastern part of Germany.³⁰

However, the main factor shaping Germany’s approach towards the EU’s Eastern neighbourhood and the EaP is its ambivalent relationship with Russia. German policy-makers have repeatedly stressed that Russia is part of the Eastern neighbourhood even though the country chose not to be included in the ENP framework. The annexation of Crimea and the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 in Eastern Ukraine considerably strained the Russian–German partnership. Public opinion deteriorated and the German government, backed by German business associations, has been a strong supporter of strict sanctions

28 Zeit Online, ‘215 Bürgermeister schreiben Brandbrief an Merkel’, 21 October 2015, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2015-10/fluechtlingskrise-angela-merkel-brief-buergermeister-ueberlastung>, accessed 2 December 2015.

29 C. Achraimer, ‘Mittelmeer–Politik auf Abwegen: Die EU muss sich vom Konditionalitätsprinzip verabschieden’, *DGAPstandpunkt*, no. 1, January 2014, <https://dgap.org/de/think-tank/publikationen/dgapstandpunkt/mittelmeer-politik-auf-abwegen>, accessed 23 September 2015.

30 H. Kundnani, ‘Leaving the West Behind’, *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/western-europe/leaving-west-behind>, accessed 20 September 2015.

against Russia.³¹ At the same time, aware of the negative outlook for a prosperous and stable Eastern neighbourhood vis-à-vis Russia, the German government has made a great effort to sustain dialogue with Russia, while at the same time insisting that the annexation of Crimea and the invasion of Eastern Ukraine have violated international law and cannot be tolerated.

The support of the ‘neighbours of the neighbours’ principle in the ENP review represents the German position that the ENP needs to be more sensitive to regional dynamics and foster intra-regional cooperation and cohesion. With regard to the EaP, Germany has therefore repeatedly and in all official statements on the Partnership emphasized that the neighbourhood can only be stabilized together with Russia and not against it, while at the same time clarifying that Russia should not be given any veto power on EaP decisions. In the run-up to the Riga Summit in May 2015 Chancellor Angela Merkel said that “The Eastern Partnership is not directed against anyone and particularly not against Russia”.³² Along the same lines, Germany has explicitly welcomed the trilateral talks between the EU, Russia and Ukraine, which have been launched in order to implement the Association Agreement and DCFTA with Ukraine. However, the Federal Foreign Office does not consider the format a blueprint that should be applied to all Eastern partners. In the long term, the German government is also in favour of looking for opportunities to reconcile the Eurasian Economic Union with the European Economic Area in such a way that the EaP countries do not need to choose between trade with Russia and closer association with the EU.

While Germany does not see a long-term solution for a stable and prosperous neighbourhood without Russia, Merkel and Steinmeier have at the same time tried to reassure the EaP countries of the EU’s support in shielding them from Russian pressure. Notwithstanding the increase in EU support for Ukraine, Germany has boosted its bilateral financial aid and technical assistance to the country. At the Riga Summit in May 2015, Merkel acknowledged and emphasized the progress made by Ukraine and Georgia on their way to Visa Liberalization. She has, however, been unwilling to offer the EaP

31 Zeit Online, *Mehrheit der Deutschen sieht Russland als Gefahr*, 16 April 2014, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2014-04/deutsche-russland-allensbach-umfrage>, accessed 15 August 2015.

32 The Federal Government, Government statement in the German Bundestag: “The Eastern Partnership is more important than ever”, 21 May 2015, http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/EN/Artikel/2015/05_en/2015-05-21-regierungserklaerung_en.html.

frontrunners Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova additional financial or cooperative incentives to continue along their reform path. Looking at the corruption crisis and democratic backsliding in Moldova, Germany has argued that the “more for more” approach has proved its limitations and cannot replace the EaP countries’ willingness to pursue sustainable reforms.

Moreover, Merkel has refused to give the associated EaP states an EU membership perspective as the German Green party or EU member states like Poland, Sweden or the Baltics have argued for.³³ She thereby reaffirmed the German conception of the ENP as an instrument of *Ordnungspolitik* and *soft power*, “not an instrument of EU enlargement policy”,³⁴ complying with the German conviction that stability and democracy can be enhanced by people-to-people contacts, trade and political cooperation. Correspondingly, instruments like Association Agreements, DCFTAs and mobility partnerships don’t pose any major challenges to German public opinion, unlike military engagements.

Developments since 2013 have shown that the ambitions of EaP states towards association with the EU vary greatly and require diverging responses that are at the same time in the interests of the EU and the EaP countries. In this regard, German policy-makers have argued that – without fully uncoupling the value dimension from the EaP – Armenia, Belarus and Azerbaijan should be offered more flexible and less demanding cooperation formats below the level of Association Agreements. Consequently, the German government supported the launch of negotiations with Armenia on a new framework agreement below the level of an Association Agreement in December 2015 and welcomed the temporary suspension of sanctions against Belarus in October 2015 as a chance to improve relations with the EU – and not leave the countries to Russian influence alone. The question of how minimum requirements for democratization, human rights and the rule of law can be defined for countries like Belarus or Azerbaijan, which have proved unwilling to submit themselves to European conditionality, is not yet resolved, however.

33 M. Sarrazin, ‘Die Ukraine-Krise: EU Perspektive und Transformationsagenda zum Erhalt der europäischen Friedensordnung’, *Journal of International Peace and Organization*, vol. 89, no. 1–2, 2014, pp. 23–29.

34 The Federal Government, *loc. cit.*

Germany's balanced leadership approach

In the course of recent years and months, Germany has assumed a leadership role in ENP matters, which combines three elements. Facing the crises in Ukraine, Northern Africa and the Middle East, Germany scaled up its engagement in ENP matters, mainly due to a lack of alternative actors that were able or willing to step in. This applied mainly to the immediate crisis management in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, as well as Russia and the EU in broader terms. Traditional European leading powers in foreign and security policy like France, the UK or Poland have either been politically and economically weakened by the eurozone crisis and the broader political crisis taking hold of Europe, or were not accepted as an equal partner by Russia.

Due to a lack of intra-European cohesion, EU institutions were not strong and united enough to take the lead. On top of that, Russia has considered the EU a conflict party which has been trying to expand its sphere of influence by offering closer political and economic association to Ukraine and other Eastern neighbours. Germany, represented by Angela Merkel, however, has had the political capital – credibility, experience and relevant networks – and weight to facilitate dialogue between Russia and Ukraine, on the one hand, and to forge consensus on EU-wide sanctions against Russia, on the other hand. Germany has thus successfully exerted ‘leadership by consensus’ in order to provide for a geopolitical context in which ENP instruments and routines can start working again.

A second package of measures can be subsumed under the term ‘leadership by power’. The German government, as well as German organizations, NGOs and businesses have been among the leading actors with regard to bilateral financial and technical assistance to crisis countries like Ukraine, Tunisia and Egypt. With regard to Ukraine, the Federal Government passed an Action Plan with a financial volume of around 700 million euros in 2015, singling out policy areas and specific projects like decentralization, infrastructure, energy efficiency and civil society, through which Germany supports domestic reforms and developments in Ukraine.³⁵ In North Africa and the Middle East, Germany has concluded transformation partnerships in order to support projects related to democracy-building, promotion of the rule of law, business and employment or constitutional reform, to name just a few areas. Since 2011, Germany has supported more than

35 Deutsche Botschaft Kiew, ‘Aktionsplan Ukraine’, 5 June 2015, http://www.kiew.diplo.de/Vertretung/kiew/de/08/03_-_Politik/Aktionsplan2015.html, accessed 15 September 2015.

200 projects in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Jordan and Yemen.³⁶ This boosted engagement has been driven by Germany's tenets of being a civilian power as well as by pragmatic economic and security considerations. Again, Germany could afford financial support more easily than countries like France, Spain or Italy because the German economy and federal budget was less strained by the economic and financial crisis. This economic robustness gave the German government sufficient leeway to act on its moral principles of democracy promotion and development aid. With the refugee crisis escalating and security risks increasingly spilling over from the European neighbourhood, German financial and technical support is likely to remain at a relatively high level in the short and medium term.

The third element of German leadership on the ENP can be labelled 'leadership by institutions'. Germany has been extensively and successfully engaged in the policy discourse on how to reform ENP policies and instruments in order to make them more effective and efficient. The fact that German positions – more politicization, more differentiation, a stronger focus on security and stability – are prominently represented in the Joint Communication following the ENP review process underlines this incidence of policy entrepreneurship.

CONCLUSION

Looking at the development of Germany's role in the ENP, continuity and change can be observed in equal measure. Since the launch of the ENP, German priorities have basically remained the same, with a focus on security, trade liberalization and the promotion of European values. In addition, the basic tension between those German preferences is likely to persist and even to increase in the light of the increasing influx of refugees into the EU. Angela Merkel is confronted with huge pressure from the German federal states and municipalities and especially from the Christian Social Union (CSU), the sister party of Merkel's Christian Democratic Union, to achieve a more balanced distribution of asylum seekers in the EU and to put an upper limit on immigration to Germany. It is therefore foreseeable that the German government will shift its focus in the Southern neighbourhood further

36 Federal Foreign Office, 'Project funding', http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Aussenpolitik/RegionaleSchwerpunkte/NaherMittlererOsten/Umbraeuche_TSP/Projekte/11125_TP_Foerderung_node.html, accessed 15 September 2015.

towards the stability dimension, promoting mobility partnerships including readmission agreements and security sector reforms in ENP countries as well as seeking common ground for cooperation where interests don't converge naturally. The likely result will be a more pragmatic and less value-based approach towards countries in the Southern neighbourhood, flanked by German development aid and the engagement of German civil society organizations.

While German interests and the factors shaping those interests – mainly the strong trade performance and energy dependence – have remained stable, the willingness to act accordingly and take the lead if necessary has increased in recent years. This enhanced unilateral and minilateral German engagement, especially in the Eastern neighbourhood, has to be seen in the context of the current crisis. Germany's political and economic strength and its resilience in the course of the political and economic crises of the EU have pushed the German government to become active when the EU as a whole was challenged by fragmentation, and traditional strong foreign policy actors like France or the UK were too weak or not willing to maintain their high profile unilaterally. At the same time, Germany has always made an effort to embed its actions and positions in a European context in order to avoid the impression of unilateral leadership outside of the EU context. Merkel and Steinmeier therefore chose to act and present their positions in collaboration with European allies like France or Poland, which have been leading powers in conceptualizing the EU's approach to the Southern and Eastern neighbourhood.

Germany's default leadership position in political and economic terms coincides with the domestic discourse in Germany – initiated at the Munich Security Conference in 2014 and pursued in the context of the Review 2014 under the leadership of the Federal Foreign Office – concerning the country's responsibility to preserve or rather re-establish a European and global security order, from which the country has benefited tremendously in the past, not least in economic terms. It remains to be seen whether Germany's increased visibility and engagement in aiming to reform the ENP, and helping to stabilize the Eastern neighbourhood by diplomatic and economic means, represents a change of mindset, or whether it is solely attributable to the lack of alternatives in a situation of crisis.

Crisis Management

4

4. Germany's role in Libya and Syria: From restraint to responsibility

Nicole Koenig

Since 2011, Libya and Syria have found themselves in a state of intermittent or perpetual civil war. The repercussions in terms of terrorism, migration and organised crime have increasingly been felt throughout the region and within the EU. Parts of Syria and Libya have fallen to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). A series of ISIS-linked terrorist attacks in Europe, culminating in the tragic Paris attacks on 13 November 2015, have illustrated the direct impact of these conflicts on the EU's internal security. Meanwhile, the Syrian conflict has triggered the worst refugee crisis in Europe since World War II.

How did Germany respond to the Syrian and Libyan conflicts and what are the implications for its role in EU crisis management? This chapter analyses German and EU crisis management efforts in these two countries between 2011 and 2015. While the EU's role was marginal and often subject to internal divisions, Germany's role has gradually changed. Initially, it adhered to its civilian power profile based on its traditional foreign policy principles of military and political restraint. It played a leading role in EU sanctions and aid but slowed down EU efforts concerning more sensitive diplomatic questions and military engagement. From 2014 onwards, Germany deviated from its traditional restraint and started to engage more decisively, both politically and militarily.

This change of course can be explained by the interplay between Germany's traditional foreign policy principles on the one hand, and contextual factors on the other. Germany's role in crisis management was typically torn between by internal demands for restraint and external calls for leadership. However, as the lines between external and internal security challenges became blurred,

domestic expectations for German leadership abroad grew, leading to a more proactive stance. Yet, these new displays of international responsibility remained cautiously bound by persistent internal demands for military restraint.

This chapter starts by outlining some of the traditional principles guiding Germany's activities in EU crisis management. Parts two and three analyse Germany's role in EU crisis management in Libya and Syria.¹ The chapter concludes by discussing patterns of continuity and change and underlying explanatory factors.

CIVILIAN POWER WITH NEW 'RESPONSIBILITY'

Germany's traditional self-image is that of a 'civilian power', which is based on economic means and which exerts international influence in a non-coercive way.² The country tends to project this image at the European level, where it favours a comprehensive approach to crisis management, based on a broad range of civilian means and with military force as the very last resort.³ Germany's self-image and EU-level projection are based on a marked culture of military and political restraint and a strong adherence to multilateralism.⁴ These principles have been shaped by the World Wars and the Cold War. However, in a post-Cold War context, they often stand in tension with each other.

In terms of multilateralism, Germany swings somewhat uneasily between Europeanism and Atlanticism.⁵ It is a strong adherent of 'Alliance solidarity' and willing to pool military resources within NATO. However, it has also supported the creation of an autonomous EU crisis management capacity. In line with its comprehensive outlook, it has been a proponent of the creation of a permanent EU civil-military

1 These analyses draw on insights from a range of expert interviews with EU and national officials or experts, conducted between 2011 and 2015.

2 U. Krotz. 'National Role Conceptions and Foreign Policies : France and Germany Compared', Working Paper no. 2.1, Harvard University, Cambridge MA, 2001.

3 C. Frank. 'Comparing Germany's and Poland's ESDPs: Roles, Path Dependencies, Learning, and Socialization, Approaches and Analyses', in *Role Theory in International Relations*, S. Harnisch, C. Frank, and H. W. Maull eds, Routledge, New York, 2011, pp. 131–46.

4 R. Baumann and G. Hellmann. 'Germany and the Use of Military Force : 'Total War', the 'Culture of Restraint' and the Quest for Normality', *German Politics*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2010, pp. 61–82.

5 E. Gross. *The Europeanization of National Foreign Policy : Continuity and Change in European Crisis Management*, *Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2009.

Headquarters. This uneasy positioning between Europeanism and Atlanticism is reflected in Germany's political landscape. While coalitions between the Social Democrats and the Greens emphasized the former, Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalitions traditionally focused more on the latter.⁶

A second tension exists between the principles of multilateralism and restraint. In crisis management, Germany's foreign policy elite tends to face domestic calls for pacifism on the one hand, and international calls for military or political contributions on the other. It thus faces trade-offs between electoral and reputational losses. A key juncture in this regard was the decision to join NATO-led air strikes in Kosovo in 1999. The coalition government at the time used historical arguments to justify the decision to intervene. At that time, Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer used the line "Nie wieder Auschwitz" (never again Auschwitz) to indicate that the historical imperative to prevent genocide trumped the culture of military restraint embodied by the phrase "Nie wieder Krieg" (never again war). The intervention represented a critical juncture in terms of German interventions. However, this turning point was not clear-cut as multilateralism and humanitarianism continued to clash with the culture of restraint.

In recent years, there have been more pronounced external calls for German leadership in foreign and security policy in line with the country's leading economic position in Europe. In January 2014, Germany's foreign policy elite launched a new narrative based on the notion of international responsibility.⁷ The narrative struck a balance between different key principles and the respective internal and external demands: It promised a more resolute German foreign policy with a strong European focus, while underlining that military action was possible but still the last resort. What follows is an evaluation of the extent to which this narrative changed Germany's foreign and security policy in the European context.

6 Ibid.

7 J. Gauck. *Speech to open 50th Munich Security Conference*, Munich, 31 January 2014, <http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/EN/JoachimGauck/Reden/2014/140131-Munich-Security-Conference.html>.

The Libyan uprising started on 15 February 2011 and soon spread across the country. Peaceful anti-regime protests were met with massive repression and violence inflicted by the regime of Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi. On 17 March 2011, the UN reacted by imposing a no-fly zone over Libya and authorising “all necessary means” to protect Libyan civilians.⁸ In late March 2011, NATO took over command of an air campaign targeting regime forces. The NATO operation ended six months later when the opposition forces had taken control of most parts of the country while Gaddafi had been captured and killed. This was the beginning of Libya’s complex transition, characterised by intense power struggles. These culminated in mid-2014 when the Islamist-leaning opposition conducted an offensive against the capital and forced the internationally recognised government to relocate to the Eastern Libyan city of Tobruk. Since then, two rival governments have been competing for power while a range of militias and rebel groups are controlling parts of the country. How did the EU and Germany react to these developments?

In early 2011, Germany, the UK and France were leading the EU’s response in the fields of diplomacy and sanctions. Days after the outbreak of violence, Chancellor Angela Merkel strongly condemned violence against civilians and warned that “all means” could be used to exert pressure on the regime, including the imposition of sanctions. Initial attempts to impose EU sanctions on 23 February 2011 were blocked by Italy, Malta and Cyprus. But their resistance was soon overcome and the EU gradually agreed on a strong sanctions regime, implementing the UN sanctions in addition to autonomous measures.

Merkel and Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle pushed for the imposition of an oil and gas embargo against the Libyan regime from mid-March 2011 onwards. Although the country ranked fourth among Germany’s crude oil suppliers, the government’s position was not disputed at the domestic level. However, it met with initial resistance from other member states, particularly Italy, which was highly dependent on Libyan oil and gas.⁹ The EU eventually agreed on extensive autonomous sanctions against the Libyan energy sector

8 See UN Security Council Resolution 1973.

9 G. Dinmore and J. Chaffin. 'Italy's Eni says no to sanctions against Libya', *Financial Times*, 16 March 2011, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/a05621d4-5009-11e0-9ad1-00144feab49a.html#axzz2xeFRqq59>.

on 12 April 2011. Germany's steady push for EU-level sanctions can be seen as an instance of leadership by example and by compromise.

Collectively, the EU was the leading humanitarian aid donor throughout the Libyan crisis. In 2011, it pledged over €150 million, mostly directed towards the efforts of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organisation for Migration in dealing with the conflict's migratory consequences.¹⁰ With a bilateral contribution of €9.8 million, Germany was the third biggest EU donor after Sweden (€15.4 million) and the UK (€13.6 million).¹¹ Bilateral pledges came in addition to Germany's large 'default' share in humanitarian aid through the EU budget.

However, Germany did not play a leading role concerning the more sensitive diplomatic question of the recognition of the Libyan opposition. The National Transitional Council (NTC) established itself as the sole representative of all Libya on 5 March 2011. On 10 March 2011, one day before an extraordinary European Council meeting on the situation in Libya, France granted it full diplomatic recognition. This unilateral move angered other member states, including Germany, as it prevented the forging of a common European approach towards the Libyan opposition. Merkel and Westerwelle attributed their hesitance to the fact that the NTC's composition was still unclear and that Germany would only grant diplomatic recognition to states.¹² This cautious and legalistic approach was in line with the country's culture of political restraint. A few representatives from the Social Democratic Party and the Greens criticized it and called for stronger political support for the Libyan opposition.¹³ But the government's approach to the NTC remained incremental. Working-level contacts were established and a first official meeting between Westerwelle and NTC representatives took place on 29 March 2011. Germany only granted the NTC full diplomatic recognition on 13 June 2011.

Germany adhered to its culture of restraint most strongly in the military domain. While France and the UK were among those drafting UN Security Council Resolution 1973 authorising the use of force in

10 European Commission – Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection, 'Factsheet – Libyan crisis', 11 January 2012, http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/libya_factsheet.pdf.

11 Ibid.

12 Süddeutsche Zeitung, 'Etappensieg für Gaddafi', *Politik*, 10 March 2011, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/buergerkrieg-in-libyen-bbc-reporter-mit-scheinhinrichtungen-gefoltert-1.1070092>.

13 See for instance Bundestag debate on developments in the Arab World, 16 March 2011, <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btp/18/18095.pdf>.

Libya, Germany – a non-permanent member of the Security Council at that time – abstained on the respective vote together with Russia, China, India and Brazil. The official justification was that it could not intervene everywhere; that the risks associated with German participation exceeded the potential benefits and that the consequences of the intervention were unforeseeable.¹⁴ At the same time, the Chancellor and the Foreign Minister stressed that Germany was not neutral and that it fully supported the objectives of the Resolution.

The key driver behind the abstention was the Liberal Party led by Westerwelle. The culture of military restraint is one of the party's key foreign policy principles. In addition, it corresponded with the public's preferences. According to polls from March 2011, a majority of Germans supported the NATO intervention, but rejected German participation.¹⁵ These figures were important for the Liberal Party, which risked not clearing the 5% hurdle in the proximate regional elections in Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland Palatinate.¹⁶ Meanwhile, Merkel's party was focusing on euro crisis management and the nuclear turnaround after the Fukushima disaster. Contradicting Westerwelle on an issue which was not of primary importance and within his remit represented a risk for the stability of the coalition.¹⁷ An additional explanation was the fact that Germany's foreign policy elite initially believed that the Americans would veto the resolution, leaving them on the 'safe side' with an abstention. The US position shifted unexpectedly one day before the UN vote while Germany adhered to its position of restraint.¹⁸

The abstention was one of the most controversial decisions of post-Cold War German foreign policy. It contrasted with the country's adherence to multilateralism and Alliance solidarity. Domestic critics argued that Germany could have supported the resolution without participating in its military implementation. They also admonished the decision to withdraw German assets from NATO's operations in the Mediterranean as contradicting Alliance solidarity.

14 G. Westerwelle, *Regierungserklärung Zu Den Aktuellen Entwicklungen in Libyen*, 18 March 2011, <http://www.bundesregierung.de/ContentArchiv/DE/Archiv17/Regierungserklaerung/2011/2011-03-18-westerwelle-libyen.html>:

15 Emnid, 'Umfrage Zu Libyen – 18 March 2011', *Die Welt*, 20 March 2011, <http://www.welt.de/12893939>.

16 M. Hansel and K. Oppermann. 'Counterfactual Reasoning in Foreign Policy Analysis: The Cases of German Non-Participation in the Iraq and Libya Interventions of 2003 and 2011', paper presented to 63rd ISA Annual International Conference, Cardiff, 2013.

17 A. Miskimmon. 'German Foreign Policy and the Libya Crisis', *German Politics*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 392–410.

18 *Ibid.*

The abstention slowed down EU-level crisis management efforts. However, Germany was not alone in its reluctance to engage the EU militarily. The only two member states truly interested in military engagement in the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) were France and Italy. After difficult discussions, the member states settled for a minimal compromise and agreed on operation EUFOR Libya on 1 April 2011.¹⁹ The Council decision triggered the planning process for the operation, which was supposed to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid on the ground in Libya. Its deployment was dependent on a call by the UN Office for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). France wanted to broaden this precondition to include a potential call by the then French-led UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations. However, other member states, including the UK and Germany, preferred the narrower condition. At the time, UN OCHA, known for its reluctance to blur the lines between the humanitarian and military spheres, was under British lead. The British and the Germans thus knew that a call for EU military assistance would be unlikely. And indeed, it never came.

The abstention continued to haunt Germany's political elite in the years that followed. An example was the government's decision to approve of a military reinforcement of the EU anti-piracy operation Atalanta. The opposition rejected the reinforcement in the Bundestag debate on 12 May 2012 and accused the government of using it as a way to atone for its foreign policy failure in Libya. Westerwelle, in turn, blamed the opposition for the lack of European solidarity and emphatically reprimanded them: "Never remind us of Alliance solidarity again. (...) Never again!"²⁰ The decision to abstain thus became a symbol of the growing tension between external demands for leadership and domestic preferences for restraint. Some press reports called "Nie wieder Libyen" (never again Libya) the informal mantra underlying the shift towards Germany's new narrative of responsibility.²¹

Meanwhile, the reality of Libya's complex transition slipped out of Germany's public domain. There was little marked German engagement in the country between 2012 and 2014. In May 2013, the EU member

19 Council of the European Union. *Decision 2011/210/CFSP on a European Union military operation in support of humanitarian assistance operations in response to the crisis situation in Libya (EUFOR Libya)*, Brussels, 1 April 2011.

20 Deutscher Bundestag, *Plenarprotokoll 17/178*, 10 May 2012, <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btp/17/17178.pdf>.

21 See for example: W. Schmiege. 'Deutschlands neue Rolle in der Welt', *Cicero*, 31 December 2014, <http://www.cicero.de/berliner-republik/2014-deutsche-aussenpolitik/58690>.

states decided to launch the Integrated Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) Libya. Germany had been a proponent of a narrow mandate and scope and only deployed 2-3 police officers.²² Both EUBAM Libya and the German embassy had to be transferred to Tunis in mid-2014 due to the deteriorating political and security conditions.

It was the combination of mass migration through Libya and the infiltration of ISIS that thrust the country back onto Germany's political agenda in 2015. From January onwards, the EU and Germany lent political, financial and logistical support to the efforts by UN Libya Envoy Bernardino León to mediate between the rivalling governments and to attain a lasting ceasefire and a national unity government. On 10 June 2015, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier arranged a high-level meeting in Berlin in the 'P5+5 format', bringing together, for the first time, representatives of the five UN veto powers, Germany, Spain, Italy and the two rivalling Libyan factions. On 8 October 2015, after numerous rounds of arduous negotiations, León presented the factions with a proposal for a unity government. Both parties subsequently rejected it. In November 2015, an experienced German career diplomat, Martin Kobler, succeeded León as a UN Special Envoy. The nomination reflected Germany's increasing diplomatic engagement.

In April 2015, the EU received a tragic wakeup call as several ships sank off Libya's coast, leaving hundreds of migrants dead. At the extraordinary European Council meeting on migration on 23 April 2015, the Heads of State or Government decided on a broad package of measures, including the tripling of resources for the EU's border management agency FRONTEX. The EU also decided to launch EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia, a military CSDP operation aimed at destroying the 'business model' of human traffickers and smugglers.²³ While Italy was the key driver and framework nation behind the operation, Germany became the second biggest contributor. On 1 October 2015, the Bundestag authorised the deployment of up to 950 troops by a large majority of 450 to 116 votes.²⁴ The coalition

22 The mission had an authorised strength of 100 international staff. By January 2014, only 45 staff members were on the ground (for more information see: Deutscher Bundestag. *Printed Paper 18/280*, 20 December 2013, <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/18/002/1800280.pdf>).

23 Council of the European Union, *Decision 2015/972 launching the European Union military operation in the southern Central Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED)*, Brussels, 22 June 2015.

24 Deutscher Bundestag. 'Ja zum bewaffneten Einsatz gegen Schlepper', 1 October 2015, https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2015/kw40_de_menschenschmuggel/389566.

presented the decision as a contribution to the dual goals of combating smugglers and rescuing migrants at sea. The opposition rejected the decision, questioning the humanitarian aims and underlining the risks of a militarised fight against smugglers.

To sum up, Germany's engagement in the Libyan conflict gradually increased between 2011 and 2015. When the 2011 crisis erupted, the country acted in line with its traditional culture of political and military restraint. It adopted a cautious approach to the Libyan opposition and rejected military engagement. Germany slowed down Europe's collective crisis management efforts in the military and diplomatic domains, but played a leading role in the fields of economic sanctions and humanitarian aid. In 2015, the combination of mass migration and jihadist terrorism showed that instability in Libya could have a direct impact on Germany. It was this recognition rather than the paradigm of 'international responsibility' that triggered a more pronounced German engagement in international military and diplomatic crisis management efforts.

SYRIA: NEW RESPONSIBILITY UNDER OLD CONSTRAINTS

On 15 March 2011, the arrest and torture of a group of children accused of anti-regime graffiti triggered peaceful protests in the Southern Syrian city of Daraa. The demonstrations rapidly spread and protesters soon called on President Bashar al-Assad to step down. The regime reacted with violent repression. The Syrian uprising initially resembled the Libyan one, but the international response did not. Assad had a more powerful army than Gaddafi and he had important international allies such as Iran and Russia. Moscow and Beijing blocked decisive reactions by the UN Security Council. Subsequent UN-led mediation attempts failed due to incompatible positions within and outside Syria. In 2014, ISIS used the power vacuum to seize control of more than half of Syria's territory. With over 7.6 million internally displaced people and over 4 million refugees, the conflict has triggered the worst humanitarian tragedy since World War II.²⁵ How has the EU reacted and what role has Germany played?

Germany, France and the UK led the EU's initial response to the Syrian uprising. They were quick to condemn the use of violence

25 European Commission – Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection. 'Factsheet – Syria crisis', November 2015, http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/syria_en.pdf.

against civilians. In late April 2011, the 'Big Three' and Portugal tabled a draft UN Security Council statement condemning the violence and calling for restraint. The US supported the draft, but Russia, China and Lebanon rejected what they viewed as interference in Syria's internal affairs.²⁶ The statement was regarded as a first step towards more coercive measures. During the initial months of the uprising, many in the West still hoped that Assad would stop the bloodshed and agree to some form of negotiated settlement. The turning point came on 18 August 2011 when the US urged Assad to step down. Germany, France and the UK (the EU-3) followed with a joint statement, which was then reiterated by the EU as a whole.²⁷

However, as in the Libyan case, the Europeans struggled to find a common stance towards the Syrian opposition. On 23 August 2011, the Syrian National Council (SNC) was established and presented itself as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people. On 21 November 2011, France was the first EU member state to recognise the SNC as a 'legitimate interlocutor'. Spain recognised it as the 'main interlocutor' two days later. Germany and other member states such as Italy or Belgium did not formally recognise it, but granted 'verbal support'. On 27 February 2012, the EU as a whole recognised the SNC as 'a', but not the sole 'legitimate representative of the Syrians seeking peaceful democratic change'.²⁸

As in the Libyan case, the EU-3 led on the sanctions dossier. When attempts to impose UN-level sanctions failed, they pushed for EU-level sanctions. On 10 May 2011, the Europeans followed the American example and started to impose restrictive measures on persons associated with the Assad regime. They gradually strengthened the sanctions in the following months to include an arms embargo, an oil import embargo, asset freezes and travel bans. While Germany was an important driver, the key engineer behind the sanctions regime was Britain. One reason for that were different political interpretations: London believed that increased pressure on the Assad regime could indeed change its position, whereas Berlin feared that overly strong external pressure might unify and thereby strengthen the regime. The second reason was structural. There was simply more manpower in the British than in the German foreign ministry dealing with Syria sanctions.

26 *Al Jazeera*. 'UN fails to agree on Syria condemnation', *Al Jazeera*, 28 April 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/04/201142723514236533.html>.

27 A. Fifield, 'US and EU call for Assad to resign', *Financial Times*, 19 August 2011, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/d93ee372-c963-11e0-9eb8-00144feabdco.html#axzz3pm3U8hAt>.

28 Council of the European Union. *Council Conclusions on Syria*, Brussels, 27 February 2012, http://eu-un.europa.eu/articles/en/article_11896_en.htm.

The UK and Germany also led on the humanitarian dossier. Collectively, the EU became the largest humanitarian donor in the Syrian conflict in 2012. Between 2011 and 2015, the Commission and the member states pledged over €4.2 billion.²⁹ Britain contributed £1.1 billion and Germany was the second biggest European donor with over €1 billion in humanitarian and development assistance. Only the US mobilised more funds for the Syrian conflict.

The consensus among the EU-3 crumbled in early 2013. Britain and France wanted to loosen the EU arms embargo to allow for the delivery of weapons to ‘moderate rebels’. They argued that the rebels had to be strengthened in light of the Russian and Iranian support for the regime. The move was also presented as a means to put pressure on Assad ahead of international negotiations. Faced with resistance from Germany and other member states, Paris and London threatened to veto the renewal of the arms embargo, thus putting the whole EU sanctions regime at risk.³⁰ The German government warned that weapon deliveries could lead to an arms race and propel a regional conflagration. This position was largely shared by the elite and the general public as 78 per cent of polled Germans rejected weapon deliveries to the Syrian opposition.³¹ Germany played an important role in fostering a compromise, which entailed renewing the sanctions regime while allowing for unilateral deviations from the arms embargo under a set of agreed conditions.³² For instance, export licences were to be denied if they risked prolonging or aggravating the conflict.³³ Considering the restrictive nature of these conditions on the one hand and the strong French and British positions on the other, this political compromise can be seen as a small diplomatic success.

When the Assad regime conducted a chemical weapons attack against opposition forces and civilians on 21 August 2013, the US threatened to react with limited air strikes. Paris and London rapidly

29 European Commission – Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection. ‘Factsheet – Syria crisis’, November 2015, http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/syria_en.pdf.

30 phw/dpa/AFP. ‘Krieg in Syrien: Ruf nach Waffen für Rebellen spaltet Europa’. *Spiegel Online*, 15 March 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/syrien-europa-streitet-ueber-waffen-fuer-rebellen-a-889077.html>.

31 dpa. ‘Geld ja – Waffen nein’, *Handesblatt*, 1 June 2013, <http://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/deutschland/deutsche-zu-syrien-geld-ja-waffen-nein/8284930.html>.

32 Council of the European Union. *Council Declaration on Syria*, Brussels, 27 May 2013, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137315.pdf.

33 Council of the European Union. *Common Position 2008/944/CFSP defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment*, Brussels, 8 December 2008, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32008E0944>.

announced their support. Germany advocated a “clear response” by the international community, but rejected an involvement in military reactions. Westerwelle explained that German “participation was neither expected, nor being considered”.³⁴ This position was in line with the German public’s preferences, a consideration that was clearly relevant three weeks before the general election. In fact, all of Germany’s larger political parties rejected military engagement and favoured political and diplomatic responses.³⁵ The unfolding hesitance of the US and Britain in light of war-weary constituencies legitimised this consensual position of military restraint externally. Moscow and Washington eventually averted military intervention due to their combined pressure on Assad, who agreed to the destruction of Syria’s chemical weapon arsenal and to adhere to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In early August 2014, the International Community’s attention turned to Iraq. ISIS attacked the Yazidis, a Kurdish religious minority group in Northern Iraq and forced them to flee to Mount Sinjar, where they found themselves under siege. On 7 August, the US started to engage in military airstrikes against ISIS to prevent what it saw as an imminent genocide. The EU’s Political and Security Committee met on 12 August but failed to agree on a common line. However, it authorised the member states to send weapons to support the Iraqi Kurds in coordination with the central government in Baghdad.

On 20 August 2014, Germany decided to deliver weapons to the Kurdish Peshmerga. This was the first time that the country had supplied weapons to a crisis or conflict theatre. Many viewed the decision as a rupture in the culture of military restraint and as a real paradigm shift. However, the government underlined that it was an *exception*, justified by an imminent genocide, the dangerous expansion of ISIS, and its security implications for the region and Germany. Speaking in front of the Bundestag on 1 September 2014, Merkel argued that Germany had to act in line with its international responsibility and that the risks of short-term inaction outweighed the potential side effects of weapon supplies.³⁶ In a consultative vote, a large majority of parliamentarians from the coalition voted in favour, while those of

34 In: dpa/mcz. ‘Deutsche Beteiligung wird nicht nachgefragt’. *Die Welt*, 30 August 2013, <http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article119542693/Deutsche-Beteiligung-wird-nicht-nachgefragt.html>.

35 Deutscher Bundestag. *Plenarprotokoll 17/253*, 3 September 2013, <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btp/17/17253.pdf>.

36 *Ibid.*

the Green and Left parties opposed the delivery of lethal materiel. This parliamentary majority contrasted with public opinion. According to polls, only 38% were in favour while 58% rejected weapon supplies.³⁷ In January 2015, the Bundestag approved the deployment of up to 100 troops in the framework of a training mission in Northern Iraq by a large majority. Polls showed that an overwhelming majority of the German public also supported the mission.³⁸ These decisions can be seen as demonstrations of Germany's new responsibility in line with external and particularly US expectations, in a situation where the risks for German soldiers were arguably limited.

In 2015, the stakes attached to the resolution of the Syrian conflict and the fight against ISIS were clearly raised. The migratory consequences of the conflict were clearly felt across Europe and in Germany in particular. The stakes rose further when Russia initiated a military offensive to support the weakened Assad regime in its fight against ISIS and 'other terrorists' (including 'moderate rebels') in September 2015. Repeated ISIS-linked attacks on European soil dramatically illustrated the conflict's impact on the EU's security. A major turning point in this regard was 13 November 2015 when a series of attacks in Paris caused the death of 130 European citizens. As a result, the French president invoked, for the first time, the mutual assistance/defence clause enshrined in Art. 42.7 TEU, requesting support from European partners for France's engagements in Syria, Iraq and Mali.

The German government reacted immediately by assuring that, "We will do everything in our power to give France help and support".³⁹ Within weeks of the Paris attacks, the government announced it would bolster its existing military engagement in Mali and Northern Iraq and provide military support to France in the framework of the US-led coalition against ISIS in Syria. The mandate foresaw the deployment of six Tornado reconnaissance jets, a frigate for the protection of a French aircraft carrier, a refuelling aircraft and

37 ARD DeutschlandTrend. 'Stärkeres Engagement ja, Waffen nein', 4 December 2015, <http://www.tagesschau.de/inland/deutschlandtrend-132.html>.

38 Dpa. 'Umfrage: Mehrheit unterstützt Ausbildungsmission gegen IS im Irak', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 16 September 2015, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/news/politik/konflikte-umfrage-mehrheit-unterstuetzt-ausbildungsmission-gegen-is-im-irak-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-150916-99-01212>.

39 Emmott, Robin and Sabine Siebold (2015) "France requests European support in Syria, Iraq, Africa", Reuters, 17 Nov 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-shooting-eu-defence-help-idUSKCN0T611Z20151117>.

up to 1,200 troops for up to one year.⁴⁰ The engagement was aimed at bolstering the international coalition, but excluded an active combat role. The mandate was approved by the Bundestag on 4 December 2015 with 445 votes in favour, 145 against and seven abstentions.

The decision to engage militarily in Syria represented a major shift in Germany's position. It was only the third time that Germany had decided to join an offensive military intervention abroad since World War II and the first time in Merkel's legislature. It was also by far the quickest decision of that sort. The government's justification was based on two key arguments. The first was the need to demonstrate solidarity with France as the Paris attacks constituted a "direct attack on Europe's liberal value order".⁴¹ Coalition politicians tied this solidarity to the future of the whole European project. The second argument related to the threat ISIS posed to Germany's security. The opposition rejected the mandate with arguments resonating with the culture of restraint. They criticised the lack of a sound legal basis, the unclear mandate, the absence of a comprehensive political strategy, the risk for German soldiers and the potential for counter-productive effects in light of the experiences in Iraq and Libya.

However, the government's position was backed by the otherwise pacifist German public. A poll ahead of the Bundestag debate on 4 December 2015 showed that 58 per cent were in favour of assisting the French military in its fight against ISIS in Syria, while 37 per cent were opposed to it.⁴² The threat perception in the population was relatively high, as 61 per cent of those polled feared a proximate terrorist attack in Germany. The government's argumentation was thus in line with the country's Europeanist vocation, its self-image as a reliable partner *and* the public's preferences and perception. This shift in position can be seen as a sign of Germany's new international and – in this case – European responsibility. Nonetheless, the display of responsibility remained bound by the country's culture of restraint: neither political parties nor the public advocated an active participation in the air strikes. Merkel plainly rejected a US request for additional military engagement in the fight against ISIS in December 2015 by stating,

40 Deutscher Bundestag, *Plenarprotokoll 18/6866*, 1 December 2015, <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/18/068/1806866.pdf>.

41 Ibid.

42 ARD DeutschlandTrend. 'Mehrheit für Syrien-Einsatz', 4 December 2015, <http://www.tagesschau.de/inland/deutschlandtrend-455.html>.

“I believe that Germany is playing its part and that we don’t have to discuss any new questions in this context, in these days”.⁴³

CONCLUSION

Aside from substantial humanitarian contributions, the EU’s role in the Libyan and Syrian conflicts was marginal. The member states were divided during the Libyan crisis in 2011 and failed to prevent the resurgence of violence in 2014. The UN was in charge of diplomacy while Europe’s military contributions were organised in the framework of NATO. In the Syrian conflict, the Europeans had no unified strategy and were marginalised by other global or regional players. The member states’ contributions to the fight against ISIS were not organised in the framework of the EU, but in coalitions of the willing.

Meanwhile, Germany’s role in crisis management evolved. Until 2014, it adhered to its traditional civilian power profile and attempted to upload it to the EU. Together with France and the UK, it demonstrated leadership in the field of economic sanctions. When other member states were reluctant to agree to sanctions or threatened to deviate from them, Germany worked behind the scenes to forge European compromises. It also displayed leadership by example in the fields of humanitarian and development aid. However, Germany was cautious when it came to the more sensitive diplomatic questions such as the recognition of the respective opposition representatives. When France pushed for a more proactive approach, Germany was among those dragging their feet and the EU ended up without a common approach. In addition, Germany was outright reluctant regarding the use of force and diverged from its core European and international allies on several occasions. This reluctance was in line with the culture of military restraint and backed by the preferences of a largely pacifist public.

Germany’s approach to diplomacy and the use of force became less restrained in 2014. It broke with the taboo of delivering weapons to conflict theatres in Syria and deployed a military training mission outside of the EU or NATO. In 2015, Germany started to demonstrate more diplomatic leadership in the Syrian and Libyan peace negotiations.

43 aar/Reuters. ‘Bundeswehreinsatz in Syrien: Merkel weist US-Bitte nach mehr Unterstützung zurück’, *Spiegel Online*, 14 December 2015, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/angela-merkel-lehnt-us-bitte-nach-mehr-bundeswehr-einsatz-in-syrien-ab-a-1067611.html>.

The country became the second largest contributor to a military CSDP operation in the Mediterranean. Significantly, it decided to provide military assistance to the US-led coalition against ISIS in Syria.

What explains this change of course? The combination of mass migration and the increased terrorist threat illustrated how close the link between external and internal challenges is. This message gradually reached the German public. A majority thereof had rejected any form of military engagement in Libya or Syria until 2014. However, once the threat emanating from ISIS and the challenges linked to mass migration became more tangible, it started to support selected military contributions. The combination of interlinked crises, high external expectations for more German leadership and a more permissive domestic audience explain why the balance between multilateralism and restraint shifted more towards the former. However, multilateralism was not equivalent to reflexive Europeanism as the engagement in different multilateral formats illustrated.

Germany did not depart from its culture of restraint, but chose the middle ground between responsibility and restraint, as illustrated by the cautious and restricted nature of its military engagements. When asked whether the new doctrine of international responsibility meant that Syria-type military engagements would become “the rule rather than the exception” in an interview on 13 December 2015, Merkel replied that the conflict’s repercussions “at home” meant that Germany had to get more involved in the EU’s neighbourhood, “that is, politically and with the means of development cooperation”.⁴⁴ Germany’s understanding of international responsibility still entails that the use of force is subject to careful consideration and remains “the very last resort”.⁴⁵ Germany will continue to forge Europe’s profile as a civilian crisis manager, but it is more likely to play a supporting than a leading role when rapid and robust international or European crisis responses are required.

44 A. Merkel. ‘Interview: Merkel über Flüchtlinge und Syrien-Einsatz’, *Nordbayerischer Kurier*, 13 December 2015, <http://www.nordbayerischer-kurier.de/nachrichten/merkel-ueber-fluechtlinge-und-syrien-einsatz>.

45 J. Gauck. *Speech to open 50th Munich Security Conference*, Munich, 31 January 2014, <http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/EN/JoachimGauck/Reden/2014/140131-Munich-Security-Conference.html>.

5

5. Leadership in the Ukraine conflict: A German moment

Liana Fix

Germany has been widely perceived as calling the shots in the EU's crisis-management efforts in, and in relation to, Ukraine. Some observers even argued that Germany has established itself as the leader of not only European, but Western efforts in general by facilitating a common approach between the United States and Europe towards Russia.¹ This is a surprising development: Not only did Germany leave the leadership role to France in a similar crisis situation with Russia – the Georgian-Russian war in 2008, when former French President Nicolas Sarkozy led mediation efforts as EU Council Presidency – but Germany has also been criticized for cultivating a 'special relationship' with Russia² and for prioritizing business interests over human rights and rule of law concerns.

Against this backdrop, this chapter addresses how Germany has emerged as the leader of European and possibly even Western crisis-management efforts and which partners, institutions and instruments Germany has chosen (and omitted) in its crisis-management approach. The conflict over Ukraine is a particularly useful case for examining the formation of German leadership within the EU since it represents one of the most significant challenges to European security since the end of the Cold War and is a pilot test of Germany's new foreign policy discourse on stronger responsibility and engagement in international

1 Elizabeth Pond, 'Germany's real role in the Ukraine crisis', *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/eastern-europe-caucasus/germany-s-real-role-ukraine-crisis> (accessed 30 October 2015); Liana Fix, Has Germany Led the West's Response toward Russia and Will It Stay the Course? AICGS Transatlantic Perspectives Essay, 31 December 2015.

2 See chapter by Forsberg in this Report.

affairs, initiated by Federal President Joachim Gauck, defence minister von der Leyen and foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier in 2013. Can Germany's leadership role during the Ukraine conflict serve as 'smoking gun' evidence for a change in Germany's foreign and European policy towards more assertiveness and responsibility or possibly even German dominance within the EU, namely a 'German Europe'?

The analysis suggests that throughout the conflict, Germany was at the centre of a tightly-knit web of multilateral and international crisis management. The European response to the crisis has been shaped to a large extent by Germany. Germany's ideas and approaches have become widely accepted and have prevailed within the EU, and also to some extent within the transatlantic alliance. This demonstrates a prominent managerial role³ for Germany and a continuous 'multilateral reflex'⁴ of Germany's foreign policy. This reflex has, however, not unfolded as an 'EU-28 reflex': The EU was not the single default option for German policy formulation and implementation, but one choice among others, with alternative policy frameworks selected below (informal member state coalitions) or outside the EU-28 (OSCE). In consequence, the OSCE and intergovernmental processes within the EU have been strengthened, while EU institutions and representatives have been weakened. In other words, while the institutional power of the EU has reinforced Germany's leadership role, the power of the EU as an institution has not been strengthened vice versa. The Ukraine conflict has therefore contributed to a 'German moment' without (as yet) transforming it into a European moment.⁵

In crisis-management efforts over Ukraine, Germany has demonstrated the self-confidence to play a prominent role outside the EU-28 by selectively choosing the partners, institutions and instruments it deemed necessary for the implementation of an essentially German crisis-management framework: The EU's intergovernmental Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) for a common sanctions policy; the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for monitoring on the ground and mediation efforts; informal coalitions

3 'Chief facilitating officer', as described by Foreign Minister Steinmeier in an article for the New York Times, March 2015: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/12/opinion/save-our-trans-atlantic-order.html?_r=0.

4 Graham Timmins, German-Russian Bilateral Relations and EU Policy on Russia: Between Normalisation and the 'Multilateral Reflex', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 19:2, 2011, pp. 189-199.

5 Thomas Bagger, The German Moment in a Fragile World, *The Washington Quarterly*, 37:4, 2014.

with member states for crisis diplomacy and dialogue and negotiation formats; as well as NATO and the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) for the reassurance of Eastern member states and partnering with the US on questions of military engagement in Ukraine. Germany prioritized the implementation of its crisis-management framework with whatever instruments seemed to be most useful over fostering a strong leadership role for the European Union, anchored in institutions.

Contrary to what many observers have expected,⁶ Germany's leadership was not based on bilateral (economic) interests, but guided by normative convictions about the inviolability of international law and the principles of the European security order. Leading by example, Germany risked negative economic consequences and its traditionally good relations with Russia to defend these norms and principles, thereby gaining additional legitimacy and credibility for its leadership role in Europe and facilitating European unity towards Russia. This leadership role was closely linked to the notion of responsibility: responsibility to assume leadership in a situation of lack of leadership alternatives, guided by expectations of responsible leadership from actors both within the European Union and the United States.⁷ The Ukraine conflict has therefore demonstrated that Germany can assume a leadership role within Europe if leadership is legitimized by normative principles and leading by example. Furthermore, it is likely to have strengthened Germany's readiness to take on a leadership role in foreign and security policy. Despite fatigue as well as critique, Germany's leadership in a security crisis situation was in principle accepted within the German public, the EU and the transatlantic alliance.

THE PRELUDE TO THE CRISIS

In the run-up to the Vilnius summit in November 2013, which marked Ukraine's refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the EU and prompted the Euromaidan protests as well as subsequent Russian interventions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, Germany played an active role in EU relations with Ukraine. The negotiations for an Association Agreement with Ukraine were already finalized by December 2011 and

6 Stephen F. Szabo, *Germany, Russia, and the rise of Geo-Economics*, London/New York, 2015.

7 Hanns W. Maull, What German Responsibility means, *Security and Human Rights* 26 (2015), pp.11–24.

initiated in March 2012. The signing of the agreement was, however, postponed due to concerns about the state of the rule of law and human rights in Ukraine. Ukraine, for its part, demanded that the prospect of EU membership be formally mentioned in the Association Agreement. In particular, Germany together with France strongly opposed Ukraine's push for a membership perspective. The prosecution of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko was criticized by the EU and Germany as a case of selective justice and her release considered to be the most important precondition for the signing of the agreement. The then German foreign minister, Guido Westerwelle, met Yulia Tymoshenko's daughter several times and proposed medical treatment in Germany as a potentially face-saving solution to the Ukrainian government.⁸ By insisting on the symbolic release of Tymoshenko as a precondition for the signing of the Association Agreement and underestimating Russia's determination to prevent it, the EU manoeuvred its policy towards Ukraine into a dead end before the Vilnius summit in November 2013.

At the same time, Russia was stepping up pressure on Ukraine: At the end of September, Russia offered a loan of 750 million euro to Ukraine and a one-time price reduction for Russian gas. In October, new customs regulations as well as trade sanctions were imposed on selected Ukrainian goods.⁹ In a government statement issued ten days before the envisaged signing of the Association Agreement, Chancellor Angela Merkel warned Russia against interfering in the affairs of Eastern Partnership countries, and promised solidarity with Ukraine through additional market opportunities for Ukrainian products and support for energy supplies¹⁰ in the event of Russian retaliatory measures. Nevertheless, after a failed vote in the Ukrainian parliament, Ukrainian President Yanukovich announced on 21 November 2013 that Yulia Tymoshenko would not be released and Ukraine would not sign the Association Agreement at the Vilnius summit on 28/29 November 2013. Kiev proposed a joint commission instead to improve relations

8 Westerwelle macht sich für Timoschenko stark, *Die Welt*, 21 June 2013, <http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article117329290/Westerwelle-macht-sich-fuer-Timoschenko-stark.html> (accessed 30 October 2015).

9 Katerina Malygina, *Die Ukraine vor dem EU-Gipfel in Vilnius: Einflussversuche externer Akteure, abrupter Kurswechsel der Regierung und die Volksversammlung zugunsten der europäischen Integration*, *Ukraine-Analysen* Nr. 124, 26 November 2011, pp. 2–5.

10 Regierungserklärung von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel zum EU-Gipfel „Östliche Partnerschaft“ am 28./29. November 2013 in Vilnius, 18 November 2013, <http://www.bundesregierung.de/ContentArchiv/DE/Archiv17/Regierungserklaerung/2013/2013-11-18-merkel-oestl-partnerschaften.html> (accessed 30 October 2015).

between Ukraine, Russia and the EU. Despite the warning signals, the cancellation came as a surprise to the EU and Germany.¹¹

During the subsequent Euromaidan protests, the German government initially adopted a reserved position. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, inaugurated as the new foreign minister on December 17, rejected a mediation role for Germany and referred to EU efforts.¹² Gernot Erler, the Coordinator for Intersocietal Cooperation with Russia, Central Asia and the Eastern Partnership Countries, argued for restraint in Germany's engagement and criticized former German foreign minister Guido Westerwelle for his surprise visit to Kiev in the last weeks of his term in office, as well as High Representative Catherine Ashton for her presence in Euromaidan, arguing that the EU should avoid being perceived as taking sides.¹³ Only when the situation escalated and violent clashes erupted in February 2014 did Germany intervene as part of the Weimar triangle: on February 21, the three foreign ministers – Steinmeier, Fabius and Sikorski – negotiated an agreement between President Yanukovich and the opposition. The disappearance of President Yanukovich on February 22 in an unclear security situation resulted in the formation of an interim government, which was not considered legitimate by Russia.¹⁴ At the beginning of March, the takeover of strategic positions by Russian troops on the Crimean peninsula were reported. In response, the EU suspended bilateral talks with Russia on visa matters as well as on a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. After a manipulated referendum on March 16, Russia formally annexed Crimea and Sevastopol city as federal subjects of the Russian Federation two days later.

11 "EU-Abkommen mit Ukraine endgültig geplatzt", *Wall Street Journal*, 29 November 2013, <http://www.wsj.de/nachrichten/SB10001424052702304017204579226680510056584> (accessed 30 October 2015).

12 "Steinmeier lehnt eine Vermittlerrolle ab", *Die Welt*, 19 December 2013, <http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article123143999/Steinmeier-lehnt-eine-Vermittlerrolle-ab.html> (accessed 30 October 2015).

13 Gernot Erler, "In Sachen Ukraine gibt es in der EU zu viele Fehleinschätzungen", *Internationale Politik*, 12 December 2013, <https://zeitschrift-ip.dgap.org/de/ip-die-zeitschrift/themen/europaeische-union/sachen-ukraine-gibt-es-der-eu-zu-viele> (accessed 30 October 2015).

14 Russian Presidential Administration, "Vladimir Putin answered journalists' questions on the situation in Ukraine", *kremlin.ru*, 4 March 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20366> (accessed 30 October, 2015).

German leadership unfolded around the annexation of Crimea on March 18, 2014 amid widespread shock at Russia's actions and the breach of principles underlying the European security order. On March 13, five days before the formal annexation of Crimea, Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed her principled rejection of Russia's actions as a violation of international law: "We are now experiencing in Europe, in Ukraine, a conflict about spheres of influence and territorial claims, which we are familiar with from the 19th and 20th century, a conflict we thought we had overcome. It remains a breach of international law in Central Europe, after which we must not and did not go back to business as usual".¹⁵ She went on to outline a three-tier crisis-management framework: Germany seeks no military solution to the crisis, but would engage in diplomatic and economic measures by imposing sanctions on Russia, facilitating talks and dialogue between Russia and Ukraine and strengthening the Ukrainian state and economy. This policy was to be pursued in accordance with the European Union and the United States.

Germany assumed a leadership role in all aspects of this crisis-management framework. First, in the sanctions policy, Germany played an important role in building consensus among more hesitant and more forceful EU member states without settling for the lowest common denominator: Leading by example, Germany argued for the necessity of stronger sanctions against Russia despite potential losses for its own economy. Second, in crisis diplomacy, Germany engaged in a number of dialogue and negotiation formats, from the 'Weimar triangle' to the 'Normandy format', and led efforts for the establishment of a trilateral contact group together with the Swiss OSCE chairship. Here, Germany's leadership was not only limited to, but went beyond, the EU context: the country demonstrated the willingness and self-confidence to engage in a prominent role outside the EU-28 and to choose freely and instrumentally the partners, institutions and formats it deemed necessary for the implementation of its crisis-management framework. Third, Germany's reluctance to engage militarily with regard to lethal defensive weapon deliveries to Ukraine and the stationing of permanent NATO troops in Central European member states demonstrate its ability to take issues off

15 Regierungserklärung, 13 March 2014, <http://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/Content/DE/Regierungserklärung/2014/2014-03-13-bt-merkel.html> (accessed 30 October, 2015), author's translation.

the agenda: Both questions were settled in line with Germany's position, with the United States expressing similar restraint in the question of lethal defensive weapon deliveries and a rotating instead of permanent NATO force being agreed on at the Wales Summit in September 2014.

In all these aspects, Germany's leadership in crisis-management efforts reflects traditional civilian power principles of German foreign policy: A strong preference for diplomatic and economic instruments over military means, in a multilateral framework aimed at 'civilizing' international relations through adherence to a rules-based order.¹⁶

Sanctions policy: Building consensus and leading by example

Regarding the sanctions policy, Germany exercised leadership within the EU by building consensus in a balancing act between different factions within the European Union member states. On the one hand, member states like Slovakia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Hungary, which are to a high degree dependent on Russian gas, and others like Austria, Italy and Greece, which are concerned about the impact on domestic businesses, took a more reluctant stance towards stronger sanctions. On the other hand, the Baltic countries and Poland favoured a stronger stance out of security concerns. Moreover, the traditional foreign and security actors within the EU – France and the UK – had preferential interests, France in the case of the delivery of two mistral warships to Russia, and the UK with regard to concerns about disadvantages for the City of London in the case of financial sanctions. In building consensus, Germany has not followed the lowest common denominator among EU member states, but has been proactive in seeking a strong common EU stance on sanctions towards Russia.

A preliminary set of restrictive measures against Russian and Crimean officials was put in place against the backdrop of Russia's takeover of the Crimean peninsula in March 2014. At an extraordinary meeting of EU leaders on March 6, only a first and second phase of possible sanctions against Russia was initially contemplated. However, the incoming news that the referendum in Crimea had been brought forward to March 16 led EU leaders to agree on a three-tier sanctions regime, which explicitly included economic sanctions as a possible

16 Hanns W. Maull, "Zivilmacht: Karriere eines Begriffs", Abschiedsvorlesung Universität Trier, 3 May 2013, https://www.uni-trier.de/fileadmin/fb3/POL/Mitarbeiter/Maull__Hanns_W/Abschiedsvorlesung_Rev.pdf (accessed 30 October, 2015).

course of action in phase three if Russia further escalated the conflict.¹⁷ The sanctions regime was gradually stepped up throughout the following months given the destabilization of Eastern Ukraine and the kidnapping of OSCE observers, including four Germans, in April 2014. But it was the shock of the downing of flight MH17 on July 17 that played a particularly important role in bringing the different positions of member states on sanctions policy closer together. On July 22, the Foreign Affairs Council asked the Commission and the EEAS to finalize preparatory work for economic sanctions in four sectors, which were adopted by EU leaders on July 31.¹⁸

Germany, supporting a three-tier economic sanctions regime and disillusioned by Russia's uncooperative stance in mediation efforts before the annexation and in Eastern Ukraine,¹⁹ argued for reinforcing these economic measures at an EU summit on August 30, but member states could only agree on preparing further measures to be reviewed within a week. On September 5, further measures were agreed upon in principle, but the question of them coming into force was again postponed to 'leave time for an assessment of the implementation of the cease-fire agreement...depending on the situation on the ground'.²⁰ Despite the conclusion of this ceasefire agreement in Minsk on September 5 under the auspices of the OSCE, Merkel argued in a speech in the German Bundestag on September 10 for stronger economic sanctions to come into force as soon as possible.²¹ Eventually on September 12, together with further sanctions imposed by the United States, the strongest economic sanctions package against Russia to date was introduced.²² The lifting of sanctions was linked

17 Ukraine crisis: March 6 as it happened, *The Telegraph*, 6 March 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/10679802/Ukraine-Russia-crisis-live.html> (accessed 30 October 2015).

18 European Council, Adoption of agreed restrictive measures in view of Russia's role in Eastern Ukraine, ST 12318/14, Brussels, 31 July 2014.

19 Auswärtiges Amt, Ukraine: Gespräche in Brüssel, Genf und Bern, 4 March 2014, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Aktuelle_Artikel/Ukraine/140303_Steinmeier_Brussel_FAC.html (accessed 30 October 2015); Andreas Rinke, *Wie Putin Berlin verlor*, *Internationale Politik* 3, May/June 2014, pp. 33–45.

20 Statement by the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy on further EU restrictive measures against Russia, EU CO 175/14, Brussels, 8 September 2014.

21 Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel im deutschen Bundestag, 10. September 2014, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Rede/2014/09/2014-09-10-merkel-bt-haushalt.html> (accessed 30 October 2015).

22 Sweeping new US and EU sanctions target Russia's banks and oil companies, *The Guardian*, 12 September 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/12/russia-sanctions-us-eu-banks-sberbank-oil-gazprom> (accessed 30 October 2015).

in March 2015 to the full implementation of the second Minsk agreement, which was signed under the mediation of Germany and France in Minsk on February 12. Again, it was Germany that argued strongly for the linkage.²³ To this end, the current level of sanctions will remain in force until all commitments under the Minsk II agreement are fully implemented.²⁴

The German government's strong position on the sanctions policy was supported by public opinion in general. After the annexation of Crimea in March, only 26% supported economic sanctions,²⁵ but the number increased during the escalations in Eastern Ukraine. The downing of flight MH17 in July 2014 is often assumed to be a turning point, but 50% supported economic sanctions against Russia even in May 2014,²⁶ and in August 2014, 49% (against 46%) favoured a reinforcement of economic sanctions even if it were to have a negative effect on the German economy and labour market.²⁷ The domestic German controversy between 'Russlandversteher' (advocating an apologetic position towards Russia) and 'Russlandkritiker' (advocating a hawkish position) had no evident impact on the German government's policy, despite its temporary prominence.²⁸ On the contrary: Both the chancellor as well as the foreign minister have been outspoken in establishing a normative discourse on the inviolability of international law, rejecting any alternative interpretations about the 'right to self-determination' and the 'responsibility to protect' of the Russian-speaking population. In an interview with the FAZ, Merkel argued that the Ukraine conflict was 'without doubt about values, more concretely, about the right of every country to freedom and self-determination and

23 Pressestatements von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel und dem ukrainischen Präsidenten Poroschenko, Berlin, 16 March 2015, <https://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2015/03/215-03-16-merkel-poroschenko.html> (accessed 30 October 2015).

24 European Council, Conclusions 19 and 20 March 2015, EUCO 11/15, Brussels, 20 March 2015.

25 Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Politbarometer März I, 14 March 2014, http://www.forschungsgruppe.de/Umfragen/Politbarometer/Archiv/Politbarometer_2014/Maerz_I_2014/.

26 ARD-Deutschlandtrend, May 2014, <http://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/ard-deutschlandtrend/2014/mai/> (accessed 30 October 2015).

27 ARD-Deutschlandtrend, August 2014, <http://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/ard-deutschlandtrend/2014/august/> (accessed 30 October 2015).

28 Eine Debatte zum Gruseln, *DieZeit*, 14 April 2014, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2014-04/Kommentar-Debatte-Putin> (accessed 30 October 2015).

the reliability of the legal order'.²⁹ During a visit to Moscow in May 2015, she even dubbed the Crimea annexation 'criminal'.³⁰

The business community opposed sanctions from the start, and both the chancellor as well as the foreign minister felt the necessity to stress the 'primacy of politics' to German economic lobby organizations. In a speech in front of business representatives on April 9, foreign minister Walter Steinmeier reaffirmed that Germany would continue its course towards Russia 'even if we suffer economic disadvantages'.³¹ While the Federation of German Industries (*Bundesverband deutscher Industrie*) supported sanctions after the downing of flight MH17, the Committee for Eastern European Economic Relations (*Ostausschuss der deutschen Wirtschaft*) continued to question their necessity and warned about considerable damage for the German economy.³² Although the relevance of trade with Russia for the German economy in general should not be overestimated – Russia is not among the top ten biggest trading partners for Germany³³ and constitutes only about 3% of Germany's overall trade turnover – Germany is among the EU countries most affected in absolute numbers by the worsening economic relationship with Russia,³⁴ resulting from a general recession in the Russian economy due to declining oil prices and the direct and indirect effects of EU sanctions, as well as Russian counter-sanctions. In the first half of 2015, exports to Russia shrank by 31%.³⁵

29 Für gemeinsame Werte eintreten: Interview mit Angela Merkel, *FAZ*, 16. Mai 2014, <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Interview/2014/05/2014-05-16-merkel-faz.html> (accessed 30 October 2015).

30 "Verbrecherische Annexion der Krim", *Bayerischer Rundfunk*, 10. Mai 2015, <http://www.br.de/nachrichten/merkel-putin-moskau-100.html> (accessed 30 October 2015).

31 Rede von Außenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier anlässlich der Eröffnung des east forum Berlin, Deutsches Historisches Museum, *Auswärtiges Amt*, 9 April 2014, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Infoservice/Presse/Reden/2014/140409-BM_east_forum.html (accessed 30 October 2015).

32 "Russland nicht in die Ecke drängen", *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, 28 December 2015, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/sanktionspolitik-russland-nicht-in-die-enge-draengen-1.2798174> (accessed 30 December 2015).

33 Foreign trade ranking of Germany's trading partners in foreign trade, *Destatis*, 22 October 2015, https://www.destatis.de/EN/FactsFigures/NationalEconomyEnvironment/ForeignTrade/TradingPartners/Tables/OrderRankGermanyTradingPartners.pdf?__blob=publicationFile (accessed 30 October 2015).

34 Simond de Galbert, "A year of sanctions against Russia – now what?" CSIS Report, October 2015, http://csis.org/files/publication/150929_deGalbert_SanctionsRussia_Web.pdf (accessed 30 December 2015).

35 Ost-Ausschuss der deutschen Wirtschaft, 1. Halbjahr 2015: Deutsche Russland-Exporte gehen um 31 Prozent zurück, 24 August 2015, <http://www.ost-ausschuss.de/node/953> (accessed 30 December 2015).

The willingness of the German government to prioritize principles and norms and to defend these through economic means, at the expense of its good (economic) relations with Russia, constitutes an important aspect of Germany's credibility within the European Union, and lent additional legitimacy to Germany's consensus-building efforts. Given the country's legacy of *Ostpolitik*³⁶ and its powerful position as the largest national economy in Europe, Germany might have been expected to steer a European policy that avoided economic losses and aimed at a quick normalization of relations with Russia. Contrary to initial fears and expectations, Germany has, however, not used its strong economic position to try to water down EU sanctions but, on the contrary, has argued for even stronger sanctions against Russia. Germany's readiness to lead by example and to risk the consequences of economic sanctions for its own economy – not only talking the talk but walking the talk – helped to secure the fellowship of others.³⁷

The importance of legitimacy and credibility for a normative leadership role became particularly evident during the third round of sanctions extension in December 2015. Germany's strong position on sanctions was perceived as losing credibility, with plans for the construction of a Nord Stream 2 pipeline through the Baltic Sea adding 55bcm to the existing Nord Stream twin pipelines. Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy Sigmar Gabriel's visit to Moscow in October 2015, when he proposed to circumvent EU energy legislation (which requires an unbundling of energy suppliers from network operators under the Third Energy Package) for this project, fuelled the debate about the credibility of Germany's normative stance. Hence, Italy initially resisted extending sanctions until they were discussed further in the European Council, and raised concerns about perceived double standards and German dominance within the European Union.³⁸

36 See chapter by Forsberg in this report.

37 Elizabeth Pond, Germany's real role in the Ukraine crisis, *Foreign Affairs*, March/April issue 2015, (accessed 30 October 2015).

38 "Italy's Renzi joins opposition to Nord Stream 2 pipeline deal", *Financial Times*, 12 December 2015, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/cebd679c-a281-11e5-8d70-42b68cfae6e4.html> (accessed 30 December 2015); "Renzi says that EU can't remain under solely German leadership", *NewEurope*, 18 December 2015, <http://neurope.eu/article/renzi-says-that-eu-cant-remain-under-solely-german-leadership/> (accessed 30 December 2015).

Crisis diplomacy: Informal coalitions and the lack of an EU role

Regarding crisis diplomacy, Germany's leadership exceeded and went beyond the EU-28 context. Germany engaged in various dialogue and negotiation formats, from the 'Weimar triangle' to the 'Normandy format', and led efforts for the establishment of a trilateral contact group together with the Swiss OSCE chairship. To this end, Germany demonstrated the willingness and self-confidence to engage in a prominent role outside the EU-28 and to proactively choose partners, institutions and instruments it deemed necessary for the implementation of its crisis-management framework. Germany's preference for informal coalitions of member states (building coalitions is a foreign policy instrument which Germany is considered to excel at³⁹), mostly without the explicit involvement of EU representatives, as well as its preference for the OSCE as the main crisis-management institution, instead of (and at the expense of) the EU, demonstrates that the EU-28 is not the single default option for Germany's leadership and indicates a more instrumental German foreign policy approach towards the EU.

In the early phases of the conflict, dialogue and negotiation formats focused on mediation efforts between the government and the opposition in Kiev. While EU High Representative Catherine Ashton initially led negotiations in Kiev, the Weimar triangle (Germany, France, and Poland) was used as a format for crisis management when the situation escalated into violent clashes on 19–20 February 2014. Foreign ministers Steinmeier, Fabius and Sikorski brokered a deal between the opposition and Yanukovych. For Germany, co-opting both France and Poland reinforced the legitimacy of its crisis-management efforts.⁴⁰ At that time, the Weimar triangle was an important framework for Poland in particular when it came to anchoring its ambition for a major role within the EU, as well as a useful instrument for reassuring Poland vis-à-vis its concerns over too soft a stance towards Russia.⁴¹

39 Hanns W. Maull, Germany and the Art of Coalition-building, *Journal of European Integration* 30:1, 2008, pp. 131–152.

40 Nevertheless, Central European member states in particular demonstrated significant divergences in their approach towards the Ukraine conflict. See Joerg Forbrig, Central European Responses to the Russia-Ukraine Crisis, GMF Europe Policy Paper, February 2015.

41 Tobias Bunde, Dominik P. Jankowski, Martin Michelot, Reassurance First: Goals for an Ambitious Weimar Triangle, Center for European Analysis, 10 June 2014, <http://www.cepa.org/content/reassurance-first-goals-ambitious-weimar-triangle> (accessed 30 October 2015).

After the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of fighting in Eastern Ukraine, dialogue and negotiation formats shifted to mediation efforts between Ukraine and Russia. The first format was the so-called Geneva format between Ukraine, Russia, the United States and the EU, represented by High Representative Catherine Ashton. In talks on April 17, the participants agreed on the disarmament and withdrawal of Russian-backed separatists in Eastern Ukraine. The Geneva format is the only dialogue format in which Germany was not explicitly involved at the negotiation table. Nevertheless, the German foreign minister engaged in intense shuttle diplomacy before the meeting and called for renewed Geneva talks when the agreement was not implemented in the weeks that followed. His efforts to secure a second meeting failed due to Russia's resistance to meeting without the participation of the separatists. Foreign Minister Lavrov later called the Geneva format a 'closed chapter'⁴² and criticized the involvement of EU and the United States.

As a result of the failed Geneva format, the main dialogue and negotiation platform shifted to the so-called 'Normandy format' between Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia, after a meeting held in Normandy in June 2014. Direct mediation efforts were thereby upgraded to the level of heads of state and government, accompanied by continued talks between the foreign ministers. It is not entirely clear why Poland has left centre stage as far as the negotiations are concerned. It could either be due to Polish concerns about how to sell the meagre results of the crisis-management process to its domestic audience, or because of Russian pressure.⁴³ It demonstrates, however, the extent to which the initial phases of the crisis-management efforts were policy-making 'on the fly', with an experimental trial-and-error approach towards formats and instruments. The Normandy format reflects the classical format of European leadership, with the German-French tandem as the 'engine' of European policy-making.

Despite the success of the Normandy format, which negotiated the second Minsk agreement in February 2015 with more detailed and sequenced commitments, the various formats and informal coalitions of member states initiated by Germany during crisis-management

42 "Lawrow: Nur Kiew und Separatisten können Lösung aushandeln", FAZ, 19 November 2014, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/europa/ukraine-krise-sergej-lawrow-will-keine-gespraechе-mit-westen-13274570.html> (accessed 30 October 2015).

43 Piotr Buras, Has Germany sidelined Poland in Ukraine crisis negotiations? ECFR Commentary, 27 August 2014, http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_has_germany_sidelined_poland_in_ukraine_crisis_negotiations301 (accessed 30 October 2015).

efforts have raised concerns about the lack of a role for EU institutions and representatives, as voiced, for instance, by former German ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger⁴⁴ as well as former Polish foreign minister Radek Sikorski, who complained that ‘on Ukraine, the EU is not even at the negotiating table’.⁴⁵ This raises questions about the ‘legitimacy and mandate’⁴⁶ of member states’ and particularly Germany’s leadership. Although crisis management is traditionally an intergovernmental policy field due to the fast-paced nature of events,⁴⁷ the cases of negotiations with Iran as well as between Serbia and Kosovo have demonstrated the potential for a significant role for EU representatives. However, the lengthy transition period after the European parliamentary elections in May 2014 created a vacuum which was only filled in November 2014 with the appointment of Donald Tusk as European Council President, Jean-Claude Juncker as Commission President and Federica Mogherini as the new High Representative. Mogherini has not continued Catherine Ashton’s initial efforts and has instead adopted more of a coordinating role.⁴⁸ She also lost credibility with her ‘reconciliatory’ non-paper on Russia from January 2015.⁴⁹

In contrast to the establishment of an EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia after the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008, in the case of Ukraine no Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) mechanisms have been activated, despite Ukraine’s calls for a greater role for the

44 Wolfgang Ischinger, Deutschland in der Hegemonie-Falle, *Project Syndicate*, 14 September 2015, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/germany-should-support-common-eu-foreign-policy-by-wolfgang-ischinger-2015-09/german> (accessed 30 October 2015).

45 Radek Sikorski, “Member states must back their jointly chosen EU leaders”, *Financial Times*, 16 August 2015, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/92f54bb8-3791-11e5-bdbb-35e55cbae175.html#axzz3wwboQ2Zn> (accessed 30 October 2015).

46 Kristi Raik, “No zero-sum game among EU foreign policy actors”, FIIA Commentary 8, March 2015.

47 Chris Ansell, Arjen Boin, Paul 't Hart, Political Leadership in Times of Crisis, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Leadership*, 2014, pp. 418–438. Wolfgang Wagner, Why the EU’s common foreign and security policy will remain intergovernmental, *Journal of European Public Policy* 10:4, 2003, pp. 576–595.

48 Ulrich Speck, German Power and the Ukraine conflict, *CarnegieEurope*, 26 March 2015, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/2015/03/26/german-power-and-ukraine-conflict> (accessed 30 October 2015).

49 Kadri Liik, The real problem with Mogherini’s Russia paper, *ECFR Commentary*, 20 January 2015, http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_the_real_problem_with_mogherinis_russia_paper402 (accessed 30 October 2015).

EU in monitoring the ceasefire with a UN-mandated police force.⁵⁰ The lack of CSDP instruments also relates to Russia's perception of the EU as a party to the conflict.⁵¹ Only the EU Commission played an institutional role by facilitating energy security talks between Russia and Ukraine and securing a gas agreement in September 2015,⁵² as well as conducting talks between the Commission, Ukraine and Russia on the implementation of the DCFTA, which nonetheless failed despite a last-minute intervention by German foreign minister Steinmeier.⁵³

In consequence, while the institutional power of the EU has reinforced Germany's position and leadership role, the power of the European Union as an institution has not been correspondingly strengthened. The lack of a strong EU role was also noticed by the German public. In a poll conducted in August 2014, 62% said that the EU should confront Russia in a more forceful way. Germany's strong leadership role was supported by a majority of the public, with 59% agreeing that their country should take on a leading role in the Ukraine crisis.⁵⁴

Instead of the EU, Germany relied strongly on the OSCE as its institutional choice for crisis management on the ground in Eastern Ukraine and for establishing the initial talks between Ukraine and Russia. Germany pushed for a strong role for the OSCE from the outset (Steinmeier proposed an OSCE observer mission during his first official visit to Moscow in February 2014) and, together with the Swiss OSCE chairship, led efforts for the deployment of a Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine in March 2014, which was later also tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Further, Germany was closely involved in the shuttle diplomacy of the Swiss OSCE chairship for the establishment of a trilateral contact group at

50 EU police as peacekeepers in Ukraine? Deutsche Welle, 19 February 2015, <http://www.dw.com/en/eu-police-as-peacekeepers-in-ukraine/a-18269929> (accessed 30 October 2015).

51 Ronja Kempin/ Margarete Klein, Plädoyer für eine EU-Russland-Friedensmission in der Ukraine, SWP Kurz Gesagt, 20 February 2015, <http://www.swp-berlin.org/publikationen/kurz-gesagt/plaedoyer-fuer-eine-eu-russland-friedensmission-in-der-ukraine.html> (accessed 30 February 2015).

52 European Commission, EU-Ukraine-Russia talks agree on the terms of a binding protocol to secure gas supplies for the coming winter, 25 September 2015, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-15-5724_en.htm (accessed 30 October 2015).

53 "Germany pushes EU-Russia deal to avert Ukraine trade pact tension", *Financial Times*, 1 December 2015, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/4ee93654-9840-11e5-9228-87e603d47bdc.html#axzz3wwboQ2Zn> (accessed 30 December 2015).

54 ARD-Deutschlandtrend, August 2014, <http://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/ard-deutschlandtrend/2014/august/> (accessed 30 October 2015).

the beginning of June 2014 under Swiss ambassador Heidi Tagliavini, which led to the conclusion of the first Minsk agreement on September 5, 2014 between Moscow, Kiev and pro-Russian separatists.⁵⁵ This preference for the OSCE over the EU as an institution for immediate crisis management is also related to the OSCE instruments, with existing contingency plans making a quick deployment of observers on the ground possible, coupled with the strong Swiss OSCE chairship, which immediately offered OSCE support for crisis management. As a result, the OSCE gained importance as an institution for crisis management and emerged from the conflict reinforced, while the EU has been weakened. The OSCE will remain relevant as an institutional partner for Germany with the German OSCE chairship in 2016.⁵⁶

'No military solution': A continuum of German foreign policy

Throughout the Ukraine crisis, Germany has demonstrated a preference for diplomatic and economic instruments over military ones, both in the debate about lethal defensive weapon deliveries to Ukraine as well as the stationing of permanent NATO troops in Central European countries. Both questions were settled in line with Germany's position, with the United States expressing similar restraint in the question of lethal defensive weapon deliveries and a preference for rotating instead of permanent forces. This demonstrates Germany's ability to take issues off the agenda and to find support for its position. Nevertheless, the application of military instruments has not been ruled out in principle nor due to a pacifist position: Germany did engage militarily in a limited framework for the reassurance of Central European member states.

At the beginning of 2015, at the height of the debate both in Europe and the US about lethal defensive weapon deliveries to Ukraine, Merkel stated early and publicly that she opposed arming the Ukrainian military against Russian-backed separatists.⁵⁷ She reiterated this stance at the Munich Security Conference (MSC) in February, arguing that

55 Christian Nünlist, Testfall Ukraine-Krise: Das Konfliktmanagement der OSZE unter Schweizer Vorsitz, Bulletin 2014 zur Schweizerischen Sicherheitspolitik, pp. 35-61, <http://www.css.ethz.ch/publications/pdfs/Bulletin-2014-03-Testfall-Ukraine-Krise.pdf> (accessed 30 October 2015).

56 Petri Hakkarainen/ Christian Nünlist, Trust and Realpolitik: The OSCE in 2016, Policy Perspectives Vol. 4/1, CSS ETH Zürich, January 2016.

57 "Proposed us weapons deliveries to Ukraine raise fears of further escalation", Deutsche Welle, 5 February 2015, <http://www.dw.com/en/proposed-us-weapons-deliveries-to-ukraine-raise-fears-of-further-escalation/a-18235091> (accessed 30 October 2015).

there was no military solution to the conflict since Russia could always increase its supply of weapons and soldiers.⁵⁸ Interestingly, she did not question the applicability of military instruments in principle out of a pacifist position, but argued in terms of policy contingency against the usefulness of military instruments in this specific situation. Heading directly to Washington, D.C. after the MSC, Merkel received support from US President Obama for her stance, which again added legitimacy to her leadership role within the EU.⁵⁹

Germany also played an important role with regard to the question of the permanent stationing of NATO troops in Eastern NATO member states. Against Polish and Baltic demands, Germany insisted on the validity of the NATO–Russia Founding Act⁶⁰ and opposed the stationing of permanent NATO troops in Central European member states.⁶¹ Instead, a NATO very high readiness joint task force (VJTF) was agreed upon at the NATO Summit in Wales in September, which should be deployable within two days, thereby trying to reassure the security concerns of the Eastern NATO member states.⁶² As a framework nation, Germany takes a leading role in the build-up of the VJTF, and the first exercise took place in Germany on 4–5 March 2015, involving the 1st German–Netherlands Corps, which is also acting as the Interim VJTF.⁶³ Furthermore, as ‘partners in leadership’⁶⁴, Germany and the US established a Transatlantic Capability Enhancement and Training (TACET) initiative, joined by the UK in October 2015,

58 Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel anlässlich der 51. Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz, 7 February 2015, <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Rede/2015/02/2015-02-07-merkel-sicherheitskonferenz.html> (accessed 30 October 2015).

59 Michael Kofman/ Matthew Rojansky, U.S. and German Views on Ukraine. The Risks of Trans-Atlantic Misunderstanding, FES Perspective, June 2015.

60 Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, France, 27 May 1997, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm (accessed 30 October 2015).

61 Merkel sceptical of NATO deployments in Eastern Europe, *EurActiv*, 3 July 2014, <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/europes-east/merkel-sceptical-nato-deployments-eastern-europe-303276> (accessed 30 October 2015).

62 Wales Summit Declaration, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales, 5 September 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm (accessed 30 October 2015).

63 NATO–Speerspitze: Deutschland wird 2019 Rahmennation, *BMVG*, 9 October 2015, http://www.bmvg.de/portal/a/bmvg!/ut/p/c4/NYS9E4lWEET_UY70WMQOhsaCxcgaxCYETTVM1x4GNP96kcHfmFftm4QmlUR_ONGOK2SMDJOPX-SPmCdJxSjuvVwxoVkurRd5y8sj4hrFeFytMipYr2UbgQkeaE4mciHo101ExAhevgtl3jWz-kd_2fFHDcFKqv3V3yc60Pybb5bw!/ (accessed 30 October 2015).

64 See chapter by Tobias Bunde in this report.

which co-ordinates military activities, training and exercises in the Baltic states and Poland.⁶⁵

In sum, when it comes to military engagement, on the one hand, Germany remained committed to its 'culture of military restraint', as formulated by former foreign minister Guido Westerwelle, and acted in line with its traditional foreign policy principles of a civilian power. On the other hand, military engagement has not been ruled out in principle or due to a pacifist approach, but due to practical reasoning: In the question of lethal defensive weapon deliveries to Ukraine as these would be no match for Russian deliveries, and in the question of reassuring Eastern neighbours because a permanent stationing of troops might unnecessarily provoke Russia. Instead, Germany has engaged in other reassurance measures, for instance the VJTF and the TACET initiative. 'No military solution' remained a continuum of German foreign policy, but while preference is given to political solutions, Germany did engage militarily in a limited framework, suggesting change within the continuity of Germany's foreign policy.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the conflict, Germany was at the centre of a tightly-knit web of multilateral and international crisis-management activities. Germany's leadership approach – the partners, institutions and instruments it has chosen to master the crisis – gives rise to three observations regarding the country's role in Europe:

Firstly, the European response to the crisis has been shaped to a large extent by Germany. If impact is benchmarked by comparing the initial German proposal for crisis management – the three-tier framework – with the actual shape and outcome of crisis-management activities by the end of 2015, Germany's ideas and approaches have become widely accepted and have prevailed within the EU, and also to some extent within the transatlantic alliance. Although the European response has certainly not been 100% 'German only' and has also been shaped by the preferences and engagement of other member states, particularly France, it has been more German than Polish, British

65 "Defence Secretary announces more support in Baltics and Ukraine", Ministry of Defence and The Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP, 8 October 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/defence-secretary-announces-more-support-in-baltics-and-ukraine> (accessed 30 October 2015).

or American, for instance. During the Ukraine conflict, Europe's response can therefore indeed be described as a 'German European' one. This impact has been made easier since no convincing alternative approaches have been formulated by other European actors, and the US has, in some important areas such as military engagement, grown closer to Germany's position.⁶⁶

Further, Germany's assertion of a leadership role faced limited resistance, and was indeed welcomed and expected both by European and transatlantic actors: The US President explicitly praised German leadership, closely consulted with Berlin and took the back seat in negotiation formats. Moreover, as the longest-serving politician within the EU, the seniority of the chancellor's position, as well as her personal history and ties to Russia, added further weight and legitimacy to Germany's leadership assertion within Europe and the United States. It was only when the normative foundation of Germany's leadership was perceived as losing legitimacy in the case of Nord Stream 2 that Germany's prominent leadership role came in for criticism amid assertions of dominance and hegemony.⁶⁷ The Ukraine conflict has therefore demonstrated that Germany can assume a leadership role within Europe if leadership is legitimized by normative principles and leading by example. In its pursuit of military restraint (although not excluding military instruments in principle and, for instance, engaging in reassuring Central European states), Germany has also sustained its 'civilian power' approach to foreign policy, which was also mirrored in the European response.

Secondly, while the institutional backing of the EU has strengthened Germany's position and leadership role, the power of the European Union as an institution has not been similarly strengthened. In the manner of a global power, Germany has picked and chosen the partners, institutions and instruments it deemed necessary for the implementation of its crisis-management framework, with a marginal role for EU representatives, institutions and mechanisms apart from the intergovernmental CFSP process for a common sanctions policy. While there are certainly many practical and situation-contingent reasons why OSCE mechanisms, for instance, were preferred over CSDP ones, these choices nevertheless reveal that the EU is not the single

66 Liana Fix, Has Germany Led the West's Response toward Russia and Will It Stay the Course? AICGS Transatlantic Perspectives Essay, 31 December 2015.

67 Germany Is Real Target of Italy's Opposition to Russia's Planned Nord Stream Two, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 13:11, 18 January 2016.

default option for Germany in policy formulation and implementation in crisis management, but one choice among others, with alternative policy frameworks selected below (informal member state coalitions) or outside the EU-28 (OSCE). The pattern emerging from this crisis-management framework involved a number of partners, institutions and instruments that have changed over time (laying to rest the Weimar and Geneva format, for instance), reflecting the experimental ‘trial-and-error’ character of policy-making ‘on the fly’ in a crisis situation. Germany prioritized the implementation of its crisis-management framework with whatever instruments seemed to be most useful over fostering a strong leadership role for the European Union, anchored in institutions. To this end, the EU as an institution has been weakened compared to the OSCE, and the Ukraine conflict contributed to a ‘German moment’ instead of a ‘European moment’.

Thirdly, it is difficult to generalize from this case to broader trends in German foreign policy with regard to change or continuity – the Ukraine conflict could be argued to be, due to the gravity of the case, both the exception to the rule or the ‘smoking gun’ evidence for change. Nevertheless, the pattern revealed in this case-specific analysis of Germany’s foreign and European policy – the self-confidence to take on a prominent role outside the EU-28, selectively choosing the partners, institutions and instruments for implementing one’s own approach – is a common finding among observers of Germany’s foreign and European policy,⁶⁸ and therefore likely to be characteristic of a more instrumental and self-confident German approach towards the EU in the future.

Furthermore, the Ukraine conflict is likely to have strengthened Germany’s readiness to take on a leadership role in foreign and security policy. Despite fatigue as well as critique, Germany’s leadership in a security crisis situation was in principle accepted within the German public, the EU and the transatlantic alliance. The number of German citizens supporting a stronger international German engagement rose throughout 2014 and 2015 to 40%, although 55% still prefer German restraint.⁶⁹ Therefore, despite a likely stronger German readiness to

68 Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik – “Sonderhefte, Früher, entschiedener und substantieller”? Die neue Debatte über Deutschlands Außenpolitik, hrsg. Hellmann, Gunther, Jacobi, Daniel, Stark Urrestarazu, Úrsula, 2015.

69 Aktualisierung 2015: Körber-Umfrage: Einmischen oder Zurückhalten? http://www.koerber-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user_upload/internationale_politik/sonderthemen/umfrage_aussenpolitik/2015/Koerber-Stiftung_Umfrage-Aussenpolitik-2015_Zusammenfassung.pdf (accessed 30 December 2015).

adopt a leadership position, the contextual conditions for German leadership have to be favourable: it has to be an area of German interests where Germany's crisis-management approach and experience can be usefully applied and where Germany faces no significant resistance or rivals in leadership. Given the current situation of the European Union in general, the lack of leadership alternatives and the multitude of crises the EU is facing, Germany's action or inaction matters more than ever. In various policy fields, Germany is the actor ultimately responsible for action or inaction on the part of the EU – in other words, Germany is 'system relevant'.⁷⁰

The long-term counterfactual question that remains for Germany's leadership in the Ukraine conflict is whether the German approach was actually the best framework for dealing with the conflict and whether alternative partners, institutions and instruments – for instance a stronger US role, more active EU representatives, institutions and mechanisms, or stronger military engagement on the Ukrainian side – could have led to a more successful outcome in terms of conflict resolution. Here, the test for German leadership will be whether the Minsk II agreement can be successfully implemented during Germany's OSCE chairmanship – and what else Germany can do should it fail.

70 Barbara Lippert, *Deutsche Europapolitik zwischen Tradition und Irritation. Beobachtungen aus aktuellem Anlass*, Arbeitspapiere FG EU/Europa, 7 October 2015.

Relations with Powers & Partners

6

6. The Domestic Sources of German Foreign Policy Towards Russia

Tuomas Forsberg

Under the leadership of Chancellor Angela Merkel, Germany has played a crucial role in shaping the European response to the Ukrainian conflict. When the crisis in Ukraine escalated in February–March 2014, Germany was ready to assume the role of mediator, or at least to serve as a contact partner for Russia. Yet Germany was also willing to advocate tougher action in terms of sanctions if Russia escalated the crisis. A third leg in Germany's policy was support for Ukraine. In formulating this response to Russia's action, Germany was also pushing for the unity of the West and the EU in particular. Germany ruled out the use of military force as a solution to the crisis but believed in the power of long-term efforts in tackling the challenge.

Germany's relations with Russia have been deemed crucial, not only in terms of the Ukraine conflict but also with regard to the European security system as a whole. In the past, since the late 1960s, Germany has conducted foreign policy that has aimed at acknowledging Russia's legitimate security concerns and integrating the country into the European and transatlantic security structures. Germany's behaviour has been seen as deviating from this traditional pattern particularly because of its willingness to invoke sanctions against Russia, with various explanations being given. At the same time, questions have been raised over the sustainability of German foreign policy vis-à-vis Russia and the manageability of the Ukraine conflict.¹ German foreign

1 See e.g. Wolfgang Seibel, 'Arduous learning or new uncertainties? German diplomacy and the Ukrainian crisis', *Global Policy*, Supplement S1, 2015, pp. 56–72. For a Russian view, see Viktor Vasiliev, 'Germany's Ostpolitik: Controversial Evolution', *International Affairs (Moscow)* 61:2, 2015, 15–29.

policy is often seen as a struggle between two camps. In fact, it is often suspected that Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, for both historical and ideological reasons, differ in their policy towards Russia, the former being more hard-line and the latter more soft-line. The picture is, however, more complex than this, as Chancellor Merkel and the governing Christian Democrat (CDU and CSU) and Social Democrat (SPD) coalition have been driving the sanctions policy, while being challenged by her opponents both within and outside the coalition. The policy towards Russia is, however, not the biggest problem that Merkel faces in terms of her popularity – the refugee crisis is – but the situation nevertheless makes it imperative to analyze the domestic background to Germany’s policy towards Russia since such an analysis helps both explain it better and predict possible changes to it.

There are three basic variants when it comes to explaining foreign policy through domestic politics: the first centres on government and leadership, the second on interest groups, and the third on media and public opinion. When we look at the formation of German foreign policy in terms of the leadership and government coalitions, the standard assumption is usually that the Social Democrats are more willing to follow the cooperative ‘Ostpolitik’ tradition in German foreign policy than the Christian Democrats. When looking at the effects of interest groups, it is commonplace to pay attention to the business lobbies of Germany’s leading industrial sectors and how they define Germany’s national interest. For Stephen Szabo, ‘German business remains the key driver of German policy towards Russia’.² In particular, the German car industry had a strong interest in preserving stable cooperative relations with Russia. Finally, a third domestic political approach is to look at the role of the media and public opinion. German media and public opinion, with its alleged anti-American undercurrents, are supposedly the reason why Germany has been conducting a cooperative policy towards Russia, but it has also been claimed that there is a Russophobic bias in the media and public opinion that would explain Germany’s behaviour in the Ukraine conflict and its policy towards Russia.

I have written on German Ostpolitik elsewhere claiming that the interactional dynamics between the German and Russian leaders account for Germany’s foreign policy towards Russia better than

2 Stephen Szabo, *Germany, Russia and the rise of geo-economics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 47.

domestic politics.³ Domestic politics is nevertheless an important field to look at. I will start this exploration of the domestic political origins of Germany's policy towards Russia in the context of the Ukraine crisis by examining the key politicians and parties, before moving on to the interest groups followed by the media and public opinion.

THE KEY POLITICIANS AND PARTIES

German policy towards Russia is traditionally shaped by the federal chancellor. When Merkel was elected chancellor of Germany in 2005, it was expected that German–Russian relations would not be as close as they had previously been under Schröder and Putin. Schröder not only continued the Ostpolitik tradition of friendly relations, he also searched for joint political positions with the Kremlin on international issues such as the Iraq War, and refrained from criticizing Russia for defects in the rule of law or human rights violations. His relationship with Putin was intimate and his interest in Russia also had a very personal dimension that led to common vacations and the adoption of an orphaned Russian girl. After the chancellorship, Schröder's Russian orientation manifested itself in his chairmanship of the board of the Nord Stream pipeline company. Schröder's attitude towards Russia and Putin is best remembered for his emphasis on Russia's importance in world politics and his defence of Putin's credibility as a champion of democracy.⁴

In contrast to Schröder, Merkel was more willing to raise concerns with regard to Russia's democratic development and human rights situation.⁵ Like her predecessor, however, she fostered trade and economic cooperation and was prudent when it came to security policy. She did not, for example, support the idea of NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine, which was promoted by Washington at the time of the Bucharest summit in April 2008. While Merkel was suspicious of Putin from the outset, she had a much warmer relationship with Dmitry Medvedev when he served as President of Russia from 2008 to 2012, during which time a German–Russian partnership of

3 Tuomas Forsberg, 'From Ostpolitik to 'Frostpolitik'? Merkel, Putin and German Foreign Policy towards Russia', *International Affairs*, vol. 92 no. 1, 2016, pp. 21–42.

4 See Gerhard Schröder, *Entscheidungen: Mein Leben in der Politik*. Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 2006.

5 Alexander Rahr, 'Germany and Russia: A Special Relationship', *The Washington Quarterly*, volume 30, issue 2, 2007.

modernization was concluded and discussions over European security structures conducted.⁶

Merkel reacted strongly to Russia's occupation and annexation of Crimea and subsequently to Russian military involvement in Eastern Ukraine. Right after the occupation of Crimea, Merkel made it clear that Russia had violated international law and a partnership would not work without a core set of shared values. Merkel tried to convince Putin to cancel the referendum in Crimea. When this did not happen and annexation ensued, she opted for targeted sanctions and advocated further sanctions if Russia took further military action in Ukraine. When the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine escalated, she called for a ceasefire and urged Putin to use his authority and influence over the separatists there.⁷ She also showed solidarity with the new Ukrainian leadership and supported Ukraine's expanding ties with the EU, speaking in favour of new energy political solutions for Europe to reduce dependency on Russia. She declared, however, that the fundamentals of Ostpolitik had not changed: in the mid-term or the long-term, the partnership with Russia would be continued.⁸

From the onset of the Ukrainian crisis, Merkel spoke regularly with Putin over the phone and orchestrated international solutions to the crisis. In March 2014, Merkel succeeded in mediating an OSCE-based, fact-finding mission to Ukraine. That same summer, she reportedly attempted to broker a solution to the crisis that would have included Russia's delivery of gas to Ukraine and its acceptance of Ukraine's association agreement with the EU, while the West had refrained from offering NATO membership to Ukraine and had lifted the sanctions without formal recognition of Crimea as a part of Russia.⁹ Merkel was seemingly reticent over the ceasefire agreement that was achieved in Minsk in September 2014, but she continued to point out breaches over

6 Kornelius, Angela Merkel, p. 181; 'German-Russian Relations: Medvedev Charms Merkel at Munich Summit', *Der Spiegel*, 17 July 2009 and Andrew Rettman, 'Germany and Russia call for new EU security committee', *EuObserver*, 7 June 2010, <https://euobserver.com/foreign/30223>.

7 'Dancing with the Bear: Merkel Seeks a Hardline on Putin', *Spiegel Online*, 24 March 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/merkel-and-europe-search-for-an-adequate-response-to-putin-a-960378.html>.

8 'Merkel will "enge Partnerschaft mit Russland" fortsetzen', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 16 May 2014, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/die-kanzlerin-in-der-f-a-z-merkel-will-enge-partnerschaft-mit-russland-fortsetzen-12941420.html>.

9 Margareta Pagano, 'Land for gas: Merkel and Putin discussed secret deal could end Ukraine crisis', *The Independent*, 17 August 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/land-for-gas-secret-german-deal-could-end-ukraine-crisis-9638764.html#>.

the course of the autumn. Merkel did not travel to the International Investment Forum in Sochi in October 2014, but she met with Putin in Milan in October, and in Brisbane in November. These meetings made it clear that the German and Russian leaders disagreed over the causes and resolution of the Ukraine conflict, but they also indicated that Merkel was ready to engage in dialogue and that Putin still regarded Merkel as his most important interlocutor in Europe.¹⁰ Yet the attempts to conduct a dialogue on what Russia really wanted turned out to be a dead-end.¹¹ Despite this, Merkel still invested a lot of personal authority in achieving a renegotiated ceasefire between the parties in Minsk in February 2015.

Merkel regarded the negotiated way as the only option in solving the conflict in Ukraine. She emphasized the impact of the sanctions, which would not be lifted before the Minsk agreement was fulfilled, but she resisted new sanctions and rejected the idea of delivering lethal weapons to Ukraine. In the speech held at the annual Munich security conference in February 2015, Merkel criticized Russia harshly for violating international law and breaking its commitments. However, she also stated that the crisis in Ukraine could not be solved by military means.¹² Instead, she started to emphasize that the conflict would require long-term commitment and patience before it ended. As another balancing act, Merkel also decided not to travel to Moscow to attend the military parade and celebrate the anniversary of the end of the Second World War, but was instead willing to travel to Moscow the following day to pay her respects at the graves of fallen soldiers.¹³ Merkel tied the sanctions to progress with regard to the Minsk agreement: she considered it too early to ease the sanctions in winter 2016, but also explained that in principle she would be in

10 Peter Müller, 'Gespräch in Brisbane: Merkel verliert die Geduld mit Putin', Spiegel Online, 15 November 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/g20-gipfel-merkel-wirft-putin-wegen-ukraine-expansionsstreben-vor-a-1003107.html>.

11 Noah Barkin and Andreas Rinke, 'Merkel hits diplomatic dead-end with Putin', Reuters, 25 November 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/25/us-ukraine-crisis-germany-insight-idUSKCN0J91EN20141125>.

12 Angela Merkel, 'Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel anlässlich der 51. Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz', Munich, 7 February 2015. <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Rede/2015/02/2015-02-07-merkel-sicherheitskonferenz.html>.

13 'Merkel bleibt Weltkriegsgedenkfeier in Moskau fern', Die Zeit Online 11 March 2015, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2015-03/angela-merkel-moskau-militaerparade-absage>.

favour of lifting them but complained that there was no trust.¹⁴ At the same time, Merkel was ready to defend the plans for a second Russian-German pipeline, Nordstream 2, despite allegations that it would weaken Ukraine.¹⁵

Most of the other leading CDU politicians adopted similar positions or used even harsher language than Merkel. Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble, for example, compared Russia's actions in Ukraine to the expansionism of Nazi Germany. When speaking to a group of schoolchildren, Schäuble argued that Hitler adopted similar methods when he annexed the Sudetenland. "That's something that we all know from history," he claimed.¹⁶ Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen was more careful, stressing diplomatic solutions to the crisis and rejecting Ukraine's membership of NATO.¹⁷ Later, she argued that Russia had destroyed a massive amount of trust, but also that NATO should still stick to the commitments that it had made to Russia in the Founding Act.¹⁸ At the same time, some of the older Christian Democrat guard associated themselves with the critics of the government's line, such as Kohl's advisor, Horst Teltschik, and the former Federal President, Roman Herzog. Teltschik, for example, was one of the initiators of an open letter entitled "Another War in Europe – not in our name", published in *die Zeit* in December 2014. The letter appealed for 'a new policy of détente' and warned German politicians and the media about demonizing Russia and the Russians.¹⁹

In winter 2016, rather surprisingly, Merkel was criticized by the leader of the Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), and the Prime Minister of Bavaria, Horst Seehofer, who regarded the sanctions as a mistake and called for them to be relaxed.²⁰ He did not

14 'Vorerst kein Ende der Sanktionen', Tagesschau, 1 February 2016, <https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/poroschenko-merkel-105.html>; 'Insider – Merkel generell zu Wegfall von Russland-Sanktionen bereit', Reuters, 16 February 2016, <http://de.reuters.com/article/ukraine-russland-sanktionen-merkel-idDEKCN0VP27K>.

15 Gabriele Steinhauser, 'Germany's Merkel Defends Russian Gas Pipeline Plan', Wall Street Journal, 18 December 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/germanys-merkel-defends-russian-gas-pipeline-plan-1450447499>.

16 Christian Reiermann, 'Fighting Words: Schäuble Says Putin's Crimea Plans Reminiscent of Hitler', Spiegel Online 31 March 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/schauble-compares-putin-moves-in-crimea-to-policies-of-hitler-a-961696.html>.

17 "Wir werden den Konflikt friedlich lösen", Bild, 7 April 2014, <http://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/Content/DE/Interview/2014/04/2014-04-07-von-der-leyen-bild.html>.

18 'German Defense Minister: 'Russia Has Destroyed a Massive Amount of Trust'', Spiegel Online, 11 June 2014.

19 'Wieder Krieg in Europa? Nicht in unserem Namen', Die Zeit, 5 December 2014.

20 'Seehofer stellt Sanktionen gegen Russland infrage', Die Welt, 18 December 2015.

deny the validity of the original reason for imposing the sanctions, but argued that the aims could not be achieved with such measures. As there were currently many other problems to deal with, namely the war in Syria and the refugee crisis, it would be important to foster closer political relations with Russia. In February 2016, he visited Moscow, where he met with Putin in a small circle. Seehofer claimed that he had agreed the trip with Merkel, but it became plain that Merkel was not happy with Seehofer's diplomatic activity in the matter. Seehofer was widely criticized in public and, for example, the experienced foreign policy opinion leader and CDU Member of the European Parliament, Elmar Brok, demanded Seehofer not to distance himself from the joint European positions with regard to the sanctions policy against Russia.²¹

Generally speaking, the Social Democrats were more cautious than the conservatives when it came to criticizing Russia. Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier was known to be Schröder's trusted man and a staunch supporter of a cooperative Ostpolitik. In the first grand coalition government, Steinmeier openly criticized Merkel with regard to her policy towards Russia, accusing her of appeasing domestic opinion too much and attempting to isolate Russia.²² At first, Steinmeier did not support sanctions against Russia, considering it particularly inappropriate to exclude Russia from the G8. Later, however, it was very difficult to discern any significant difference between his stance and Merkel's. Steinmeier supported the EU policy of three stages of sanctions and argued that 'no-one in Europe believes that we could simply return to business as usual in our dealings with Russia following the annexation of Crimea'. He reacted angrily to pro-Russian demonstrators telling him that the world is complicated. Moreover, he warned the Kremlin that 'Russia can be in no doubt that it will have to reckon with a strong reaction if it wants to go beyond Crimea'.²³ On the other hand, he was quick to praise Putin for his constructive moves and he also had to defend the German Ukraine policy against accusations that it was too weak and smacked of appeasement. He explained that in the NATO ministerial council he was accused of being too soft on Russia, but when 'I come back to Germany ... I am attacked on the grounds

21 'Nach Moskaureise: Seehofer erntet Kritik aus eigenen Reihen', *Der Spiegel*, 5 February 2016.

22 'Kritik an Merkels Außenpolitik "Ängstlicher Blick auf die Schlagzeile"', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 November 2007.

23 Matthias Nass and Michael Thumann, 'Frank-Walter Steinmeier: "Das ist politisch inakzeptabel"', Interview of Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, *Die Zeit*, 16 April 2014; 'Steinmeier warnt vor Sanktionen gegen Moskau', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 20 April 2014 and Steinmeier: 'Aufgeben ist keine Option', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6 May 2014.

that we have absolutely no understanding for Russia'.²⁴ In November 2014 Merkel and Steinmeier assured the Bundestag that there was no difference between them and that all actions had been coordinated and mutually agreed.²⁵ Nevertheless, Steinmeier continued to issue public statements seeking accommodation with Russia, which could easily be interpreted as contradicting Merkel's stance. In December, amid the collapse of the rouble, Steinmeier warned that further sanctions would not be good for European security and that one should not bring Russia to its knees.²⁶ In June 2015, before the G7 meeting in Germany, he regarded Russia's return to the G8 as desirable.²⁷ Despite the differences in rhetoric, both Steinmeier and Merkel criticized Russia for its excessive use of military force against civilians in Syria in early 2016.²⁸

Some prominent SPD politicians, such as SPD leader and Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy Sigmar Gabriel, also expressed criticism of Russia. For instance, he urged Russia to negotiate and distance itself from the violence in eastern Ukraine.²⁹ He also opined that there was no alternative to Russian gas but did not regard it as a problem for Germany, since the Soviet Union had been willing to deliver gas during the worst times of the Cold War, too. Moreover, defending common values was, for him, more important than economic gains.³⁰ Most SPD members were sceptical about the sanctions, however, and hoped that they would be lifted when Russia accepted the outcome of the presidential election held in Ukraine in May 2014. Critical views towards Russia mounted, particularly after Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 was shot down in Eastern Ukraine in July.³¹ Many SPD politicians

- 24 Stefan Wagstyl, 'Steinmeier feels pressure as Russia outburst goes viral', *Financial Times*, 24–25 May 2014; 'Steinmeier verteidigt deutsche Ukraine-Politik', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 11 September 2014.
- 25 'Merkel bekräftigt Einigkeit der Koalition gegenüber Putin', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 November 2014.
- 26 'Russland nicht in die Knie bringen', Interview with Frank-Walter Steinmeier, *Der Spiegel*, 20 December 2014.
- 27 Burkhard Ewert, 'Steinmeier setzt auf Rückkehr Moskaus in Kreis der G8', Interview with Frank-Walter Steinmeier, *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung*, 4 June 2015, <http://www.noz.de/deutschland-welt/politik/artikel/581980/steinmeier-setzt-auf-rueckkehr-moskaus-in-kreis-der-g8>.
- 28 'Steinmeier kritisiert Russlands Vorgehen in Syrien', *Die Welt*, 6 February 2016, <http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article151917157/Steinmeier-kritisiert-Russlands-Vorgehen-in-Syrien.html>.
- 29 'Russland muss handeln', Interview mit Sigmar Gabriel, *Passauer Presse*, 14 March 2014.
- 30 'Gabriel sieht keine Alternative zu russischem Gas', *Zeit Online*, 18 March 2014, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/2014-03/gabriel-russland-gas>.
- 31 Severin Weiland, 'MH17-Abschuss: CDU und SPD fordern Härte gegenüber Putin', *Der Spiegel*, 21 July 2014.

nevertheless continued to hint that the crisis should be resolved on the basis of accommodating Russian perspectives. In August 2014, Gabriel argued for the federalization of Ukraine.³² In November, former Chairman of the Party and Minister-President of Brandenburg Matthias Platzeck spoke of the need to acknowledge the annexed Crimea as part of Russia, yet he later distanced himself from this stance.³³ Experienced SPD foreign policy experts went to great lengths to argue that a nostalgic policy of rapprochement and appeasement vis-à-vis the Kremlin would not help to resolve the crisis.³⁴

There were indeed many former SPD politicians who openly defended Russia and criticized the West. Maybe the most prominent representative of those empathetic towards Russia was former Chancellor Schröder, who argued that the European Commission had not understood that Ukraine is a culturally divided land, and that it was a mistake to force it to choose between an Association Agreement with the EU and a Customs Union with Russia.³⁵ Schröder's comments pleased neither the conservatives nor the Greens in the European Parliament, who wanted to silence him for his dubious position and own self-interest with regard to Russia.³⁶ For Schröder, the sanctions are only an obstacle to the solution of the crisis.³⁷ Yet Schröder was not the only Social Democrat *Altkanzler* who 'understood' Russia. Before his death, Helmut Schmidt also criticized the West and held that sanctions against Russia were stupid.³⁸ Another prominent SPD

32 'Gabriel plädiert für Föderalisierung der Ukraine', Die Welt, 23 August 2014.

33 'Russland-Politik: Ex-SPD-Chef Platzeck will Annexion der Krim anerkennen', Spiegel Online, 18 November 2014, 'Russland-Politik: SPD-Politiker Platzeck nimmt Aussagen zur Krim zurück', Spiegel Online, 19 November 2014.

34 Rolf Mützenich, 'Entspannung ist kein Appeasement: Wir brauchen vieles, aber keinen Kniefall von Moskau', Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft, 19 January 2015, <http://www.ipg-journal.de/kolumne/artikel/entspannung-ist-kein-appeasement-744/>; Karsten Voigt, 'Eine neue Phase der Russland- und Ostpolitik hat begonnen', in English: 'A New Phase of Russia and Ostpolitik Has Begun', <http://www.aicgs.org/issue/a-new-phase-of-russia-and-ostpolitik-has-begun/>.

35 'Ukraine-Konflikt: Schröder macht EU für Krim-Krise mitverantwortlich' <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/krim-krise-ex-kanzler-gerhard-schroeder-kritisiert-eu-a-957728.html>.

36 'Antrag im Europaparlament: EU-Abgeordnete wollen Schröder Sprechverbot zur Krim erteilen', Spiegel Online, 13 March 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/krim-eu-parlamentarier-wollen-gerhard-schroeder-maulkorb-verpassen-a-958405.html>.

37 'Sanktionen gegen Russland abbauen', Interview with Gerhard Schröder, Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (WAZ), 15 February 2016, <http://www.derwesten.de/politik/sanktionen-gegen-russland-abbauen-aimp-id11565764.html>

38 'Helmut Schmidt hat Verständnis für Putins Krim-Politik', Die Zeit <http://www.zeit.de/politik/2014-03/schmidt-krim-putin>.

member, Klaus von Dohnanyi, also opined that the Americans rather than the Russians had created the problem as they had attempted to bring Ukraine into NATO. Yet he also wanted to underline the fact that understanding Russia is not the same as justifying its actions.³⁹

Die Linke (Left Party) leader Gregor Gysi also defended Russia by regarding the West as being at least as culpable. What Russia did in Crimea was wrong in his view. Yet he stressed that ‘Germany and its allies aren’t behaving any differently’, and that is why criticism of Russia’s actions is hypocritical. In Gysi’s view, Russia’s use of force in Ukraine was comparable to the Western action in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya.⁴⁰ Gysi’s successor as leader of Die Linke, Sahra Wagenknecht, advocated Russia’s return to the G8 and dubbed Russia’s exclusion a mistake from the beginning, but she also strongly condemned the country with regard to its and other actors’ military operations against civilians in Syria.⁴¹

Curiously enough, the populist political movements on the right in Germany were also opposed to assisting Ukraine or sanctioning Russia, although the question divided the ranks of the Euro-critical party, Alternative for Germany.⁴² The party was also accused of benefitting from the Kremlin’s financial support, but these claims were vehemently denied.⁴³ The German far right also had difficulty in deciding whether they supported Putin or the Ukrainian nationalists: some prominent members of the National Democratic Party of Germany, however, were critical of the sanctions against Russia and participated in a meeting of

39 Klaus von Dohnanyi, ‘Was sie in die Knie zwingt’, Frankfurter Allgemeine, 18 April 2014 <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/was-sie-in-die-knie-zwingt-klaus-von-dohnanyi-zur-ukraine-krise-12914417.html>.

40 Roland Nelles and Fabian Reinbold, ‘Gysi-Interview zur Ukraine: “Der Westen hat auch alles falsch gemacht”’, Interview with Gregor Gysi, Spiegel Online 9 May 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/ukraine-gregor-gysi-im-interview-ueber-russland-und-merkels-politik-a-968391.html>. Sächsische Zeitung <http://www.sz-online.de/nachrichten/merkels-anti-militaer-maxime-zwischen-krim-und-kosovo-2795078.html>.

41 ‘Sahra Wagenknecht fordert Russland zurück in die G8’, N24, 5 January 2016, <http://www.n24.de/n24/Nachrichten/Politik/d/7862824/russland-zurueck-in-die-g8.html>; ‘Wagenknecht zu Bombardements in Syrien: “Es ist alles ein furchtbares Verbrechen”’, Deutschlandfunk, 11 February 2016, http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/wagenknecht-zu-bombardements-in-syrien-es-ist-alles-ein.694.de.html?dram:article_id=345194.

42 Bernd Lucke, ‘Putin spaltet die AfD’, Zeit Online, 28 August 2014, <http://www.zeit.de/2014/36/bernd-lucke-afd-putin-spaltung>.

43 ‘Geld von Putin: AfD wehrt sich gegen Vorwürfe’, Berliner Morgenpost, 3 February 2016, <http://www.morgenpost.de/politik/article207000025/Geld-von-Putin-AfD-wehrt-sich-gegen-Vorwuerfe.html>

the European far right that was held in St. Petersburg in March 2015 backing Russia's policy.⁴⁴

Other opposition parties mainly supported the government in its Russia policy during the Ukraine crisis. The Green party, which had stood for a values-oriented foreign policy approach towards Russia, regarded the sanctions as justified because Russia had violated international norms and divided Ukraine. Together with the Christian Democrats, the Greens were also most willing to advocate sharper sanctions should the Russian-sponsored offensive continue in Eastern Ukraine.⁴⁵ Yet there were also dissident voices, including former minister Jürgen Trittin and former vice-speaker of the parliament Antje Vollmer, who blamed the West and criticized the sanctions policy.⁴⁶

The Free Democrats, who had lost all of their Bundestag seats in the 2013 elections, also supported the sanctions against Russia on the basis of the liberal values of democracy, freedom, and international law.⁴⁷ As one of his last acts as Foreign Minister, Guido Westerwelle even participated in the march of the opposition in Kiev in December 2013, which irritated the Kremlin. Yet there was criticism of the sanctions among the Free Democrats as well. Most prominently, the former chairman of the party and longtime foreign minister from the 1970s to the 1990s, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, doubted the wisdom of the sanctions and showed understanding towards Putin's objectives.⁴⁸

Looking at Germany's representative political landscape, it can thus be argued that there was no clear-cut ideological divide between parties on the question of how to resume relations with Russia. Instead, positions on Russia were informed by personal historical experiences

44 'Treffen europäischer Rechtsextremisten: NPD-Politiker Voigt wirbt für Putins Politik', Spiegel Online, 23 March 2015, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/npd-politiker-udo-voigt-stellt-sich-hinter-putins-ukraine-politik-a-1024957.html>.

45 'Özdemir fordert "spürbar" schärfere Sanktionen gegen Russland', Zeit Online, 18 February 2015, <http://www.zeit.de/news/2015-02/18/deutschland-oezdemir-fordert-spuerbar-schaerfere-sanktionen-gegen-russland-18163606>.

46 Claudia Kade and Karsten Kammholz, 'Putin schafft Grundlage für russischen Maidan', Interview with Jürgen Trittin, Die Welt, 20 November 2014, <http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article134520127/Putin-schafft-Grundlage-fuer-russischen-Maidan.html>; Dietmar Neuerer, 'Grünen-Politikerin schlägt sich auf Putins Seite', Handelsblatt, 17 March 2014, <http://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/deutschland/antje-vollmer-gruenen-politikerin-schlaegt-sich-auf-putins-seite/9627596.html>

47 Richard Herzinger, 'Die FDP geißelt den "Selbstekel" des Westens', Interview with Christian Lindner, Die Welt, 30 December 2014, <http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article135844812/Die-FDP-geisselt-den-Selbstekel-des-Westens.html>.

48 'Genscher für Ende der Russland-Sanktionen', Zeit Online, 18 September 2014, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/2014-09/hand-dietrich-genscher-putin-russland-ukraine>.

and interactions, the perceived need to include Russia in solutions to other pressing crises, as well as the popular appeal of adopting either a hard or soft line.

INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS LOBBIES

With regard to the key lobbying groups, German industry and business – and particularly the large companies that had invested in Russia – were initially similarly attuned to understanding Russia’s behaviour in the Ukraine crisis as the critics on the left. In their view, sanctions were not the appropriate way to influence Russia and resolve the crisis. When the chief executive of Siemens, Joe Kaeser, met with Putin in Moscow in March 2014, he did not mention Ukraine at all but, rather, emphasized the company’s commitment to doing business with Russia, and underlined the need for dialogue instead of sanctions.⁴⁹

Later in the spring, German industry became more supportive of sanctioning Russia despite the economic consequences. Markus Kerber, the director-general of the Federation of German Industries, announced that the Federation was very ready to comply with the government’s line, albeit ‘with a heavy heart’. He argued that gross violations of international law could not be tolerated and that peace and freedom stood above economic interests.⁵⁰ A third of German companies operating in Russia, including BASF and Opel, diminished or withheld their investment in Russia because of the crisis, the Russian economic downturn, and the perceived hostility towards foreign investors.⁵¹

During 2014, exports to Russia were cut by 20 per cent and 50,000 German jobs were at stake, a trend which continued in 2015. For these reasons, the *Ost-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft* (Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations), in particular, continued to be

49 ‘Siemens CEO meets Putin and commits company to Russia’, Financial Times, 26 March 2014 <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/6d774238-b506-11e3-a746-00144feabdco.html#axzz2Z0NU5UY2>.

50 Markus Kerber, ‘German industry should speak hard truths to Putin’, Financial Times, 7 May 2014; Michael Bauchmüller and Karl-Heinz Büschemann, ‘Völkerrecht geht vor Geschäft’, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 16 June 2014; ‘German industry lobby supports tougher sanctions on Russia’, Reuters 28 July 2014, Ukraine-Konflikt: Industrie unterstützt mögliche Sanktionen gegen Russland’, Spiegel Online, 14 June 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/unternehmen/ukraine-konflikt-bdi-unterstuetzt-moegliche-sanktionen-a-975157.html>.

51 Jack Ewing and Alison Smale, ‘In Reversal, Germany Cools to Russian Investment’, The New York Times, 28 December 2014.

sceptical towards the sanctions, warning of the increasing negative economic consequences for Germany, and hoping for a quick end to the conflict while refraining from challenging the government's policy directly.⁵² Eckhard Cordes, the outgoing head of the *Ost-Ausschuss* was outspoken in his farewell interview and demanded an end to the sanctions, warning that Russia should not be chased into a corner.⁵³ There was a rumour that Cordes' stepping down was related to pressure from the Chancellor's office, which was denied on both sides. The *Ost-Ausschuss* nevertheless continued to advocate the easing of sanctions against Russia. The industrial lobbyists agreed that the lifting of sanctions was related to the progress of the Minsk agreement, but they regarded Russia's role much more positively in implementing the agreement than the political decision-makers in Berlin.⁵⁴ This attitude in business circles was also patently clear when the Bavarian companies supported Seehofer's statements about rethinking sanctions and his trip to Moscow in February 2016.⁵⁵ Although their views on business prospects in Russia in the near future were negative, the easing of the sanctions regime and the restoration of business relations were considered important by the majority of German companies operating in Russia. German companies did not believe that Russia could be able to replace the trade with the EU by turning towards China but were hoping to survive the hard times. They complained the lack of predictability and regarded it as important to influence the economic

52 'Deutsche Wirtschaft lehnt Sanktionen gegen Russland ab', Deutsche Wirtschafts Nachrichten, 26 June 2014, <http://deutsche-wirtschafts-nachrichten.de/2014/06/26/deutsche-wirtschaft-lehnt-sanktionen-gegen-russland-ab/> and 'Hoffnung auf vertiefte Wirtschaftsbeziehungen mit Russland', Handelsblatt, 12 February 2015, <http://www.handelsblatt.com/unternehmen/industrie/ostausschuss-chef-eckhard-cordes-hoffnung-auf-vertiefte-wirtschaftsbeziehungen-mit-russland/11368460.html>.

53 Marc Beise and Karl-Heinz Büschemann, 'Sanktionspolitik: "Russland nicht in die Enge drängen"', Süddeutsche Zeitung, 28 December 2015, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/sanktionspolitik-russland-nicht-in-die-enge-draengen-1.2798174>; see also Georg Meck, 'Russensverstehler Klaus Mangold Mister Russland der deutschen Wirtschaft', Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 7 February 2016, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/menschen-wirtschaft/klaus-mangold-mister-russland-der-deutschen-wirtschaft-14056422.html>.

54 'Deutsche Wirtschaft dringt auf Ende der Russland-Sanktionen', Die Welt, 6 February 2016, http://www.welt.de/newsticker/dpa_nt/infoline_nt/wirtschaft_nt/article152416587/Deutsche-Wirtschaft-dringt-auf-Ende-der-Russland-Sanktionen.html.

55 Susanne Lettenbauer, 'Bayerns Unternehmer hoffen auf ein Ende der Sanktionen', Deutschlandfunk, 23 February 2016, http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/seehofer-in-moskau-bayerns-unternehmer-hoffen-auf-ein-ende.1773.de.html?dram:article_id=344441.

policy-making also in Russia.⁵⁶ In general, while the export industry was critical towards sanctions, a clear separation between the foreign policy of the government and German business interests was apparent. This came as a surprise to some foreign policy observers, who saw Germany's policies with Russia as being mainly driven by economic interests.

THE MEDIA AND PUBLIC OPINION

The German media was often regarded as being biased against Russia, a view that Putin has also expressed, but those who analyzed the content more systematically concluded that the news reports on Russia were mostly accurate and factual.⁵⁷ Among researchers and journalists were voices representing positions both in favour of and against sanctions.⁵⁸ Those seen as understanding Russia and criticizing the West included many prominent journalists such as Gabriele Krone-Schmalz and Peter Scholl-Latour.⁵⁹ The most famous pro-Russian figure among the German research community, Alexander Rahr, had become advisor to the Wintershall oil and gas company and was not very vocal in public during the Ukraine crisis.⁶⁰ While many researchers focusing

56 'Prognose Mittelstand: AHK Umfrageergebnisse zum Geschäftsklima Russland 2016', Finanzen, 22 February 2016, http://www.fmm-magazin.de/prognose-mittelstand-ahk-umfrageergebnisse-zum-geschaeftsklima-russland-2016-finanzen-mm_kat52_id8261.html; 'Deutsche Unternehmen erwarten keine Abwendung Russlands von EU', 19 February 2015, <http://www.ost-ausschuss.de/node/1049>; and Olga Proskurnina, 'German Companies Committed to Russia, Even in Today's Crisis', The Moscow Times, 14 October 2015, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/guides/eng/russia---germany-2015/538315/german-companies-committed-to-russia-even-in-todays-crisis/538320.html>.

57 See Annabelle Ahrens and Hans-Jürgen Weiss, 'The Image of Russia in the Editorials of German Newspapers' pp. 147-169 in Reinhard Krumm, Sergei Medvedev and Hans-Henning Schröder (eds) *Constructing Identities in Europe: German and Russian Perspectives*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012; Verena Bläser, 'Zum Russlandbild in den deutschen Medien', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* no. 66:47-48, 2014, 48-53. See also, Jonas Gnändinder, 'Das Russlandbild deutscher Medien in der Krim-Krise', Bachelorarbeit, December 2014, Technische Universität Dortmund.

58 Robin Alexander, 'Putin blamiert Deutschlands Außenpolitik', Die Welt, 10 March 2014 <http://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article125637098/Putin-blamiert-Deutschlands-Aussenpolitik.html>.

59 Gabriele Krone-Schmalz, *Russland Verstehen: Der Kampf um die Ukraine und die Arroganz des Westens*. München: C.H. Beck 2015; Andreas Austilat, Julia Proisinger and Björn Rosen, 'Ich verstehe mich gut mit Ganoven', Interview with Peter Scholl-Latour, *Der Tagesspiegel*, 17 August 2014. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/weltspiegel/interview-mit-peter-scholl-latour-scholl-latour-ueber-die-krise-in-der-ukraine-und-edward-snowden/9652136-2.html>.

60 'Deutscher Putin-Unterstützer gibt den Russland-Experten', Die Welt, 20 April 2014.

on Russia wanted to refrain from choosing sides in public, in April 2014 three hundred German intellectuals and activists wrote an open letter, “Another War in Europe – not in our name”, published by *Die Zeit* in support of Putin. They accused the German mass media of being Russophobic and criticized the United States for its willingness to instrumentalize the crisis in Ukraine.⁶¹ No researchers participated in this pro-Putin appeal, but 50 Political Science and International Relations scholars, initiated by Professors Gunther Hellmann and Reinhard Wolf of Frankfurt University, replied to it with another open letter, arguing that the policy of détente with Russia has to be based on realities and not on wishful thinking: ‘the Another War in Europe – not in our name’ appeal was ‘counterproductive because it rests on false premises, further irritates Germany’s partners in Eastern Europe and strengthens the hardliners in Russia’.⁶² Moreover, over 100 researchers on Eastern Europe, mobilized by Kiev-based German scholar Andreas Umland, signed another response to the open letter, criticizing the tendency to reward territorial expansion.⁶³ There are, indeed, also German opinion-makers who think that the German policy towards Russia has failed because it is too soft.

German public opinion reacted to the Ukrainian crisis in a rather ambivalent way, but it turned supportive of the Government’s and the EU policy, as well as the sanctions against Russia. This support seemed to solidify as the crisis unfolded. Public opinion wanted to see Germany play the role of a mediator rather than a party to the crisis, and the clear majority ruled out military assistance for Ukraine. In March 2014, German views were divided in a rather balanced manner: about half of the populace found the government’s approach to the Ukraine crisis appropriate, while 29 per cent regarded it as too hard, and 18 per cent as too soft.⁶⁴ In April 2014, 60 per cent of respondents considered the West’s response to the crisis appropriate, and in November there was 58 per cent support for the economic sanctions, despite setbacks in

61 ‘Offener Brief an Putin’, <http://www.nrhz.de/flyer/beitrag.php?id=20163>.

62 ‘Détente without Illusions’, <http://www.aicgs.org/issue/detente-without-illusions/>.

63 ‘Friedenssicherung statt Expansionsbelohnung’, *Zeit Online*, 11 December 2014, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/2014-12/aufruf-friedenssicherung-statt-expansionsbelohnung>.

64 ‘N24-Emnid-Umfrage zu Putin: Mehrheit der Deutschen befürchtet Annexion weiterer Gebiete durch Putin’, *N24*, 27 March 2014, <http://www.presseportal.de/pm/13399/2699056/n24-ernid-umfrage-zu-putin-mehrheit-der-deutschen-befuerchtet-annexion-weitere-gebiete-durch-putin>.

the German economy.⁶⁵ Some earlier surveys, however, had shown that more than two-thirds of Germans were opposed to economic sanctions before they were adopted. Further, in March 2014, 55 per cent of Germans sympathized with Putin's view that Ukraine belonged to Russia's sphere of influence. Almost as many believed that the West should simply accept Russia's annexation of Crimea.⁶⁶

In general, public opinion towards Russia can be seen as changing in much the same way as German policy changed. In 2003, 75 per cent of Germans had confidence in Putin's handling of world affairs – to the same degree that the Russians themselves had confidence in Putin at the time – but in 2007 this had shrunk to 32 per cent, while it had risen in Russia to 84 per cent.⁶⁷ In summer 2015, 70 per cent of Germans held an unfavourable view of Russia, while 27 per cent held a positive one, somewhat up on 2014.⁶⁸ The perception that the German public tends to lean on Russia instead of the United States is not correct: a majority of Germans, 57 per cent, believe that Germany should have strong ties with the US compared with Russia, while just 15 per cent prefer stronger ties with Russia, and only a third (35 per cent) a stronger economic relationship with Moscow.⁶⁹ Although public opinion supports the present policy, there is less evidence that it had driven the change in German foreign policy, although it had shifted earlier than the government's line. For example, when criticism towards Russia started to grow in Berlin in late 2012, there was no comparable change in the public opinion. Moreover, German public opinion has been critical of the Russian leadership but appreciated the state of German-Russian relations. Indeed, more than half of Germans evaluated Putin's role as prime minister of Russia negatively, but his role in fostering German-Russian relations positively.⁷⁰

65 'Mehr Zustimmung zu Russland-Sanktionen', ZDF Politbarometer, 28 November 2014, <http://www.zdf.de/ZDFmediathek/beitrag/video/2292994/Mehr-Zustimmung-zu-Russland-Sanktionen-#/beitrag/video/2292994/Mehr-Zustimmung-zu-Russland-Sanktionen->.

66 ARD DeutschlandTREND, ARD, March 2014, <http://www.tagesschau.de/inland/deutschlandtrend2178.pdf>.

67 'Global Unease With Major World Powers', Pew Global Attitudes Survey. Washington DC: Pew Research Center, 2007, p. 63.

68 Bruce Stokes, 'Russia, Putin Held in Low Regard around the World'. Washington DC, Pew Research Center, 5 August 2015.

69 Bruce Stokes, 'Germans and Americans differ over Russia', euobserver, 18 May 2015, <https://euobserver.com/opinion/128722>.

70 'N24-Emnid-Umfrage zur Russland-Wahl: Deutsche stellen Putin ein schlechtes Zeugnis aus', N24, 2 March 2012.

Russian political actors, media and various other opinion-shapers have also tried to influence German public opinion with regard to its perception of Russia in general, and the sanctions policy in particular. It is difficult to assess to what extent they have been successful in this endeavour, but the outcome has not corresponded with the Kremlin's objectives, as we have seen. The danger of Russia's hybrid warfare is often exaggerated and the reasons why some older eminent politicians and large segments of the public support the traditional Ostpolitik and friendly relations with Russia can usually not be traced back to such campaigns. One telling recent example of such clashes of opinion is the case of Lisa, a 13-year-old Russian-speaking girl who was allegedly raped by a migrant in Berlin, and which the Russian media and foreign minister Lavrov instrumentalized, accusing the German authorities of neglect in order to have an impact on public opinion and mobilize German-Russians in particular. Yet when the story turned out to be fabricated, the end result was most likely counterproductive.⁷¹

CONCLUSIONS

The German response to the crisis in Ukraine, Russia's annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine have been based on a firm condemnation of Russia's actions, which resulted in the willingness to impose sanctions. Yet this has not ruled out the tenets of Germany's traditional Ostpolitik, according to which Germany sees itself as Russia's interlocutor in Europe. Berlin has not hesitated to strongly criticize Russia in order to defend a rule-based international order. Nevertheless, the change in Germany's policy towards Russia is not total, but the idea of partnership and cooperation is still seen as a desirable objective. Differences between Chancellor Merkel and her CDU party, and Foreign Minister Steinmeier and his SPD party, have been more a matter of emphasis than a real clash between two separate foreign policy lines. Indeed, the Social Democrats were inclined to downplay criticism towards Russia and seek a more accommodative line before the Ukrainian crisis, but the change in the domestic

71 Damien McGuinness, 'Russia steps into Berlin 'rape' storm claiming German cover-up', BBC News, 27 January 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-eu-35413134>; Ida Haltauderheide, 'Merkel hängt am seidenen Faden: Wie Putin jetzt die Kanzlerin stürzen will', Focus online, 1 February 2016, http://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/hybrider-angriff-aus-russland-merkel-haengt-am-seidenen-faden-wie-putin-jetzt-die-kanzlerin-stuerzen-will_id_5253928.html.

coalition in 2014 does not explain why Germany's policy, the position of the Social Democrats included, was more critical towards Russia than expected. Both German industry and the public came to support the foreign policy line, which was not generally expected when the crisis started. Yet the influence of the industrial lobby turned out to be less decisive than expected. It seemed to be powerful when Russia was not a priority for the political leadership, but it could not steer the key decisions when relations with Russia topped the political agenda. During the Ukraine crisis, business lobbyists initially resisted the sanctions but then accepted them, albeit pointing out their negative consequences for the German economy and hoping for their swift end. Different views and opinions have been expressed in the German foreign policy debate, but the strongest criticism has come from parties and people who are not at the core of power. Public opinion was critical towards Russia many years before the Ukraine conflict, and although it was initially sceptical as far as the sanctions were concerned, the majority of Germans have supported them.

Merkel and her CDU-SPD coalition has been challenged and the government's policy of sanctions towards Russia has been criticized. Yet it is not the Achilles' heel of the governing great coalition. The critiques have come from the relative margins of power, and prominent figures within the coalition parties, such as CSU's Seehofer, are not interested in dissolving the coalition. Should new elections be held in the near future, it is unlikely that the government could be built on any other than the present basis, although there is a slim chance of a black-green coalition. Yet it would not change Germany's policy towards Russia as such. The most vocal critics of the present German policy towards Russia – the Left Party and the Alternative for Germany – are highly unlikely to find any coalition partners and thus to be able to influence Berlin's decisions from the government. The economic interest groups continue to lobby for relaxing sanctions but their power has remained more limited than expected. The more Russia's economy suffers from factors other than the sanctions, the more the promise of future trade with Russia declines at any rate. The population at large has supported the government, although not consistently so, but it is unlikely that the sheer power of public opinion would push the government to implement changes in its policy towards Russia. Public opinion is, however, likely to think that engagement with Russia is a good idea, but it should be underpinned by a new beginning and probably also by a new leader in the Kremlin, since confidence in Putin and his regime has been at a rather low level in Germany.

7

7. Germany's evolving relationship with Russia: Towards a norm-based *Ostpolitik*?

Marco Siddi

The relationship between Germany and Russia is considered to be an essential determinant of European politics and security. This perception was strengthened after 2013, as Germany emerged as the main economic and political power within the European Union and assumed a leading role in shaping EU foreign policy. Following the onset of the Ukraine crisis, German chancellor Angela Merkel has led EU diplomatic efforts for conflict resolution. Germany has been the most influential EU country in the different negotiation formats concerning the crisis, from the Weimar triangle (also including France and Poland) to the Normandy group (also comprising Russia, Ukraine and France). Moreover, Merkel led the shuttle diplomacy that negotiated the Minsk-2 agreement in February 2015.

In addition to its current political influence, Germany's long-standing diplomatic relations with Russia allowed the country to play a leading role in the negotiations. Berlin adopted a cooperative approach in its foreign policy vis-à-vis Moscow in the late 1960s.¹ During the Cold War, this approach – known as *Ostpolitik* – was based on the idea that economic and political engagement with Moscow would lead to positive change both within the Soviet Union and in bilateral relations. After the Cold War, German governments adopted the same stance towards post-Soviet Russia, with an even stronger

1 R. Krumm, 'The rise of Realism: Germany's perception of Russia from Gorbachev to Medvedev', in R. Krumm, H. Schröder & S. Medvedev, eds., *Constructing identities in Europe: German and Russian perspectives*, Nomos, Baden-Baden, 2012, pp. 114–123; A. Schildt, 'Mending Fences: The Federal Republic of Germany and Eastern Europe', in E. Mühle, ed., *Germany and the European East in the Twentieth Century*, Berg, Oxford & New York, 2012, pp. 153–179.

emphasis on promoting ‘change through economic interlocking’ (*Annäherung durch Verflechtung*). The political capital accumulated through decades of cooperation, as well as perceptions of its influence and trustworthiness both in Russia and the EU, enabled Germany to become the key mediator and Moscow’s main interlocutor during the Ukraine crisis.²

However, Russia’s violations of international law, notably its annexation of Crimea and military support of the separatists in the Donbass, have called into question the fundamental tenet of *Ostpolitik*, the pursuit of cooperation with Russia. Some analysts have claimed that, by supporting EU sanctions against Russia and condemning Russian policies in Ukraine, German leaders have abandoned *Ostpolitik*.³ Others have argued that the German policy towards Moscow has changed, but ‘not as dramatically as some headlines put it’.⁴ At the other end of the spectrum, some pundits have contended that business interests determine German foreign policy, thereby implying that the logic of ‘change through economic interlocking’ will continue to guide Berlin’s relations with Russia.⁵

This chapter explores the extent to which a shift has taken place in German foreign policy, and investigates the factors that aid our understanding of any such change. It argues that a shift in attitudes vis-à-vis Russia took place from late 2012 and became more noticeable during 2014, as the Ukraine crisis escalated. It was driven first by domestic developments in Russia (notably the deterioration of democracy and the rule of law since 2012) and, most significantly, by Russia’s violations of international law in the Ukraine crisis. However, this change should not be interpreted as a major reformulation of German foreign policy. Although relations with Russia have cooled considerably, *Ostpolitik* has not been abandoned altogether; it continues to play a role in current developments and shapes the long-term objectives of Germany’s Russia policy.

2 Interview at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, Berlin, 28 October 2015.

3 S. Meister, ‘Politics trump economics’, *IP Journal*, 5 February 2015; B. Vestring, For Steinmeier, the End of Ostpolitik. *IP Journal*, Berlin, German Council on Foreign Relations, 12 March 2014, <https://ip-journal.dgap.org/en/blog/berlin-observer/steinmeier-end-ostpolitik>.

4 T. Forsberg, ‘From ‘Ostpolitik’ to ‘Frostpolitik’? Merkel, Putin and German foreign policy towards Russia’, paper presented at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 5 June 2015, https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/publications/ia/INTA92_1_02_Forsberg.pdf.

5 See H. Kundnani, *The Paradox of German Power*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015 and S. Szabo, *Germany, Russia and the rise of Geo-Economics*, Bloomsbury, London, 2015.

GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY: KEY TENETS
AND THE CHALLENGE TO *OSTPOLITIK*

The foreign policy of the Federal Republic of Germany has been based on a set of tenets and values that were reconcilable with one another for several decades. In addition to *Ostpolitik*, these included the rejection of war as a means of resolving disputes, respect for human rights, the support of democratic principles, transatlanticism (the post-war alliance with the United States), multilateralism and European integration.⁶ While *Ostpolitik* dates back to the late 1960s, most of the other tenets were formulated in the first post-war years, when the Federal Republic regained its sovereignty. The disastrous outcome of the dictatorial and militaristic policies of the Third Reich largely explains the rejection of war as a means to resolve disputes and the widespread support for a norm-based foreign policy among both German leaders and public opinion.⁷ Cooperation and multilateralism in international relations are valued highly. European integration is seen as epitomizing these norms and principles, and is therefore strongly advocated by the German political leadership.

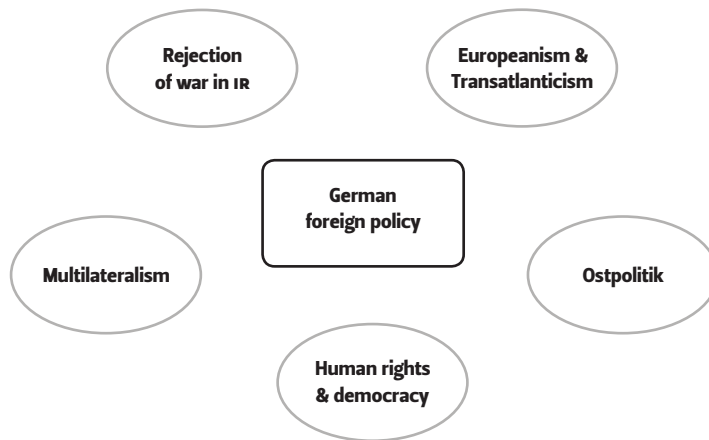


Figure 1.
The tenets
of German
foreign policy.

- 6 See for instance T. Banchoff, 'German identity and European integration', *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1999, pp. 259–289; S. Berger, *The search for normality. National identity and historical consciousness in Germany since 1800*, Berghahn, Oxford, 1997; R. Wittlinger, *German national identity in the twenty-first century: a different republic after all?*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2011.
- 7 T. Berger, 'Norms, identity and national security in Germany and Japan', in P. Katzenstein, ed., *The culture of national security: norms and identity in world politics*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996, pp. 317–356.; C. Bjola & M. Kornprobst, 'Security communities and the habitus of restraint: Germany and the United States on Iraq', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 2, 2007, pp. 285–305.

Reconciling the cooperative approach towards Russia with the support of human rights and democratic principles was arguably one of the most difficult balancing acts for German politicians. Nonetheless, a solution was found in the idea that economic cooperation would have positive spillover effects on Russian domestic political and economic developments. German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier has been one of the staunchest supporters of this approach, namely that economic interlocking would bring about domestic change in Russia and lead to a rapprochement with the EU.⁸ In terms of policy-making, the German-Russian Partnership for Modernisation launched in 2008 (and upgraded to the EU level in 2010) reflected this stance.

However, this view was increasingly challenged from autumn 2011 onwards. The irregularities in the Russian parliamentary and presidential elections in the winter of 2011-12 and the authorities' repressive reaction to the ensuing protests signalled that economic cooperation with the West had not led to improvements in democratic standards. Moreover, in the months following the elections, the Russian political establishment took several authoritarian measures curtailing the rights of the LGBT community and compelling NGOs that received funding from abroad to register as 'foreign agents'. The authorities also adopted a more nationalistic and strongly conservative rhetoric in an attempt to regain the support of part of the Russian electorate.⁹ These developments called into question the appropriateness of a policy of engagement and cooperation with the Kremlin.

The Ukraine crisis accelerated the deterioration of relations between Russia and the West. Russia's policies in Ukraine clashed with most tenets of German foreign policy. The Kremlin's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and its military support of the separatists in Eastern Ukraine collided with the principle of rejecting the use of force and abiding by international law. Russia took unilateral action, to the detriment of a negotiated solution to the crisis, and its separatist allies in Ukraine prevented democratic elections in the area under their control.

Furthermore, Russian foreign policy overtly clashed with two pillars of Germany's positioning in the international arena – European integration and transatlanticism. The crisis in Ukraine was precipitated by the question of Kiev entering into an association agreement with

8 F. Steinmeier, 'Verflechtung und Integration', *Internationale Politik*, No. 3, 2007, pp. 6-11.

9 V. Gelman, 'Cracks in the wall. Challenges to electoral authoritarianism in Russia', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 60, No. 2, 2013, pp. 3-10; K. Koesel and V. Bunce, 'Putin, popular protests and political trajectories in Russia: a comparative perspective', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 2012, pp. 403-423.

the European Union, which Russia fiercely opposed. It became clear that the Russian leadership considered further European integration in the post-Soviet space as a threat to its strategic interests. Furthermore, the United States' strong condemnation of Russian actions in Ukraine and US pressure on Germany to follow suit created profound tension between Berlin's transatlantic alliance and its traditional policy of cooperation vis-à-vis Russia.

Under these circumstances, German leaders decided to support sanctions against Russia and accepted the costs that these would entail for the German economy. Policy-makers in Berlin were particularly vocal in their criticism of Russia's violations of international law. Merkel defined the annexation of Crimea as 'criminal',¹⁰ while Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble compared it to Hitler's annexation of the Sudetenland.¹¹ Simultaneously, however, German leaders kept communication channels with the Kremlin open and came out strongly in favour of a negotiated solution to the crisis, while opposing the idea of delivering weapons to Ukraine. Despite having been weakened by developments on the ground and tensions with other German foreign policy tenets, the logic of *Ostpolitik* continued to play a significant role in decision-making and in some influential parts of German society, notably in business environments and intellectual circles.¹²

OSTPOLITIK REVISITED: AGENTS AND PRACTICE OF GERMANY'S RUSSIA POLICY IN 2014-15

German foreign policy towards Russia during the Ukraine crisis was shaped by the interaction of domestic and external factors. External factors pushed Berlin towards taking a critical stance. The United States and several EU member states, particularly Poland and the Baltic states, immediately took a hardline position vis-à-vis Russian policies. Initially, Merkel and Steinmeier attempted to resolve the Crimean crisis through talks. When this strategy failed due to Putin's intransigence,

10 A. Merkel, Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel und Staatspräsident Putin, 10 May 2015, <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2015/05/2015-05-10-pk-merkel-putin.html>.

11 Cited in C. Reiermann, 'Fighting Words: Schäuble Says Putin's Crimea Plans Reminiscent of Hitler', *Spiegel Online*, 31 March 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/schaeuble-compares-putin-moves-in-crimea-to-policies-of-hitler-a-961696.html>.

12 T. Forsberg, op. cit..

the German leaders led the efforts to impose sanctions upon Russia.¹³ Germany's position was seen as decisive for the overall EU stance vis-à-vis Russia. Being the leading economic power in the EU and Russia's main European commercial partner, Germany steered EU foreign policy. In this role, its actions were also influenced by the desire to heed the transatlantic partnership and achieve consensus within the EU – and thus to act in accordance with the 'transatlantic' and 'Europeanist' foreign policy tenets. Practically, this meant reconciling the German foreign policy stance towards Russia with those of the US and Eastern EU member states.¹⁴

The forces at work in the domestic arena were more complex. Most mass media and public opinion were very critical of Russia. In April 2014, over 50% of Germans interviewed in a public survey considered Russia a threat, whereas before the Ukraine crisis two-thirds thought that Russia was no menace to their country. In the same period, supporters of deeper cooperation with Russia diminished from over 50% to 32% of the interviewees. The majority considered Putin and Russia responsible for the crisis, but a sizeable minority (between 20% and 30% of interviewees) blamed the West and the new Ukrainian government. Moreover, the percentage of those considering Russia a 'world power' reached 67% in March 2015, compared to 45% in 2008.¹⁵

Most politicians took a very critical stance towards Russia. Both parties in the governing coalition (the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats) and the Green Party (in opposition) supported Merkel's policy of condemning and sanctioning Russia for its violations of international law. After initial hesitation, representatives of German business and industry also supported the government's line. This was particularly significant, as it refuted the argument that German foreign policy towards Russia is determined by national business interests.¹⁶

However, a closer look at the German domestic scenario reveals important nuances highlighting the persistence of *Ostpolitik* thinking in both policy-making and business communities. While accepting

13 'Economic War with Russia: A High Price for German Business', *Spiegel Online*, 17 March 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/germany-to-play-central-but-expensive-role-in-sanctions-against-russia-a-959019.html>.

14 Richard Sakwa goes as far as to argue that, following Russia's annexation of Crimea, 'German foreign policy lost some of its independence and swung behind Washington'; R. Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine: crisis in the borderlands*, I. B. Tauris, London, 2015, p. 225.

15 S. von Steinsdorff, 'Zwischen Russlandverstehern und (neuen) Kalten Kriegern – Die Auswirkungen der Ukraine-Krise auf die Wahrnehmung Russlands in der deutschen Öffentlichkeit', in *Russland-Analysen*, No. 300, 17 July 2015, pp. 2–5.

16 Kundnani, op. cit.; Szabo, op. cit..

the imposition of sanctions as a necessary evil, the associations of German industry remained sceptical about their effectiveness and appear keen to see them lifted as soon as tensions with Russia start to de-escalate. Matthias Platzeck, head of the German–Russian Forum (an influential forum bringing together representatives of German and Russian civil society), has repeatedly criticised the sanctions for being counterproductive.¹⁷

Furthermore, several former chancellors and foreign ministers – including Helmut Schmidt, Helmut Kohl, Gerhard Schröder and Hans-Dietrich Genscher – expressed strong reservations about Merkel’s policy towards Russia and argued for the resumption of dialogue and diplomatic cooperation with Moscow. Their criticism of Merkel’s policy also highlighted the different stances of the current and previous generations of German leaders vis-à-vis Russia. While the two German chancellors preceding Merkel (Helmut Kohl and Gerhard Schröder) had close personal relationships with Russian presidents, Merkel never developed similar ties with Putin. Their relationship is seen as having soured after Putin’s denial of Russian military actions in Ukraine and Merkel’s subsequent decision to impose sanctions on Russia.¹⁸

Even within the governing coalition, different points of view exist. Arguably, the Social Democratic view of a policy of détente and engagement, following the *Ostpolitik* tradition initiated by Willy Brandt, remains one of the most influential. With Social Democratic leader Frank-Walter Steinmeier as head of German foreign policy, this view continues to play an important role in the foreign ministry, where negotiations (rather than confrontation) are seen as the only way of solving the current crisis, and partnership is still considered the long-term goal of relations with Russia.¹⁹ Prior to the Ukraine crisis, Steinmeier was a staunch supporter of cooperation with Russia, particularly through the Partnership for Modernisation. During the crisis, Steinmeier has expressed moderate criticism of Russia, but he also appears keen on upholding dialogue with Moscow.²⁰

17 M. Platzeck, ‘Die Kanzlerin macht einen Fehler’ (Interview with B. Bidder and M. Schepp), *Spiegel Online*, 5 June 2015, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/interview-platzeck-gegen-merkels-russland-kurs-a-1037400.html>.

18 D. McGuinness, ‘Merkel and Putin: A grudging relationship’, *BBC News*, 21 August 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34009581>; R. Krumm, op. cit..

19 Interview at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, Berlin, 28 October 2015.

20 V. Belov, ‘Zum Russland-Diskurs in Deutschland’, in *Russland-Analysen*, No. 300, 17 July 2015, pp. 6–11.

Despite the present tensions, the persistent influence of *Ostpolitik* thinking is discernible in current German policy-making. Throughout 2015, German foreign policy combined firm condemnations of Russian violations of international law with the consistent support of diplomacy and dialogue. In February 2015, arguably the tensest moment of the Ukraine crisis so far, Merkel firmly rejected the idea of supplying weapons to Ukraine (which was advocated by Republican members of congress in the US and treated as a possibility by Barack Obama²¹) and initiated the diplomatic efforts that led to the Minsk-2 agreement.

As the fighting in Eastern Ukraine lost intensity in the spring and summer of 2015, some other political moves pointing at further dialogue and the resumption of German engagement with Russia took place. Angela Merkel was the only Western European leader who travelled to Moscow to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Merkel declined the invitation to attend the military parade in Red Square in Moscow on 9 May, however, and only arrived in the city the day after. Nonetheless, the fact that she travelled to the Russian capital to commemorate the anniversary, and held talks with Putin, highlights her willingness to uphold both the historical reconciliation with Russia and direct diplomatic contacts with the Russian leadership.

Steinmeier also travelled to Russia to commemorate the anniversary. Together with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, he attended an event in Volgograd, the site of a battle where the Soviets obtained a decisive victory against the German army. At the event, Steinmeier argued for reconciliation between Germans and Russians. He called Volgograd ‘the city of heroes’ who ‘began Europe’s liberation from Nazi dictatorship’. With implicit reference to the Ukraine crisis, he described the joint commemoration as ‘an opportunity for us [Germans and Russians] to practise understanding and to peacefully resolve any antagonisms and conflicts between us’.²²

Perhaps even more significantly, in the summer of 2015 German energy companies E.ON and Wintershall (together with Royal Dutch Shell, the French ENGIE and the Austrian ÖMV) resumed cooperation with Russian state energy company Gazprom on new joint energy projects. In June – at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum – E.ON,

21 ‘Ukraine conflict: us ‘may supply arms to Ukraine’’, BBC News, 9 February 2015 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31279621>.

22 F. Steinmeier, Speech in Volgograd to commemorate the end of the Second World War 70 years ago, 7 May 2015, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Infoservice/Presse/Reden/2015/150507_Wolgograd.html.

Shell and ÖMV signed a memorandum of intent with Gazprom for the expansion of the Nord Stream pipeline, which ships Russian gas to Germany via the Baltic Sea.²³ The expansion would double the capacity of the pipeline (from 55 to 110 billion cubic metres a year), thereby practically ending the dependency of EU–Russia gas trade on Ukrainian transit pipelines.²⁴ Wintershall joined the Nord Stream–2 consortium in July and called for the lifting of sanctions against Russia. In September, the companies participating in the consortium pushed the project forward by signing a shareholders’ agreement.²⁵

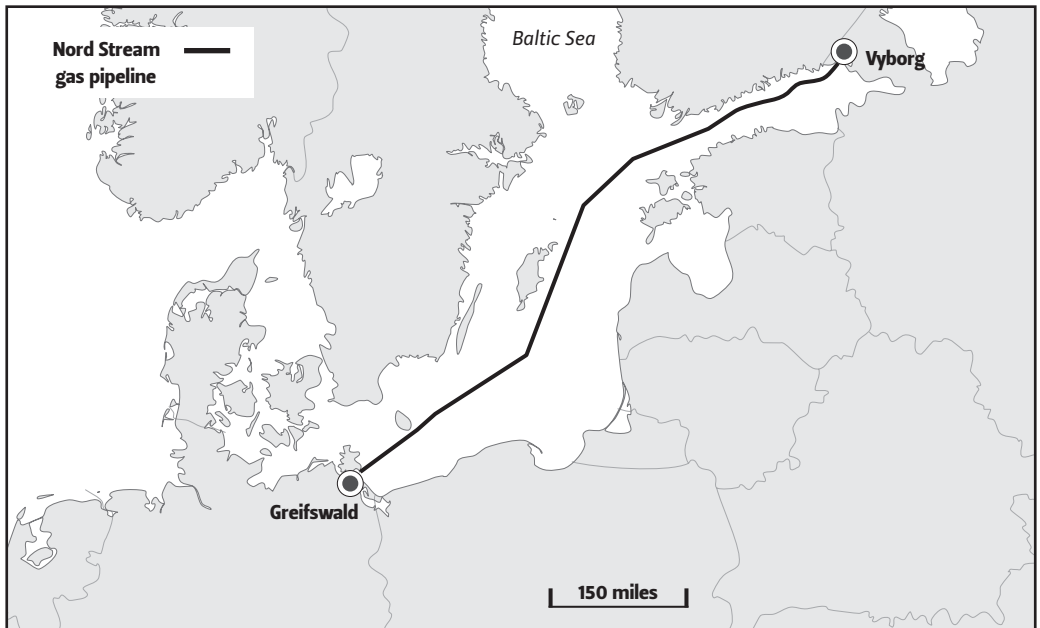


Figure 2. The Nord Stream pipeline.

- 23 S. Matalucci, 'Gazprom signs deals with E.ON, OMV, Shell for new pipeline to Germany', *Natural Gas Europe*, 18 June 2015, <http://www.naturalgaseurope.com/gazprom-signs-deals-with-e-on-omv-shell-for-new-pipe-to-germany-24262>.
- 24 M. Siddi, 'The EU–Russia gas relationship: New projects, new disputes?', *FIIA Briefing Paper 183*, Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Helsinki, 2015.
- 25 'Gazprom, European partners sign Nord Stream–2 deal', *Reuters*, 4 September 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/09/04/russia-forum-nord-stream-idUSL5N1A0G420150904>.

The German government has not openly supported the expansion of the Nord Stream pipeline (whereas it had actively lobbied for the construction of the existing sections of the pipeline between 2005 and 2012). However, German officials argue that, if built, Nord Stream-2 would contribute to European energy security.²⁶ Incidentally, energy cooperation was one of the key drivers of German *Ostpolitik* towards both the Soviet Union and Russia.²⁷ Hence, in addition to their economic and security relevance, the Nord Stream-2 deals have sent a clear political message: some large, strategic German companies want to resume cooperation with Russia and, despite the sanctions, German officials are not discouraging them from doing so.

Prominent German business associations such as the *Ost-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft*, the main representative of German industrial and commercial interests in Eastern Europe and Russia, have taken a cautious approach and estimate that the sanctions will remain in force until the Minsk-2 agreement is implemented. The *Ost-Ausschuss* claims that long-lasting damage has been done to economic relations with Russia, as mutual trust has been weakened and Moscow will try to diminish its dependence on business with the West in the future. It also argues that the sanctions against Russia are a driver for negative developments, as they reinforce Moscow's isolation and the radicalization of its policies. Hence, the *Ost-Ausschuss* is hoping for and actively advocating the gradual lifting of sanctions during 2016.²⁸

Its leadership claims that the policy of isolating Russia, rather than *Ostpolitik*, has failed. Eckhard Cordes, Chairman of the *Ost-Ausschuss* until the end of 2015, argued that, in the last 10 years, *Ostpolitik* was a feature of German-Russian relations, but did not sufficiently shape the Western policy towards Russia.²⁹ According to him, German policy-makers were engaged in defusing crises that were caused by the policies of other countries, such as the plans of the US and East-Central European states to integrate Ukraine and Georgia into NATO and deploy ballistic missile defence in Eastern Europe. In this view,

26 Interview at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, Berlin, 28 October 2015.

27 See P. Högselius, *Red gas. Russia and the origins of European energy dependence*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2013.

28 Interview at the *Ost-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft*, Berlin, 29 October 2015.

29 Cordes's successor, Wolfgang Büchele, will take up office in January 2016. He is considered to be closer to Merkel than Cordes, who openly criticised the sanctions against Russia. However, he also argued that 'The most important concern of the *Ost-Ausschuss* must be improving relations with Russia in the medium term'. See <http://www.ost-ausschuss.de/node/1008> and K. H. Büschemann, 'Der Diplomat', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 9 November 2015, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/nahaufnahme-der-diplomat-1.2728432>.

the success of German *Ostpolitik* (and the failure of other approaches to Russia) is highlighted by the fact that Berlin is the Western country with the best working relationship with Moscow, which allowed Merkel to play the role of mediator in the Ukraine crisis and achieve a diplomatic deal in Minsk.³⁰ The *Ost-Ausschuss*'s support of *Ostpolitik*, which encompasses its political as well as economic dimensions, is partly explained by the very nature of the organization, which was created in the 1950s to facilitate the resumption of German trade with Eastern Europe and became one of the key instruments of Brandt's *Ostpolitik* in the 1960s and 1970s.³¹

To a large extent, the positive assessment of *Ostpolitik* is shared at the German foreign ministry. German foreign policy officials argue that the Partnership for Modernisation with Russia has not failed, as projects continued to be implemented throughout the Ukraine crisis. A broader partnership with Russia, as well as cooperation with the Eurasian Economic Union, is portrayed as the long-term goal of EU-Russia relations, even if it is made conditional upon the implementation of the Minsk-2 agreement.³² German officials do not want further escalations of tensions with Moscow and attempt to keep diplomatic and trade channels open. Steinmeier's proposal, made in November 2015, to offer EU investment and energy concessions to Russia in order to prevent a clash over an EU-Ukraine trade deal is paradigmatic of this approach.³³

German officials saw their stance towards the Ukraine crisis vindicated when the Ministerial Council of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) voted by consensus to entrust Berlin with the Chairship of the organization in 2016.³⁴ The OSCE is the only pan-European security organization where both Russia and Western countries are represented and where the two sides have had regular contacts throughout the Ukraine crisis. Moreover, the OSCE is playing an important role in monitoring the implementation of the Minsk agreement and the overall security

30 E. Cordes, 'Mehr Ostpolitik wagen!', 22 October 2015, <http://www.ost-ausschuss.de/node/1001>.

31 See also S. Jüngerkes, *Diplomaten der Wirtschaft: Die Geschichte des Ost-Ausschusses der Deutschen Wirtschaft*. Osnabrück: Fibre, 2012.

32 Interview at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, Berlin, 28 October 2015.

33 A. Barker, S. Wagstyl and R. Olearchyk, 'Germany pushes EU-Russia deal to avert Ukraine trade pact tension', *Financial Times*, 1 December 2015, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/4ee93654-9840-11e5-9228-87e603d47bdc.html#axzz3tSp94CJx>.

34 Interview at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, OSCE Chairmanship Task Force, Berlin, 28 October 2015; see also 'German OSCE Chairmanship 2016', http://www.wien-osze.diplo.de/Vertretung/wienosce/en/01a/DEU_20Vorsitz_202016.html.

situation in Eastern Ukraine. The powers of the country holding the Chairship are limited and decisions in the organization are taken by consensus. However, the choice of Germany can be interpreted as an act of confidence in the country's capabilities to mediate the Ukraine crisis and as an endorsement of its strategy – combining diplomacy with economic leverage – for future negotiations. The vote to entrust Berlin with the OSCE Chairship took place in December 2014; in the following weeks, Merkel assumed a leading role in the negotiation of the Minsk-2 agreement.

According to Steinmeier, Germany will use its OSCE Chairship to restore dialogue and trust in Europe, with respect to OSCE principles such as the inviolability of borders. In his address to the OSCE Permanent Council in July 2015, Steinmeier unambiguously blamed Russia for the infringement of this principle and of international law. However, his call for dialogue, promoting economic exchanges and civil society cooperation, resonated with the tenets of German *Ostpolitik*.³⁵ Steinmeier stressed the importance of civil society contacts within the OSCE framework as part of the human dimension of the Helsinki Final Act. Significantly, civil society contacts are also a fundamental component of German *Ostpolitik*, and have been pursued consistently by the influential German-Russian Forum, with particular emphasis on youth exchanges, cultural cooperation and city partnerships.³⁶

Furthermore, Steinmeier's announcement that the German chairmanship will focus on 'common threats' such as 'international terrorism, radicalisation, cross-border drug trading, and risks in cyberspace' can be seen as an attempt to keep Moscow involved in security cooperation on issues where Western and Russian interests converge. Policy-makers in Berlin regard cooperation between Russia and the United States in these areas as particularly important for the improvement of East-West relations. For this reason, they see coordination between Washington and Moscow on their policies related to the Syrian crisis as a desirable outcome.³⁷ Following the terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015, German officials considered the incipient cooperation between Russia and the US-led coalition to fight the Islamic State a positive development. In late November,

35 F. Steinmeier, Address to the OSCE Permanent Council, 2 July 2015, <http://www.osce.org/pc/168376?download=true>.

36 Interview at the German-Russian Forum, 29 October 2015; see also <http://www.deutsch-russisches-forum.de/index.php?id=taetigkeitsbereiche>.

37 Interview at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, Berlin, 28 October 2015.

Steinmeier proposed that Russia be allowed to return to the G-8 (from which it was excluded after the annexation of Crimea) if it continues to cooperate with the West over Syria and in the implementation of the Minsk-2 agreement.³⁸

CONCLUSION: A NORM-BASED *OSTPOLITIK*

Developments in German foreign policy during 2015 showed that the country has not abandoned *Ostpolitik* altogether. In German foreign policy circles, there is no longer any talk of the existence of a strategic partnership with Russia. However, this is still seen as a long-term objective that could be achieved when the current crisis is resolved and Russia restores its commitment to international law and OSCE principles in Europe. Meanwhile, German leaders have maintained a policy of diplomatic engagement with Moscow, which can also be seen as a legacy of *Ostpolitik*. This stance – together with Germany’s rising influence in European foreign and security policy – has allowed Berlin to gain the trust of all sides in the Ukraine crisis and play the role of mediator. Significantly, countries that have taken a more militant stance in the crisis have been excluded from the negotiation process (notably Poland, after February 2014) or have not taken part in it (notably the United States).

Hence, the policy of diplomatic engagement inherent in the philosophy of *Ostpolitik* has proved an important factor in achieving, for the time being, a negotiated path to de-escalate the crisis. What has evaporated, on the other hand, is the idea that economic ties alone are a sufficient condition to achieve democratic domestic change in Russia, as well as the thought that Russian leaders would always prioritise economic interests over geostrategic goals (and hence avoid any confrontation with the West that may damage lucrative bilateral trade). In the past decade, *Ostpolitik* has focused excessively on an economic agenda, while overlooking the fact that its spill-over in terms of democratization and the rule of law was very limited or non-existent. Security issues hardly played any role in post-Cold War *Ostpolitik*. This meant that German foreign policy towards Russia did not adequately address a field that was considered crucial by the

38 'Steinmeier stellt Russland G-8-Rückkehr in Aussicht', *Die Welt*, 22 November 2015, <http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article149119201/Steinmeier-stellt-Russland-G-8-Rueckkehr-in-Aussicht.html>.

Russian counterparts. Until the Ukraine crisis, Berlin largely left the initiative on security issues to the United States and other European partners in the Euro-Atlantic camp.

German policies during the crisis suggest that a new type of *Ostpolitik*, more focused on diplomacy and respect for norms, has gained momentum and will remain prominent in the foreseeable future. Within this context, deeper engagement and economic partnership are mostly conditional on Russia's respect for international law. This approach is the result of the interaction between the key tenets of current German foreign policy, including the respect for international law, the rejection of war, multilateralism and the long-standing policy of engagement with Moscow. This does not exclude economic cooperation altogether: as the Nord Stream-2 deals have shown, some major German companies are keen on resuming business with Russia, particularly in the energy sector. However, as sanctions remain in force and bilateral trade continues to decline, it is unlikely that economics will return as the dominant driver of German-Russian relations in the short term.

As long as tensions between Russia and the West remain high, German policy towards Russia will focus on *détente* and rebuilding trust between the two sides, rather than on more ambitious goals such as democratization. Balanced and proactive diplomacy will be essential if Germany is to retain the central and largely positive role that it has acquired in both the EU and the broader Western policy towards Russia.

8

8. Germany and the United States: Partners in Leadership on European Security?

Tobias Bunde

‘Chancellor of the Free World’ – this is what *Time* magazine called Angela Merkel when it chose the German Chancellor as its person of the year 2015.¹ In the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, the German Chancellor had indeed found herself in a strange position for a German politician: For the first time in decades, negotiations over matters of war and peace in Europe were mainly in the hands of the German government, while the once undisputed leader of the free world, the United States, and the traditional European foreign policy heavyweights, France and the United Kingdom, remained in the background. The changing political landscape in Europe has catapulted Berlin into a position of leadership, which is still a novel situation for both the political elites and the wider public in Germany and abroad. As columnist Anne Applebaum put it: ‘Nobody ever imagined a world in which Germany would be negotiating directly with Russia – or that France would be too weak, Britain too inward-looking and the United States too uninterested to object’.² Has Germany finally become a ‘partner in leadership’ for the US, stepping in when the traditional ‘leader of the free world’ is preoccupied with other challenges?

The focus of this chapter is on Germany’s role in leading the European Union to act in partnership with the United States, with a particular emphasis on the recent changes in the security situation

1 K. Vick with S. Schuster, ‘Person of the Year 2015: Angela Merkel. Chancellor of the Free World’, *Time Magazine*, 9 December 2015, <http://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-2015-angela-merkel/>, accessed 3 January 2016.

2 A. Applebaum, ‘The Risks of Putting German Front and Center in Europe’s Crises’, *The Washington Post*, 20 February 2015, <http://wpo.st/O6111>, accessed 3 January 2016.

of wider Europe.³ The chapter thus deals with the impact of the changing role of the United States as a European power, the emergence of Germany as the central actor within the European Union, and the dynamics of the US–German relationship vis-à-vis Germany’s role in European foreign and security policy.

The chapter argues that the German government found itself in a leadership position out of necessity. Both the perception of German strength and the weakness or reluctance of France and the United Kingdom pushed Germany into a position in which Chancellor Merkel had to act like an imagined ‘Chancellor of Europe’. This was furthered by a US administration that was willing to leave the most prominent role in dealing with a critical security issue in Europe to Berlin. However, the German government’s handling of the crisis in European security has also highlighted the limits of a comprehensive leadership role for Germany. The country is encountering a number of problems that the United States is dealing with on a broader scale: While there is clear and arguably still growing demand for more German leadership, a too dominant German government easily revives fears of a ‘Germanized Europe’. Moreover, German leaders have to manage the dilemma that results from very different views of the German position in Europe: While most outsiders overestimate Berlin’s power, most Germans tend to vastly underestimate Germany’s influence. Almost as a direct result, the German government has been unable to assume a comprehensive leadership role that could live up to rising expectations both in the United States and in other European countries. Today, Berlin lacks a number of preconditions to fulfil the role of a European partner in leadership that many demand. Yet, it will need to build the necessary military and diplomatic capabilities for a time when demand for security leadership will likely continue to increase and the traditional supply of the same by the United States might decrease further.

3 This contribution is *not* about Germany’s role in forging a common European foreign policy towards the United States – similar to the way in which other chapters discuss Europe’s relations with other outside actors. In the field of security policy in particular, the United States is still a ‘European power’, which is heavily involved in European debates. Moreover, the American ‘empire by invitation’ or continued benevolent hegemony has been a background condition of European foreign and security policy for decades. See G. Lundestad, ‘Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945–1952’, *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1986, pp. 263–277.

The call for more German leadership has become something of a tradition for US politicians and diplomats. President George Bush's message to the German people, sent on the eve of German unification, that the United States and the Federal Republic would be 'partners in leadership'⁴ became so well-known partly because this proposition seemed outlandish to many Germans at the time. This is not to say that Germany did not pursue an active foreign policy or try to shape its environment. On the contrary, the Bonn Republic's foreign policy proved highly successful and reached all of its major goals. Yet, the room for manoeuvre and the tools West Germany had at its disposal were limited and belonged to a particular constellation in world politics: the bipolar confrontation and Germany's place on the frontlines after the results of Nazi Germany's aggression had put an end to German great power fantasies.

Washington, however, had fewer concerns about the future role of united Germany than Germany's neighbours and Germany itself. It was not only the main advocate for German unification but also for a renewal of German foreign and security policy. Above all, this meant a reconsideration of German participation in multilateral peace operations. Depending on one's point of view, this process turned out to be either painstakingly slow or breathtakingly rapid, with the Bundeswehr deploying a few soldiers, first to Somalia and later to Bosnia, before participating in NATO's Kosovo intervention in 1999. The true test for the new German foreign policy came when its commitment to the International Stabilization Force for Afghanistan (ISAF) led to Berlin's active role in a violent conflict, in which dozens of German soldiers were killed and the German military caused major civilian casualties.⁵ However, German caveats and the country's narrow focus on the Northern part of Afghanistan angered US politicians, a feeling that was only strengthened by Germany's abstention in the UN

4 G. Bush, 'Address to the German People on the Reunification of Germany', 2 October 1990, <http://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/ga6-901002.htm>. He thus repeated a formulation he had used in his speech in Mainz the year before: 'The United States and the Federal Republic have always been firm friends and allies, but today we share an added role: partners in leadership.' G. Bush, 'A Europe Whole and Free. Remarks to the Citizens in Mainz', 31 May 1989, <http://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/ga6-890531.htm>.

5 For the 'Kunduz airstrike', which killed more than 100 people and heavily influenced the German debate on the Bundeswehr and Afghanistan, see e.g. T. Noetzel, 'The German Politics of War. Kunduz and the War in Afghanistan', *International Affairs*, vol. 87, no. 2, 2011, pp. 397-417.

Security Council vote on Libya in 2011. A 2012 report by the Atlantic Council concluded: 'Today, Germany is an economic powerhouse, but a second-rate political and military power. German weakness is NATO's most significant problem. A stronger Germany would be the greatest boost to NATO's future'.⁶ Both in the US and in European capitals, the traditional German 'culture of restraint' came to be seen as an excuse for its 'continuing inability and unwillingness to assume a proportionately robust and responsible role towards meeting the challenges posed by growing global disorder'.⁷ Although President Obama chose a rather abstract formulation when he gave his speech at the Brandenburg Gate in 2013, his audience easily understood whom he had in mind when he stressed that 'complacency is not the character of great nations'.⁸

In contrast to his predecessors, Obama and his team had signalled early on that they expected the Europeans to assume more responsibility. After exhausting and costly wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Obama's main focus was to be domestic policy, which also meant that the US President would not insist on a leadership role for the US in each and every crisis. The main example for this new policy, which was soon dubbed 'leading from behind', was the 2011 Libya operation. Despite its less prominent public role, the United States was nonetheless indispensable in terms of military capabilities, which also demonstrated the inability of even the most advanced European military powers, France and the UK, to sustain an intense operation over a longer period of time. In early 2013, when the French government urged its partners to join it in order to prevent Mali's capital from falling into the hands of violent extremists who had overrun large parts of the country, Washington chose to provide but a few intelligence and airlift capabilities. In earlier times, such a scenario would have likely triggered a US initiative to assemble a coalition or table the issue in the North Atlantic Council. Instead, as NATO Deputy Secretary General and long-time US diplomat Alexander Vershbow put it, NATO did not have the answer to every crisis and this was something the Europeans could take care of themselves.⁹

6 R.N. Burns, D.M. Wilson & J. Lightfoot, *Anchoring the Alliance*, Atlantic Council of the United States, Washington, D.C., 2012, p. 6.

7 J. Sperling, 'Germany and America in the Twenty-first Century. Repeating the Post-war Patterns of Conflict and Cooperation', *German Politics*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2010, pp. 53–71, p. 54.

8 B. Obama, 'Remarks by President Obama at the Brandenburg Gate', Berlin, 19 June 2013, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2013/06/19/president-obama-speaks-people-berlin#transcript>, accessed 1 November 2015.

9 See A. Vershbow, 'Meeting Today's Security Challenges', Berlin, 21 January 2013, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_94139.htm, accessed 1 November 2015.

This less prominent role of the United States in Europe and its neighbourhood highlights the central challenge in the US–German relationship today, which has major implications for the future of the EU’s foreign and security policy: A changing US role in relation to Europe and the willingness to let others take the lead on some foreign policy issues heightens the demand for German leadership. At the same time, US insistence on Germany assuming more responsibility highlights a variety of disagreements between Washington and Berlin. Although the personal relations between Barack Obama and Angela Merkel are said to be excellent and the pair ‘should be a marriage made in heaven’,¹⁰ their governments have been at loggerheads on quite a number of important issues. Often, Berlin and Washington find themselves at opposite ends of the political spectrum within the West. This has been true vis-à-vis the debate about austerity versus public spending as a response to the financial and economic crisis, discussions about the use of force, and the highly emotional conflict over the surveillance and spying programmes of the National Security Agency (NSA), but also extends to matters of energy policy or the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). For many Germans, the US, once seen as a big brother protecting them against the communist threat, has become ‘Big Brother’ incarnate, a threat to privacy itself. In addition, anti-American sentiments in parts of the German Left similarly fostered scepticism concerning TTIP, with many people fearing a race to the bottom in environmental standards. More recently, the populist and nationalist movement, Pegida, and the right-wing party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) have danced to the anti-American tune and reintroduced the idea of a German–Russian axis. Their supporters not only promote anti-Islam slogans but also praise Vladimir Putin’s leadership while denouncing ‘American imperialism’.¹¹ However, this is more than a fringe phenomenon: A 2015 Pew Research survey found that 45 per cent of Germans harboured an unfavourable view of the United States, by far the highest score among

10 I. Bremmer & M. Leonhard, ‘U.S.–German Relationship on the Rocks’, *The Washington Post*, 18 October 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/us-german-relationship-on-the-rocks/2012/10/18/ed6a9f1c-13c2-11e2-be82-c3411b7680a9_story.html, accessed 1 November 2015. As they argue: ‘Merkel gives Washington someone to call when Europe is in crisis. Obama gives Europe the longed-for U.S. leader willing to invest in multilateralism and multinational institutions’.

11 Gabriel Borrud, ‘Anti-Americanism Hits Germany’s Streets’, *Deutsche Welle*, 25 January 2015, <http://www.dw.com/en/anti-americanism-hits-germanys-streets/a-18213718>, accessed 1 November 2015; ‘Ami Go Home’, *The Economist*, 7 February 2015.

the major European countries polled.¹² Even more worryingly, the NSA revelations specifically angered those Germans who still look to the United States as the leading Western democracy and were particularly frustrated with what they saw as an overreaction to terrorism and a disproportionate curbing of civil liberties. For many younger Germans in particular, the United States is no longer a 'shining city upon a hill', but is often seen as a society mired in problems: Gun violence, election campaigns influenced by wealthy donors and super PACs (Political Action Committees), government shutdowns, the detention centre in Guantanamo Bay, or the excesses in Abu Ghraib are often cited as examples of America's moral and political decline.¹³ While the majority of the German political elite remain committed to the transatlantic partnership, rising domestic scepticism already hampers closer cooperation between the United States and Germany and represents a challenge for the future partnership between the two countries.¹⁴

However, it is precisely these underlying tensions that make the US-German relationship so important for the West in general, but also to the European Union in particular. In a way, the contemporary US-German bilateral partnership today is to the Western community what the Franco-German tandem used to be to the European Union: the indispensable duo that usually represented quite different visions but could foster a broader consensus when they were able to agree. Due to their significance for the West and their distant positions on the intra-Western spectrum, the United States and Germany can lead the way. If they agree on an issue, it is far more likely that the rest will agree as well.

It is no coincidence that several US think tanks have created task forces designed to provide recommendations to improve bilateral relations between Berlin and Washington.¹⁵ Seen from Washington, Berlin is sometimes an irritating partner but nevertheless an

12 See R. Wike, B. Stokes & J. Poushter, 'Global Publics Back U.S. on Fighting ISIS, but Are Critical of Post-9/11 Torture', 23 June 2015, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/06/23/11-americas-global-image/>, accessed 1 November 2015. 50 per cent held a favourable view. In contrast, the unfavourable/favourable ratio was 14%/83% in Italy and 27%/73% in France.

13 T. Bunde, 'Will There Be Another Generation of Atlanticists?', *AICGS Transatlantic Perspectives*, 17 December 2013, <http://www.aicgs.org/publication/will-there-be-another-generation-of-atlanticists/>, accessed 1 November 2015.

14 Jon Vinocur, 'Germans Fall Out of Love With America', *The Wall Street Journal*, 1 June 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/germany-falls-out-of-love-with-america-1433187158>, accessed 1 November 2015. See also 'Ami Go Home', *The Economist*, 7 February 2015.

15 See, e.g., the GMF Task Force on the Future of German-American Relations or the Atlantic Council's US-German Next Generation Project.

indispensable one as the central actor in the European Union today.¹⁶ As for Berlin, a leadership role within the European Union that goes beyond financial and economic portfolios is only possible if Washington assists.

THE US-GERMAN RESPONSE TO THE RUSSIAN CHALLENGE

The emergence of Germany as the central actor within the European Union was not the result of a carefully planned and executed strategy by the German government but came about almost as a matter of course. On the one hand, Germany's economic strength made it an indispensable actor in addressing the threats to the euro, which also had consequences for the German role in dealing with external issues. On the other hand, other countries that could potentially have played a leading role in the European Union's foreign and security policy were preoccupied with domestic political or economic problems.

Over the past few years, moreover, calls from abroad for more German leadership have been echoed by domestic pleas for 'assuming more responsibility'. For a few years, more and more members of the German 'strategic community' have argued that Berlin has to adapt its foreign and security policy to new circumstances. Over time, this gathered a certain momentum that resulted in projects such as the working group assembled by *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* (SWP) and the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), whose members published a widely noted report describing elements of a renewed German foreign policy.¹⁷ A few months after the publication of the SWP/GMF report, Federal President Joachim Gauck gave an important speech at the Munich Security Conference echoing many of the report's main arguments. At the same venue, both German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen and Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier repeated the main thrust of Gauck's speech. The fact that Steinmeier and Gauck used exactly the same words in places – Germany, they said, must be ready 'for earlier, more decisive and more substantive

16 Since the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine, official US visits to Berlin have doubled according to American diplomats. Personal conversation, Berlin, July 2015.

17 Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik and The German Marshall Fund of the United States, *New Power, New Responsibility: Elements of a German Foreign and Security Policy for a Changing World*, SWP, Berlin, 2013.

engagement’ – only underlined that this was a concerted effort.¹⁸ For the US participants in the conference room in particular, these speeches came as a relief.¹⁹

The test for this new policy, however, came much earlier than expected when the Russian government sent the now infamous ‘little green men’ to Crimea, pushed for a referendum and annexed the peninsula on 18 March 2014, before shifting its attention to Eastern Ukraine. Needless to say, this challenge caught Germany (like many others) more or less unprepared. In contrast to many of its Central and Eastern European (CEE) neighbours, the mainstream in Berlin had misunderstood how far the Russian regime had changed. For years, the Germans had opposed the demands by some CEE countries to ramp up NATO’s defence at its borders with Russia. Poland and the Baltic states in particular had voiced their concerns for years, triggered by the Russo-Georgian War in 2008 and not really alleviated by the NATO-Russia ‘reset’ after the inauguration of Barack Obama as US President, which was greeted with enthusiasm by most German politicians. Particularly after Vladimir Putin’s decision to re-run for president and the mass demonstrations in Moscow, which many believe led Putin to embark on an increasingly authoritarian path, politicians from Poland and the Baltic states warned of an increasingly aggressive Russian government. The majority of the German political elite, however, continued to perceive Russia as a partner – albeit a difficult one, but a partner nonetheless. While members of the Obama administration shared the basic sentiment that engagement with Russia was needed, they were always more cautious than their German counterparts and clearly pointed out that the ‘reset’ did not mean that they would

18 For an overview of the speeches, see T. Bunde, ‘Deutsche Verantwortung, transatlantische Verstimmung und syrische Verzweiflung. Ein Bericht über die 50. Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz’, *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 237–250, 2014, pp. 238–241.

19 As Ivo Daalder, former US Ambassador to NATO, tweeted in response to Gauck’s speech: ‘This is really 1st time German leader makes case for Germany to bear the responsibility of its power – in Europe & beyond. #MSC50’. I. Daalder, *Twitter*, 31 January 2014, <https://twitter.com/IvoHDaalder/status/429261688844845057>, accessed 1 November 2015.

acquiesce to a European order based on spheres of influence.²⁰ Most German politicians who did not see this risk were caught completely off guard by the Russian annexation of Crimea and its covert (and later more or less overt) escalation in Eastern Ukraine in the early months of 2015.

When the Western response to Russia's actions in Ukraine was debated, the US administration hoped for a strong German role in support of European sanctions against Moscow, especially given German economic ties to Russia. Yet, many US experts were irritated by the results of some public opinion polls. Some findings of the *ARD-DeutschlandTREND* in April 2014 were particularly striking and worried experts and politicians in both the United States and Central and Eastern Europe. The poll asked where Germany should position itself in the conflict with Russia. In response, 49 per cent answered: 'midway between the West and Russia'. Another 45 per cent responded: 'firmly within the West'. When it came to reassurance measures for Germany's allies, only 40 per cent supported a stronger NATO air-policing presence in Eastern Europe, whereas 53 per cent opposed it. Opinions diverged even more when the respondents were asked about a German Bundeswehr contribution (35 vs. 61 per cent).²¹ These results highlight a persistent German preference for a mediating position and a strong distaste for military tools. In addition, German business lobby groups and economists raised concerns with their resistance against tougher sanctions and were seen as a major stumbling block for a unified Western front against Russian aggression in Ukraine.²² Given these

20 See the speech US Vice-President Joe Biden gave at the Munich Security Conference in 2009, shortly after the inauguration of Barack Obama. Joseph R. Biden, 'Remarks by Vice-President Biden at 45th Munich Conference on Security Policy', 7 February 2009, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-vice-president-biden-45th-munich-conference-security-policy>, accessed 1 November 2009. Biden made it clear: 'We will not agree with Russia on everything. [...] We will not recognize any nation having a sphere of influence. It will remain our view that sovereign states have the right to make their own decisions and choose their own alliances. But the United States and Russia can disagree and still work together where our interests coincide'.

21 See Infratest Dimap, 'ARD-DeutschlandTREND', April 2014, <http://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/ard-deutschlandtrend/2014/april/>, accessed 1 November 2015.

22 M. Karnitschnig, 'German Businesses Urge Halt on Sanctions Against Russia,' *The Wall Street Journal*, May 1, 2014, <http://goo.gl/3t1f3j>, accessed 1 November 2015. For an example of a prominent German economist arguing for a soft stance towards Russia, see H.-W. Sinn, 'Give Putin a Chance,' *The Wall Street Journal*, May 2, 2014.

prominent voices in the German public sphere, some observers even asked whether Germany was turning away from the West.²³

In the spring of 2015, the official German reaction to the crisis also heightened lingering scepticism in the United States that Germany was an ‘unreliable fellow’ when it came to Russia. When Angela Merkel came to Washington in May 2014, the strategic community in Washington was waiting for a clear signal as to the German position on Russia and Ukraine. Instead, the Chancellor decided to devote her main speech to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), which caused some minor irritation in Washington.²⁴ Overall, at the beginning of the European crisis over Ukraine, Germany acted slowly and seemed overwhelmed by the decisiveness the Russian government demonstrated in Ukraine. To a certain extent, German uncertainty and reluctance also explain why the first military response to the violation of internationally accepted borders by Russia was almost exclusively American. In this sense, the ‘European Reassurance Initiative’, which President Barack Obama announced in Warsaw, was European only in name. To be sure, an initiative by other European countries would never have had the same importance. However, it would have sent an important signal early on – both to the Russian government and to the United States – that the Europeans were serious about their own defence.

The German mood changed when the violence in Eastern Ukraine increased – and after Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 was shot down, Chancellor Merkel, backed by a majority of Germans in support of stronger sanctions and encouraged by the weakening resistance (and implicit approval) of German industry, changed course and pressed for tougher sanctions. For the US administration, the German Chancellor was the key figure who brought other initially sceptical Europeans on board. After President Obama and the leaders of Britain, France, Germany, and Italy had agreed to implement a coordinated new round of sanctions in a videoconference in late July 2014, US officials told *the New York Times* that Angela Merkel was the ‘key to the agreement’ when she ‘dropped her past reluctance and pressed for more assertive

23 See e.g. H. Kundnani, ‘Leaving the West Behind’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 94, no. 1, 2015, pp. 108–116.

24 Interviews in Washington, D.C., end of April and early May 2015.

moves, which forced the French to go along, and that then forced the Italians to give in'.²⁵

This change in the German position paved the way for a rather unusual diplomatic format in the ensuing months, the so-called Normandy Group consisting of Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine. While US governments had hitherto insisted on their leading role in negotiations over matters of peace and war in Europe, the Obama administration encouraged the German government to take the lead. Some experts even argued that it 'outsourced' the negotiations to Berlin.²⁶ Officials cited both their weariness to engage in a Cold-War-like confrontation between Washington and Moscow (thereby only corroborating Putin's argument about spheres of influence) and their interest in Europe taking 'the lead in resolving what the White House considers foremost a European security problem'.²⁷ Throughout the negotiations, the Germans and Americans remained in close contact, and Obama clearly indicated his support of Angela Merkel's efforts. However, this division of labour also raised concerns in the United States, in Germany as well as in other European countries.²⁸ Some experienced German diplomats, for instance, were far from happy that the United States was not sitting at the table and repeatedly called for a 'contact group' which included Washington, because they believed that a settlement would only be possible if the US administration threw its weight behind a compromise. In any case, the long-term challenges of a more assertive Russia will continue to challenge the traditional German position within NATO and the European Union.

25 J. Ewing & P. Baker, 'U.S. and Europe Set to Toughen Russia Sanction', *The New York Times*, 28 July 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/29/world/europe/us-and-europe-agree-to-escalate-sanctions-on-russia.html?_r=0, accessed 1 November 2015. For a detailed account of the development of the German government's positioning on sanctions in the course of 2014, see W. Seibel, 'Arduous Learning or New Uncertainties? The Emergence of German Diplomacy in the Ukrainian Crisis', *Global Policy*, vol. 6, suppl. 1, 2015, pp. 56–72.

26 E. Pond, 'Misreading Berlin', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 94, no. 2, 2015, pp. 173–176.

27 P. Richter and C. J. Williams, 'Hands-off Strategy in Ukraine Spurs Critics of Obama's Foreign Policy', *Los Angeles Times*, 13 February 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-us-ukraine-20150214-story.html>, accessed 1 November 2015.

28 See e.g. Richter/Williams, op. cit.; A. Applebaum, op. cit..

Germany lacks a number of necessary preconditions to assume a comprehensive leadership position within EU foreign policy. When it comes to military security, Berlin has come a long way since the 1990s when the Bundeswehr took part in multinational operations for the first time. Yet, the military is far from being accepted as a political instrument: The German mantra of ‘there is no military solution’ is usually akin to expressing helplessness when it means that the debate on an effective strategy precludes even the threat of the use of force, while other actors are implementing their military ‘solution’ on the ground.²⁹ For many of its partners, Germany’s military weakness has become a problem in the changing European security environment. As Anne Applebaum summarized bluntly: ‘When Germans speak about defence, nobody listens, especially not the Russian president’.³⁰ Germany’s CEE neighbours in particular remain doubtful whether they can fully trust Berlin. This clearly hinders further efforts at pooling and sharing within both NATO and the European Union. Likewise, French officials have long complained about Germany’s risk awareness and unwillingness to support more robust interventions. Paris was upset by Berlin’s initial lack of support for its mission in Mali and continuously lobbied for a stronger German footprint. After the terrorist attacks in Paris on November 13 2015, many French officials were disappointed again and, initially, felt almost betrayed by the Germans, who firstly objected to a military role before finally contributing to the operation against the so-called Islamic State in Syria.³¹

To be sure, Germany’s defence policy has begun to adapt and to assume leadership roles within NATO’s new Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) agreed upon at the Wales Summit in 2014. At the same time, however, Berlin has again defined the red lines of NATO’s response by insisting on a limited presence that does not question NATO’s commitment to the NATO–Russia Founding Act, which most partners see as inapplicable now that Russia has violated its major provisions. In the end, defence of the CEE mainly rests on US shoulders

29 This could be seen in German reactions to various proposals to provide the Ukrainian government with weapons in early 2015, but also in the domestic discussion about a response to Bashar al-Assad’s indiscriminate use of violence against large sectors of the Syrian people.

30 A. Applebaum, op. cit..

31 Confidential interviews. Interestingly, the German mandate only includes reconnaissance missions helping its partners to locate potential targets.

while Germany and other European countries only complement the US military. Although the German position has changed quite radically since early 2014, Berlin remains among NATO's most reluctant actors. But a country that is seen as a 'brakeman' by many of its potential followers will hardly become a leader.

The dependence on US hard power is practically taken for granted in Germany. It has become such a stable background condition (and has worked so well) that few people in Germany can imagine what the absence of these conditions would mean for European security. For instance, Germany has profited from the US nuclear umbrella for several decades now. Its participation in the NATO Nuclear Planning Group is based on nuclear sharing, namely German readiness to fly US tactical nuclear weapons, a topic which will force its way onto the agenda when the German Tornados that would deliver the weapons go out of service.³² It is hard to imagine how Europe could secure its own defence without the support of the United States. Given Germany's political and economic role in the European Union, however, the EU will not be able to turn into an effective defence actor without Germany as a 'backbone'.

While Germany is increasingly seen as a (potential) European hegemon,³³ neither the German military capabilities nor the German mindset allow for such a role today. This sets clear limits on a German leadership position that could forge a more equitable security partnership between the United States on the one hand and the European Union on the other. Ironically, whereas previous US administrations have been openly opposed to stronger EU cooperation in defence because this was seen as a potential danger for the primacy of NATO, US politicians today would welcome a more serious defence effort on the part of the Europeans. The United States is no longer a hindrance to a strong EU defence policy. Germany could thus push the agenda of more serious defence cooperation and even integration within the EU. In practice, however, the government has not offered any clear mid-term agenda beyond the long-term vision of a 'European army'. So far, it has followed a bottom-up strategy that intends to

32 The Tornados were initially scheduled to be replaced in 2015 but their service life has been extended beyond 2025. See e.g. K. Mizokami, 'Is Germany's Military Dying?', *The National Interest*, 1 September 2015, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/germanys-military-dying-13748?page=show>.

33 See e.g. H. Münkler, *Macht in der Mitte: Die neuen Aufgaben Deutschlands in Europa*, Edition Körber Stiftung, Hamburg, 2015.

approach the final goal by setting up small islands of cooperation with selected European partners.

The German view of the military is still quite different from that of many of its allies. Thus, policy proposals to ramp up NATO's presence on its Eastern flank are often seen as an unnecessary escalation, not as a defensive move underwriting NATO's collective defence commitment and thus deterring Moscow from attacking a NATO country. Germany's security dependence on the United States, however, extends to the non-military realm as well. German scepticism concerning its own intelligence services – as well-founded as it may be – essentially means that a considerable part of German security policy is 'outsourced' to the US.

Finally, German leadership in the EU will only work if it has the implicit or explicit support of the other Europeans. One may argue that it was a particular strength of German foreign policy in the Bonn Republic to engage its neighbours and thus forge consensus that usually reflected the enlightened, long-term interest of Germany even if it had to forego short-term benefits or to spend more than others. While the circumstances have changed in many ways and a comparison between then and now might be misleading,³⁴ the basic strategy remains appropriate.

However, it is here that the German foreign policy establishment may have to change course. Most importantly, if you want to lead you need empathy. Yet, in the views of many other Europeans, this has not been a particular strength of Germany's European policy in recent years. This has, of course, to do with the German position on the euro crisis, which was often criticized as fairly narrow and unfairly blaming the Southern Europeans and their 'profligacy' for the crisis without acknowledging the German contribution to the severity of the situation. Several foreign observers criticized a certain self-righteousness in Berlin, which resulted in a rather inflexible euro policy that (arguably) made things worse or only kicked the can down the road. As Isabelle Hertner and Alistair Miskimmon put it, 'the German *Musterknabe* (model pupil) appears more like the class swot, rather than setting an inclusive example'.³⁵ A similar problem exists in foreign and security policy. Sometimes, Berlin circles give the impression that they know

34 Most importantly, the number of EU members has grown considerably, which makes long consultations with everyone impossible. In addition, the 'permissive consensus' for a generous *Scheckbuchdiplomatie* has also shrunk domestically.

35 I. Hertner & A. Miskimmon, 'Germany's Strategic Narrative in the Eurozone Crisis', *German Politics and Society*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2015, pp. 42–57, p. 53.

better concerning how their allies should define their security interests or how the United States should act without assuming responsibility themselves. The different perspectives on Russia are a case in point. For years, a considerable number of German politicians and experts have ridiculed Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Polish warnings of an increasingly assertive Russian government. Some strategists even argued that a constructive Western policy towards Russia was taken hostage by those countries who were 'obsessed with their fear of Russia'.³⁶ Even after the annexation of Crimea you could hear some experts argue that a NATO presence in the Baltic states only made sense because it would help to keep these governments in check. One may belittle these statements as anecdotal evidence but they are grist to the mills of a lingering scepticism and historically grounded fear of German-Russian rapprochement over the heads of Central and Eastern Europeans. Angela Merkel could only negotiate the Minsk documents in the Normandy format, namely without US or Central European participation, after she had proved herself to be a determined supporter of tough sanctions against Russia. It is unclear whether another German leader would be able to do so.³⁷ Similar critiques of unilateral German decisions have been voiced most recently regarding the refugee crisis, when Angela Merkel was accused of unilaterally sending the wrong signals to those who might wish to seek safety in the EU. The German government's pleas for a fairer distribution of refugees within the EU are countered by pointing to Germany's previous neglect for the refugee situation in Europe's Southern member states or its perceived lack of solidarity on other issues, including the euro crisis. These events highlight the fine line between German leadership that moves ahead and tries to close ranks behind it in the pursuit of a larger goal on the one hand, and the impression that the rest of Europe has to follow a German diktat on the other. As early as 1995, Michael Kreile described the requirements for German leadership that still apply today: '[...] leadership requires both the ability to integrate the interests of the

36 U. Weisser, 'Keine Ausreden mehr. Ein Bericht über die 46. Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz', *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2015, pp. 247–252, p. 250, author's translation.

37 Sigmar Gabriel's recent meeting with Vladimir Putin in Moscow certainly was grist to the mills of those who are convinced that Germany cannot wait for the first opportunity to go 'back to normal' with Moscow. See the transcript published by the Kremlin: 'Meeting with Vice-Chancellor and Minister of Economic Affairs and Energy of Germany Sigmar Gabriel, 28 October 2015, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50582>, accessed 1 November 2015.

partner countries in a strategic concept and to mobilize resources for its realization as well as the partners' willingness to follow the leader. This willingness to follow can be based on conviction, expectations of profit, or weakness of resolve in acting. Economic dominance, defined as asymmetric relations of influence between economic units, might create a basis for it but should not be confused with either hegemony or leadership ability'.³⁸

CONCLUSION

In contrast to other Western governments, various US administrations have been in favour of a stronger German role in European (and global) security. The Obama administration has even made it clear that the United States would not insist on a US leadership role in every major security crisis, and 'outsourced' a considerable part of the Western negotiations with Moscow to Berlin. At the same time, Germany currently lacks the institutional background, the personal resources and the military capabilities to assume a comprehensive leadership role, which could compensate for a (potentially more) isolationist United States with shifting domestic and geopolitical priorities. While these hindrances could be overcome in the long run, both material and ideational constraints will continue to prevent Germany from turning into a European leader that self-confidently exercises power, using the whole gamut of diplomatic and military tools. First, despite numerous articles and books proclaiming a new German hegemony, Germany's hard (and soft) power resources are less impressive and, most importantly, less dominant in Europe than many observers tend to believe.³⁹ Second, although the foreign policy elite in Germany has, by and large, accepted the need for a more proactive German foreign policy, this emerging consensus is still far from settled. As a consequence, Germany cannot serve as a major guarantor of European security in the absence of the United States.

For the time being, German leadership will entail building a consensus for a stronger European defence policy, trying to act as what Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier called Europe's

38 Michael Kreile, 'Will Germany Assume a Leadership Role in the European Union?', *American Foreign Policy Interests*, vol. 17, no. 5, 2015, pp. 11–21, p. 11.

39 See also P. Nicholson, 'The Myth of a Mighty Germany', *Foreign Affairs Snapshot*, 1 June 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/germany/2015-06-01/myth-mighty-germany>, accessed 1 November 2015.

CFO, its 'chief facilitating officer'.⁴⁰ Germany and, for that matter, Europe will have to rely on a strong US role in European defence for the foreseeable future. However, as numerous US politicians have underlined, European countries will have to increase their role in security and defence policy. The brutal civil war in Syria has already indicated that a stronger emphasis on US domestic policy and the perceived retreat of the United States from its role as a global policeman may provide opportunities for various actors to benefit from a power vacuum. Although the transatlantic democracies remain 'natural allies' and may have even more reasons to work together in the face of various crises and the challenges posed by illiberal challengers, close cooperation between the United States and Europe may be hampered by frustrations on both sides of the Atlantic.⁴¹ Most crucially, domestic politics, including a radicalizing Republican party in the US and illiberal nationalist forces in Europe,⁴² may make transatlantic cooperation more difficult to achieve.

The European Union will not meet the challenges facing it without a German co-leadership role that extends to the field of security and defence – and without close cooperation with the United States. The crucial role of Germany for the EU notwithstanding, German efforts will remain fruitless if other influential members of the EU do not do their share. Alas, the roles of France, Italy, Poland, and the UK are probably at least as insecure as Germany's. France is still struggling economically and might be even more influenced by the right-wing Front National, Italy has even higher economic burdens to shoulder, while the new Polish government's course might sharply diverge from the constructive role played by its predecessor. Finally, a lot will depend on the EU referendum in the United Kingdom and its impact on the shape and direction of the European Union.

In sum, the conditions for the conduct of German foreign policy within and for the European Union have changed – in certain aspects, dramatically. Most importantly, the expectations of others have risen enormously and are probably too high for Germany to live up to. This is mainly due to an overestimation of German power resources – in material, institutional, and intellectual terms – by outsiders, but

40 F.-W. Steinmeier, 'Maintaining Transatlantic Unity in a Complex World', Washington, D.C., 12 March 2015, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Infoservice/Presse/Reden/2015/150312-BM_CSIS.html, accessed 1 November 2015.

41 For a similar view, see Daniel Hamilton, 'Die Stärken einer unbequemen Partnerschaft', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, 22 November 2015.

42 See 'Playing With Fear', *The Economist*, 12 December 2015.

also results from the Germans' general underestimation of their own influence. Berlin will likely be struggling to come to terms with its new role for quite some time. New German initiatives are necessary, although they will almost certainly produce mistakes and provoke negative reactions. After all, the German government is sailing in uncharted waters. The fundamental guideline for German foreign policy, however, has not changed: Germany will only succeed if it takes into account the preferences and perceptions of its European neighbours. If the German government does not succeed in this or ignores its partners' concerns, it will surely draw criticism or even become the subject of what some perceive as historical 'blackmail'.⁴³ Berlin would thus do well to reinvigorate its traditional and long-term oriented foreign policy of 'shaping the regional milieu'.⁴⁴ This would require, however, an update of the institutional structure of the foreign policy decision-making system, the broadening of Berlin's diplomatic and military toolbox, and a continued effort to strengthen the strategic debate both at home and in relation to its most important partners.⁴⁵

43 As *The Economist* put it, '[...] Germans know that whenever others are angry with them, they will paint a Hitler moustache on posters of their chancellor. Many Germans are fed up with this—with being "blackmailed", as *Bild*, the leading tabloid, complained this spring, when Greece unexpectedly brought war reparations into negotiations about bail-outs in the euro crisis'. 'What the Führer Means for Germans Today', *The Economist*, 19 December 2015.

44 S. Bulmer, C. Jeffery & W. Paterson, *Germany's European Diplomacy. Shaping the Regional Milieu*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2000.

45 See also W. Ischinger & T. Bunde, 'Neue deutsche Diplomatie?', in G. Hellmann, D. Jacobi & U. Stark Urrestarazu eds., *'Früher, entschiedener und substantieller'? Die neue Debatte über Deutschlands Außenpolitik*, Springer vs, Wiesbaden, 2015, pp. 313–333.

9

9. Germany's Turkey policy in troubling times: A necessary partner for Europe in an unstable region?

Can Büyükbay & Wulf Reiners

A series of high-level meetings at short intervals, intergovernmental consultations across all ministries and joint preparations of EU-Turkey summits in support of accelerated EU accession negotiations – a snapshot of German-Turkish relations in 2016 suggests that the two countries share an encompassing agenda and work together on the basis of a strong, long-lasting partnership of mutual trust. By contrast, back in 1997, Germany still opposed the candidacy of Turkey as an EU accession country.¹ Even in 2013, ahead of the German elections, it was Germany that vetoed the opening of a new chapter in the accession negotiations.² Clearly, in the past decades, Germany's foreign policy vis-à-vis Turkey did not stand out for its high degree of continuity. Quite the contrary, it evolved amid a rhetoric characterized by changing perspectives, policies and priorities. Embedded in the discussions regarding Turkey's potential accession to the EU, bilateral economic relations, societal structures and Germany's role within the European Union are among the most influential factors that affected Germany's Turkey Policy. With the refugee crisis since 2015, the relations have experienced new impulses that may mark the beginning of a new period characterized by structured consultations and intensified cooperation, not only in security and migration affairs but also in view of a generally broadened EU-Turkey agenda.

1 E. Turhan: The European Council Decisions Related to Turkey's Accession to the EU: Interests vs. Norms, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012.

2 Hürriyet Daily News: German Interests and Turkey's EU Bid, 27.11.2013, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/german-interests-and-turkeys-eu-bid.aspx?pageID=449&nID=58575&NewsCatID=396> (accessed 08.03.2016).

This chapter deals with the relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Turkey by (1) mapping the various ties between the two countries, (2) tracking the evolution of Germany's foreign policy perspectives towards Turkey over time with a special emphasis on Turkey's EU accession process, and (3) the developments during the course of the refugee crisis since 2015. In so doing, it elaborates on both external as well as domestic conditions that have influenced the process, including party politics, economic and societal ties as well as the German political discourse on Turkey. Arguing that changed understandings in the German government of the aspired affiliation of Turkey to the EU and external security challenges are key to an understanding of German-Turkish relations, the paper concentrates on the last six legislative periods since 1994. The study concludes with reflections on future prospects for the relations between Germany and Turkey in view of their impact on both countries as well as the EU.

ROOTS AND FOUNDATIONS OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN GERMANY AND TURKEY

Bilateral relations between Germany and Turkey build on historical roots that date back to at least the 18th century when the first trade agreements were concluded. These long-lasting ties were particularly fostered by socio-economic cooperation during the 1950s and 1960s, when Turkey became one of the biggest recipients of German development assistance.³

After 1961, when a Labour Recruitment Agreement between Turkey and Germany was signed, a significant number of Turkish citizens migrated to Germany.⁴ As the agreement was based on a principle of rotation, the 'guest workers' were expected to return home after a year of employment abroad. However, the rotation principle did not materialize as planned and migrants settled down in Germany, which was undergoing strong industrial development and could therefore benefit from the additional labour force. The migration movement was

3 Auswärtiges Amt: Türkei-Beziehungen zu Deutschland, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Laenderinfos/Tuerkei/Bilateral_node.html (accessed 06.03.2016).

4 Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Relations between Turkey and the Federal Republic of Germany, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-the-federal-republic-of-germany.en.mfa> (accessed 06.03.2016).

fostered through family reunification schemes and the asylum track.⁵ Whereas in 1961 no more than 7,000 Turkish citizens lived in Germany, 50 years later that number has risen to roughly 2.8 million inhabitants with a Turkish migration background, more than half of whom have also obtained German citizenship.⁶

Nowadays, following from the high number of people of Turkish origin in German cities and industrial regions like Berlin, Cologne, Stuttgart and the Ruhr area, and due to their comparatively high degree of organization, inhabitants with Turkish roots have a substantial impact on the cultural and political life in Germany. Since cultural ties to Turkey are strong even for many third-generation Turkish descendants in Germany, diverging understandings of ‘societal integration’, Turkish diaspora politics as well as extra-territorial voting and election campaigning in Germany influence the German perspective. At the same time, Germans constitute the largest group of visitors to Turkey, with figures totalling 4.5 million in 2014, so that the transnational and cultural exchange is nurtured in both directions. In Germany, Turkish civil society organizations also participate in Federal Government initiatives such as the German Islam Conference and the Integration Summit. Furthermore, the two countries also engage in joint initiatives such as the Ernst Reuter Initiative for Intercultural Dialogue and Understanding (ERI) or the recently established Turkish-German University in Istanbul.⁷

Interconnected with the societal and cultural ties, the economic relations between Germany and Turkey are particularly strong. Being the largest importer of Turkish goods and among the top three exporters to Turkey, Germany is Turkey’s leading trading partner.⁸ Beyond that, Germany is also the most important foreign investor with nearly 6,000 German companies operating in Turkey. Within 10 years,

5 See K. Kirişçi: Turkey: A Transformation from Emigration to Immigration, Migration Policy Institute Policy Paper, 2003.

6 Statistisches Bundesamt: Bevölkerung nach Migrationshintergrund im engeren Sinne 2014 nach derzeitiger beziehungsweise früherer Staatsangehörigkeit, <https://www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/GesellschaftStaat/Bevoelkerung/MigrationIntegration/Migrationshintergrund/Tabellen/MigrationshintergrundStaatsangehoerigkeit.html> (accessed 29.01.2016). See also http://www.auswaertigesamt.de/DE/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Laenderinfos/Tuerkei/Bilateral_node.html#doc336370bodyText1 (accessed 29.01.2016).

7 Auswärtiges Amt: Türkei-Beziehungen zu Deutschland, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Laenderinfos/Tuerkei/Bilateral_node.html (accessed 06.02.2016).

8 Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung: Handelspartner der Türkei, <http://www.bpb.de/internationales/europa/tuerkei/187249/handelspartner> (accessed 29.01.2016).

Turkey's import and export trade with Germany increased by 80 per cent, reaching US\$38 billion in 2013.⁹ Turkish companies, too, have become increasingly active in Germany and are involved in businesses of strategic importance for both countries, such as the transport and energy sectors. The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) also continue to cooperate with Turkey in innovative and renewable technologies and environmental projects.

In terms of political cooperation, the two countries work today in the framework of various international organizations, most importantly as members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Group of 20 (G20), the Council of Europe as well as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Beyond that, in 2013 Germany and Turkey initiated the German-Turkish Strategic Dialogue at the foreign minister level in order to strengthen the constructive bilateral cooperation on key issues, including security policy, energy security, the fight against terrorism and regional issues. In 2016 the dialogue was elevated to the level of heads of government, when the first bilateral German-Turkish intergovernmental consultations took place in Berlin.¹⁰

Despite the importance of these bi- and multilateral ties between the two countries, German foreign policy towards Turkey takes place most importantly under the influence of, and in view of, EU-Turkey relations. In this context, Turkey's accession to the Customs Union and particularly the process of Turkish accession to the EU are of paramount importance; a process throughout which different German governments have proved to play decisive roles.

GERMANY'S POSITIONS ON TURKEY'S EU MEMBERSHIP

Turkey's relationship with the European Union has a long history that reaches back to the country's application for associate membership of the European Economic Community in 1959 and the resulting Ankara Agreement in 1963. Since then, the process has been fiercely contested

9 Anadolu Agency: Turkey-Germany trade relations to increase, 04.02.2014, <http://aa.com.tr/en/world/turkeygermany-trade-relations-to-increase/185322> (accessed 06.03.2016).

10 See Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung: 'Joint Communiqué', <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Pressemitteilungen/BPA/2016/01/2016-01-22-gemeinsame-erklaerung-deu-tur-konsultationen-englisch.html> (accessed 29.01.2016).

and slow, with the result that Turkey was not recognized by the EU as a candidate country until the Helsinki Summit in 1999, and that accession negotiations did not start before October 2005. The belief that Turkey's road to Europe runs through Berlin has been shared by both Turkey's governing elites and public opinion for years.¹¹ However, throughout the different government constellations in Germany, the Turkish-German partnership also faced difficulties with regard to Turkey's affiliation to the EU. In 1987, after the decision by the Turkish government to apply for membership of the European Community, Germany's position was far from supportive. At that time, Richard von Weizsäcker, the then President of the Federal Republic of Germany, declared the application an early step and hardly feasible.¹² Turkey's integration into the EU's Customs Union, however, was supported by the conservative-liberal coalition government in 1994. In this context, German foreign minister Klaus Kinkel is said to have played a supportive role in convincing Greece not to block Turkey's path to integration with the Customs Union.¹³ Christian Democrat (CDU/CSU) considerations were dominated by perceptions of Turkey as an important trading partner and as a NATO ally that could help to protect Europe's south-eastern borders. Regarding EU membership, however, the government under Chancellor Helmut Kohl remained sceptical, not only due to a democratic deficit but also because of the Greek-Turkish conflict over Cyprus. Kinkel called these obstacles "stones in Turkey's path to Union membership which it will take a long time to remove".¹⁴

In that sense, the Kohl government harboured clear reservations about Turkish Union membership,¹⁵ at a time when the German perspective on EU enlargement focused mainly on the integration of the Central and Eastern European countries and advocated their quick accession, particularly Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Added to the German understanding that Turkey could not fulfil the

11 S. Ateş: *Der EU-Beitritt der Türkei und seine Spiegelung in der deutschen Presse*, KAS Auslandsinformationen, 10/2002, p. 44.

12 A. Szymanski: *Germany and the question of Turkey's membership in European Union*, The Polish Institute of International Affairs Research Papers, no. 3, 2007, p. 28.

13 H. Arıkan: *Turkey and the EU – An Awkward Candidate for EU Membership?* Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003, p. 182.

14 C. Weick: *Die schwierige Balance*, LIT, Berlin, 2001, pp. 358–360, as cited in Szymanski 2007: p. 28.

15 By way of illustration, in 1975, at its 23rd congress, the CDU adopted a declaration in which it listed this issue among the most urgent tasks in European politics. However, when it came to the discussion about becoming a member of the European Union, Germany was sceptical (See A. Szymanski 2007).

Copenhagen criteria, concerns also related to the fact that Turkey was a predominantly Muslim country. The German government's sceptical attitude was manifest in the results of the Luxembourg European Council in December 1997, where Germany refused to support the change of Turkey's status to an actual membership candidate.¹⁶ The part played by the German government in rejecting the application resulted in altogether weakened German-Turkish relations. In Turkey, Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz accused Kohl of turning the EU into a Christian Club and used the term 'Lebensraum' for his support of the eastward enlargement strategy.¹⁷

Although at that time the Social Democrats (SPD), as the largest opposition party, had also rejected Turkey's EU membership due to the country's failure to satisfy the Copenhagen criteria,¹⁸ their position was slowly revised after the SPD came to power in 1998 under Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, together with the smaller coalition partner, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (the Greens). In its first term, the Schröder government focused on deepening rather than enlarging the EU. But the changing international context, such as the events in Kosovo, contributed to a revision of Germany's security perception and to the insight that stability in the southeast regions was essential for the EU. Moreover, the majority of those of Turkish origin had traditionally shown support for the Social Democratic Party (SPD) since the 1960s, linked to the German labour unions' affiliation to the SPD, as well as rising support for the pro-immigrant Greens from the 1980s onwards. Against this background, the political stance and votes of people of Turkish origin played into the SPD-Green government's consideration in support of Turkey's EU accession.¹⁹ Beyond that, Turkey's constitutional reforms in 2001 and the idea of the complete unification of Europe ("Vollendung Europas"), as coined by SPD politician and then European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy,

16 A. Szymanski: Germany and the question of Turkey's membership in European Union, The Polish Institute of International Affairs Research Papers, no. 3, 2007, p. 28-29.

17 Ö. Taşpınar: Changing Parameters in U.S.-German-Turkish Relations, AUCGS Policy Paper 18, American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, The John Hopkins University, Washington 2005, p. 23.

18 Süddeutsche Zeitung: SPD gegen Beitritt der Türkei zur EU, 10.03.1997, p. 10.

19 According to Politbarometer surveys conducted in late 2001 and 2002, 62% of Turkish-German citizens intended to vote for the SPD, followed by 22% for the Greens, and only 11% for the CDU/CSU, 3% for the FDP, and 3% for the PDS. See A. M. Wüst: Naturalised Citizens as Voters: Behaviour and Impact, German Politics, Vol.13, No.2, pp. 351, Table 7. See also Ş. Aktürk: The Turkish Minority in German Politics – Trends, Diversification of Representation, and Policy Implications, Insight Turkey, Vol.12, No.1, 2010, pp. 65-80.

Günter Verheugen, contributed to Germany's change of attitude towards Turkey's candidate status. Eventually, the events of 9/11 also exerted an impact on the attitude towards Turkey at a time when the idea of a multicultural Europe was regarded as a means of avoiding the hotly debated 'clash of civilizations'.

All in all, the change of coalition government in Germany in 1998 brought about a significant change in Germany's perspective, with Chancellor Schröder describing the rejection of Turkey in 1997 as a failure. Consequently, during the Helsinki European Council in December 1999, Germany tried and eventually succeeded in persuading Greece to the effect that an official candidate status could be given to Turkey. However, when deciding to open accession negotiations, the European Council stated that "these negotiations are an open-ended process, the outcome of which cannot be guaranteed beforehand".²⁰

The shift in the German position took place on the basis of a new assessment by the centre-left coalition. Democratic principles, human rights and civil liberties – rather than Turkey's religious background – were seen as decisive issues with regard to Turkey's EU membership prospects. Schröder also argued that yet another rejection of Turkey would have seriously damaged Turkey-Germany relations and diminished the credibility of the EU as a whole.²¹ However, while the SPD was generally in favour of Turkish accession, it also faced internal opposition, for example the objection raised by former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who argued that Turkey as a Muslim country belonged historically to another culture and that the huge population could constitute a threat to European societies.²²

The decision to start negotiations with Turkey was intensely debated in Germany and the issue had strong political salience because of the upcoming elections for the German Bundestag.²³ The acceptance

20 European Commission: Turkey Negotiating Framework, Luxembourg, 3 October 2005, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/turkey/st20002_05_tr_framedoc_en.pdf (accessed 06.03.2016).

21 G. Schröder: Regierungserklärung von Gerhard Schröder zu den Ergebnissen des Europäischen Rates in Helsinki, 16.12.1999, <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btp/14/14079.pdf>, pp. 7212–7216 (accessed 06.03.2016).

22 The European Union Center of Excellence of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: Turkey's Quest for Membership, EU Briefings 2008, p. 7.; Hürriyet Daily News: Helmut Schmidt's 'realist' view of Turkey, 10.19.2010, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/helmut-schmidts-realist-view-of-turkey.aspx?pageID=438&n=helmut-schmidts-realist-view-of-turkey-2000-10-19> (accessed 11.02.2016).

23 H. Kramer: Türkei, in: S. Schmidt (ed.): Handbuch zur deutschen Aussenpolitik, Wiesbaden: vs Verlag, 2007, pp. 482–493.

of Turkey was bitterly received by the CDU and CSU in particular. Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU), then leader of the opposition, claimed that it was the wrong decision to raise Turkey's hopes of joining the Union.²⁴ In contrast, the CDU developed the concept of 'a privileged partnership' for Turkey, which should be composed of deepened cooperation between the EU and Turkey, but not full membership.

A major difference between the centre-right government and the subsequent centre-left coalition was that the former viewed the topic predominantly from an economic perspective, whereas Chancellor Schröder's and Foreign Minister Fischer's position was largely determined by global security concerns. According to their assessment, in the aftermath of 9/11, the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) could benefit from Turkey's position and become more efficiently involved in international conflict resolution. They furthermore argued that Turkey, as a secular Muslim country, could serve as a model for other Muslim countries and thus act as a promoter of democracy in a wider area. In line with this understanding, the Schröder/Fischer government also rejected the concept of a 'privileged partnership', arguing that the term did not embrace the promises already made to Turkey and that setting Turkey aside could imply a crisis scenario for the country.²⁵ Beyond that, Fischer also claimed that by supporting the modernisation of Turkey, Germany could demonstrate its soft power as an alternative model to American military interventionism.²⁶

With the change of government in Germany in 2005, when Angela Merkel assumed the office of German Chancellor, the CDU/CSU party regarded Turkey's candidate status as a case of 'pacta sunt servanda'. It implied that the new government accepted the decisions of the previous government and that it was bound to them. At the same time, Merkel also stressed the open-endedness of the accession talks and revitalized the concept of a 'privileged partnership'.²⁷ The following statement by Merkel is a case in point: "I don't believe that Turkey can

24 Die Welt: CDU und CSU: Türkei noch kein geeigneter Kandidat, 11.12.1999, p. 6.

25 N. Nazlı Inal and D. Yeğenoğlu: German and French Leaders' Views on Turkey's EU Membership, Policywatch 1007, 27.06.2005 <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/german-and-french-leaders-views-on-turkeys-eu-membership> (accessed 06.03.2016).

26 J. Fischer: Turkey's European Perspektive – The German View, Turkish Policy Quarterly, Fall 2004, pp. 3–4, http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_turkey_tpq_id_8.pdf (accessed 06.03.2016).

27 Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung: Merkel lehnt EU-Betritt der Türkei weiter ab, 29.03.2010, www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/kanzlerin-in-ankara-merkel-lehnt-eu-beitritt-der-tuerkei-weiter-ab-1953192.html (accessed 06.03.2016).

become a member of the Union in the foreseeable future. Negotiating a privileged partnership is a way to keep close ties between Turkey and the EU”.²⁸ This reserved attitude towards Turkish EU membership is inherent even today in the CDU’s official position as illustrated by the 2014 party programme, stressing that the EU was not able to cope with Turkish membership due to the country’s size and the structure of the economy.²⁹

GERMAN-TURKISH RELATIONS SINCE THE 2015 REFUGEE CRISIS

Historical, political, economic, societal and cultural ties between Germany and Turkey as well as the different perspectives of the German government and parties on the question of Turkey’s EU accession constitute structural points of reference for Germany’s foreign policy towards Turkey. Building on these parameters, a number of interrelated external issues gave rise to new dynamics in German-Turkish and EU-Turkey relations in 2015, particularly the envisaged fight against ISIS and the Syrian conflict, terrorist attacks in both Turkey and EU countries and, most significantly, the large and relentless flow of Syrian refugees to the EU.

With regard to the refugee crisis, Turkey appears as an indispensable partner given its common land borders with Syria and two EU member states. Clearly, the country occupies a key position since the majority of refugees fleeing the war region “came [...] through Turkey via the Aegean Sea, relying on criminal networks set up by human smugglers”.³⁰ In order to find a political solution to the root cause of the refugee crisis – the conflict in Syria – Germany and the EU intensified consultations with all regional powers, including Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey. However, some experts hint at the unclear role of Turkey

28 N. Nazlı Inal and D. Yeğenoğlu: German and French Leaders’ Views on Turkey’s EU Membership, Policywatch 1007, 27.06.2005 <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/german-and-french-leaders-views-on-turkeys-eu-membership> (accessed 06.03.2016).

29 CDU: Gemeinsam erfolgreich in Europa, Europapolitischer Beschluss des 26. Parteitags der CDU Deutschlands, Berlin, 04.04.2014, p. 79, <http://www.cdu.de/artikel/gemeinsam-erfolgreich-europa> (accessed 25.01.2016).

30 K. Kirişçi: What the new Turkey-EU cooperation really means for Syrian refugees, The Brookings Institution, 19.10.2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/order-from-chaos/posts/2015/10/19-turkey-europe-action-plan-syrian-refugees-kirisci> (accessed 06.03.2016).

in the conflict,³¹ and its perspectives on the situation, which are neither compatible with those of all NATO partners nor those of Russia and the Assad regime. Following this perspective, it remains uncertain to what extent Ankara can be a key to the success of the process.

In contrast, with regard to the handling of the flow of refugees, not only from Syria but also from Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, joint actions between Turkey and the EU are considered the primary tool in stemming the flow of refugees.³² In this context, despite the overarching nature of the crisis, Germany occupies a particular role because of Chancellor Merkel's contested decision of August 2015 on a de facto intermission of the Dublin system for asylum seekers and due to the fact that Germany constitutes the primary destination for refugees within the EU.

Consequently, German-Turkish relations dealing with refugees and irregular migration turned out to be of particular importance for the relations between the EU and Turkey as a whole. This development became particularly visible during Chancellor Merkel's meeting with Turkish leaders in Istanbul in October 2015, three days after a European Council meeting on the migration crisis.³³ In this way, German foreign policy actively shaped the preparations for the EU-Turkey summit in November 2015, where a joint 'action plan' was eventually concluded.³⁴ The agreement comprised a series of proposed measures including cooperation on the support of Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey.³⁵ One of the clear aims of the action plan was to stem the flow of refugees to Europe. In return, the deal was coupled with an

31 S. Ülgen: *Fundamentale Unterschiede*, Internationale Politik 1, Januar/Februar 2016, pp. 42–45, <https://zeitschrift-ip.dgap.org/de/ip-die-zeitschrift/archiv/jahrgang-2016/januar-februar/fundamentale-unterschiede> (accessed 10.02.2016).

32 One can argue that in some sense the conceptualization of Turkey as a 'buffer zone' was revitalized, see BBC News: Turkey mulls 'buffer zone' against Islamic State, 16.09.2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29223208> (accessed 30.01.2016). This concept goes back to the Cold War era when Turkey "served as the bastion of Western Europe's defense during the Cold War". See A. Çarkoğlu and B. Rubin: *Turkey and the European Union*, London: Frank Cass, 2003, p. 95.

33 European Council: European Council meeting (15 October 2015) – Conclusions, EUCO 26/15, CO EUR 10, CONCL 4, Brussels, 16.10.2015, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2015/10/15-euco-conclusions/> (accessed 30.01.2016).

34 European Council: Meeting of heads of state or government with Turkey – EU-Turkey statement, 29.11.2015, 870/15, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/11/29-eu-turkey-meeting-statement/> (accessed 10.02.2016).

35 European Commission: Fact Sheet – EU Turkey Joint Action Plan, Brussels, 15.10.2015, MEMO/15/5860, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-5860_en.htm (accessed 10.02.2016).

advancement of the negotiations for visa liberalization, an upgrade of the Customs Union, an “unfreezing” of accession negotiations, as well as an initial €3 billion assistance package.³⁶ By referring to the EU Heads of State or Government’s call of 23 September 2015 for a reinforced dialogue with Turkey at all levels, the agreement was also part of an overall reinforcement of EU–Turkey relations.

The process was taken forward during the EU–Turkey Summit of 7 March 2016 where additional “bold moves” were discussed to address the migration issue, including the ideas to return irregular migrants from Greece to Turkey and to legally resettle Syrian refugees from Turkey to EU Member States.³⁷ A preparatory meeting between German Chancellor Merkel, Dutch Prime Minister Rutte and the Turkish Prime Minister Davutoğlu one day before the EU–Turkey summit led to comments that the advancement of the original EU–Turkey migrant deal had been “crafted by Germany and Turkey“,³⁸ thereby underlining Germany’s important role in EU–Turkey relations as a whole.

Embedded in the re-energized EU–Turkey relationship, the external challenges related to the conflict in Syria also provided fresh momentum for bilateral German–Turkish cooperation. The German–Turkish Strategic Dialogue Mechanism, a tool to strengthen the bilateral dialogue on key international issues, had already been concluded by the Turkish and the German foreign ministries in May 2013.³⁹ Building on this “new chapter”⁴⁰ in German–Turkish relations, a significant number of bilateral meetings between Chancellor Merkel, Prime Minister Davutoğlu and President Erdoğan have been observed

36 G. Gotev: EU and Turkey agree on €3 billion refugee deal, EurActiv, 30.11.2015, <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/global-europe/eu-and-turkey-agree-eu3-billion-refugee-deal-319929> (accessed 06.03.2016).

37 European Council: Statement of the EU Heads of State or Government, Brussels, 07.03.2016, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/07-eu-turkey-meeting-statement/> (accessed 08.03.2016).

38 Financial Times Online: Berlin/Ankara migration pact – wrecking ball or silver bullet? 08.03.2016, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/2bde51d6-e4a2-11e5-ac45-5c039e797d1c.html#axzz42lrAXYBE> (accessed 08.03.2016).

39 Joint Declaration between the Federal Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey on the establishment of a Strategic Dialogue Mechanism, 12 May 2013, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/644924/publicationFile/179845/130512_ErklaerungStratDialogDEUTUR.pdf (accessed 10.02.2016).

40 Auswärtiges Amt: Strategischer Dialog: ein neues Kapitel in den deutsch-türkischen Beziehungen, 13.05.2013, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Aktuelle_Artikel/Tuerkei/130512-BM_DEU-TUR%20Strateg%20Dialog.html (accessed 06.03.2016).

since summer 2015 – in addition to the multilateral G20, NATO and EU-Turkey summits. The development yielded the first German-Turkish intergovernmental consultations at the highest political level in Berlin in January 2016 and a wide-ranging agenda for reinforced cooperation in police, military and intelligence operations to fight terrorism and human trafficking, but also in the field of technical relief to address the situation of Syrian refugees at the Turkish-Syrian border.⁴¹ Due to the specificity of this form of intergovernmental consultations, Turkey is among a small group of countries “on the list of challenging but significant relationships for Germany’s foreign policy”.⁴² According to Chancellor Merkel, this specific form of reinforced bilateral cooperation between the two countries “develops very well”.⁴³

Within the German societal and political debate, the intensified relations with Turkey were not entirely positively received. Although wide agreement exists that Turkey is an essential actor to respond to the sources of migration, terrorism, human trafficking and numerous other related regional problems, the grand coalition government’s policy of rapid rapprochement with Turkey is also subject to criticism by both political and societal actors. The main arguments in this context are that the at least unclear attitude of the Turkish government towards ISIS, the “politics of escalation” regarding the Kurdish question and violations of the rule of law, the separation of powers, the freedom of expression and human rights in Turkey give cause for concern or even indicate that cooperation should be halted in critical fields.⁴⁴ In a similar vein, support was voiced by German civil society for Turkish

41 Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung: ‘Joint Communiqué’, <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Pressemitteilungen/BPA/2016/01/2016-01-22-gemeinsame-erklaerung-deu-tur-konsultationen-englisch.html> (accessed 29.01.2016).

42 J. Janning: Germany’s gambit – Turkey and the refugee crisis, European Council on Foreign Relations, 28.01.2016, http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_germanys_gambit_turkey_and_the_refugee_crisis5080 (accessed 10.02.2016).

43 A. Merkel: Regierungserklärung vom 17.02.2016, <https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2016/kw07-de-eu-gipfel/406242> (accessed 08.03.2016).

44 Die Linke: Beschluss des Parteivorstandes vom 26.09.2015, Solidarität mit der HDP! Für ein Ende der Kriegspolitik Erdogans!, <http://www.die-linke.de/partei/organe/parteivorstand/parteivorstand-2014-2016/beschluesse/solidaritaet-mit-der-hdp-fuer-ein-ende-der-kriegspolitik-erdogans/> (accessed 30.01.2016); Bündnis 90/Die Grünen: 39. Ordentliche Bundesdeligiertenkonferenz, Halle, 20.-22.11.2015, Beschluss (vorläufig), Für Frieden und Freiheit in der Türkei, https://www.gruene.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/BDK_2015_Halle/BDK15_V-14_Fuer_Frieden_und_Freiheit_in_der_Tuerkei.pdf (accessed 30.01.2016).

academics who faced “legal and administrative probes for signing a petition calling for an end to security operations in the southeast”.⁴⁵

Criticism of Merkel’s handling of the refugee crisis and modified approach towards Turkey not only came from new political movements in Germany and even from within the German government coalition, but also from other EU member states. Clearly, new negotiations on EU enlargement and visa liberalization were launched in the face of a large stream of irregular migrants coming through Turkey, but also at a time when the European Commission’s progress report on Turkey *inter alia* highlighted restrictions on freedom of assembly, an undermining of the independence of the judiciary and the principle of separation of powers, a serious backsliding regarding the freedom of expression, the protection of minorities and the rule of law, as well as serious concerns related to media freedom.⁴⁶ Against this backdrop, Germany’s leading role in the re-energized relations with Turkey was blamed for compromising European values and kow-towing to increasingly authoritarian leaders in Ankara.⁴⁷ In response to this criticism, the German government referred to the new more problematic context that had developed in recent years following the war in Syria. Nevertheless, according to the German position, “critical questions” regarding Turkish military actions against the Kurdish population were also part of the bilateral talks, just as questions regarding the rule of law would be subject to the discussions on the respective chapters of the EU accession process.⁴⁸

45 Die Zeit Online: Künstler drängen Merkel zu Kritik an Davutoğlu, 21.01.2016, <http://www.zeit.de/kultur/2016-01/angela-merkel-offener-brief-tuerkei-deutschland-konsultation-fatih-akin-navid-kermani> (accessed 30.01.2016).

46 European Commission: Commission Staff Working Document: Turkey 2015 Report. Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions “EU Enlargement Strategy” Brussels, 10.11.2015, SWD(2015) 216 final, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2015/20151110_report_turkey.pdf (accessed 10.02.2016).

47 The Economist: Charlemagne – Value shoppers, 30.01.2016, <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21689602-europe-promised-principled-foreign-policy-now-it-desperate-quick-deals-value-shoppers> (accessed 10.02.2016); G. Seufert: Turkey as Partner of the EU in the Refugee Crisis, SWP Comments, January 2016, http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2016Co1_srt.pdf (accessed 10.02.2016).

48 Mitschrift im Wortlaut der Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel und dem türkischen Ministerpräsidenten Davutoğlu, 08.02.2016, Ankara, <https://www.bundestkanzlerin.de/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2016/02/2016-02-08-bkin-tuerkei-davutoglu.html> (accessed 10.02.2016).

Germany and Turkey can build on numerous strands of strong ties, ranging from economic and societal interconnectedness to cooperation in European and international political institutions and processes, of both bilateral and multilateral kinds. Consequently, Germany's foreign policy is fed from both domestic sources linked to business interests, the Turkish community in Germany and German public opinion, as well as from international sources such as the collaboration within NATO.

Given their overarching character, accession negotiations and EU membership are at the heart of Germany's foreign policy debate on Turkey, even in times when enlargement is only implicitly discussed. Changes in German party politics have had a major influence on Turkey's acceptance as a candidate country and Germany also continues to play a central role in the current EU-Turkey relations. The Syrian refugee crisis since 2015 and Germany's role in the search for international and EU-wide solutions are a case in point. In this way, external shocks provided new momentum in parallel not only with EU-Turkey but also Germany-Turkey relations.

Although the refugee crisis can be considered one of the most critical challenges confronting the EU and Germany's evolving role within the Union in many years, Germany's foreign policy towards Turkey also takes place under the influence and in consideration of essential EU-related questions. To exemplify, the resolution of the division of Cyprus, vis-à-vis which much (preparatory) progress has been achieved recently, is inseparably linked to the EU's and Germany's Turkey affairs. In a more indirect way, the question of Turkey's EU membership might also play into the "Brexit" discussions and the United Kingdom's terms of membership. Not least in hopes of a slowed-down political integration process in an enlarged Union and an additional counter-weight against Germany's increasing leadership within the EU system, the UK supports Turkey's EU membership provided that related migration questions are settled. At the same time, should "Brexit" become a reality and lead to a form of privileged partnership between the Union and its former full member, new forms of differentiated integration could also serve as a point of orientation for Turkey's linkage to the EU. Clearly, the British debate on any form of alternative 'associated membership' for countries "that want of Europe a common market and a security relationship", rather than a pooling of sovereignty, a joint currency or European fundamental rights, relates to Turkey; and potentially chimes with the understanding of parts of

Turkey's ruling party.⁴⁹ However, in official statements by German governmental or EU officials, the notion of a privileged or alternative partnership with Turkey is as absent as in Ankara, very much in contrast to the emphasis that is put on the joint objective to revitalize and accelerate the accession negotiations.

It is nevertheless uncertain for both the Turkish as well as the German side whether full EU membership is indeed the ultimate objective of Turkey's negotiation process. The Strategic Dialogue between Germany and Turkey refers to Turkey's EU accession process as "beneficial for both sides"⁵⁰ and is, thus, also endorsed by parts of Germany's conservative political spectrum, which is sceptical with regard to actual Turkish EU membership. Indeed, support for the process should not be confused with support for membership, a destination which Chancellor Merkel has described as being "a very long way" and which she deemed it "nicht sachgerecht", namely not appropriate and not the time, to talk in terms of a short-term perspective.⁵¹

The current absence of a discussion on alternative forms of Turkey's partnership with the EU may be found partly in the notion that a 'second class' status was widely perceived as discriminatory on the Turkish end and openly rejected by Erdoğan when the privileged partnership was still part of the German debate.⁵² The fact that it is not advocated in Germany in times of growing dependence on close cooperation to address the Syrian conflict and the refugee crisis, however, does not mean that it is off the agenda for good. Ultimately, there is no pressure on German foreign policy to formulate a (difficult) position on the contested membership question as long as the accession is a distant prospect and as long as other EU member states appear far more sceptical, such as France, where a referendum on Turkey's accession is envisaged should the time come.

49 A. Duff: The case for an Associate Membership of the European Union, LSE Comment, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2013, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2013/03/06/associate-eu-membership/> (accessed 06.03.2016).

50 Auswärtiges Amt: Strategischer Dialog: ein neues Kapitel in den deutsch-türkischen Beziehungen, 13.05.2013, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Aktuelle_Artikel/Tuerkei/130512-BM_DEU-TUR%20Strateg%20Dialog.html (accessed 06.03.2016).

51 Tagesschau Online: Merkel zu Mitgliedschaft der Türkei – "Ein sehr langer Weg" zum EU-Beitritt, 16.01.2016, <http://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/merkel-eu-tuerkei-101.html> (accessed 11.02.2016).

52 Sueddeutsche Zeitung: Türkei lehnt "privilegierte Partnerschaft" mit EU ab, 16.02.2004, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/angela-merkel-stoesst-bei-besuch-auf-skepsis-tuerkei-lehnt-privilegierte-partnerschaft-mit-eu-ab-1.929509> (accessed 11.02.2016).

Hence, just as among EU member states, there is no commonly shared and clear vision for Turkey's ultimate affiliation to the EU, not across the German political spectrum, not within most political parties and not within German society. This lack of a broad agreement in the German consensus-oriented system also partly explains why German foreign policy towards Turkey has, despite the deep structural linkages between the two countries, not been a continuous development. Quite the contrary, depending on the issue area, the relations have developed in waves of changing priorities and perspectives. Whereas economic relations developed well in a rather continuous manner, political cooperation in other areas was largely dependent on external impulses that revealed interdependencies, particularly in security affairs.⁵³

In this way of thinking, the continuing war in Syria and the emergence of the 'Islamic State' have reflected the dominance of a security dimension in the current phase of German-Turkish relations, which is a strong driver for broader and intensified German efforts towards Turkey. The potentially ongoing mistrust between the partners and existing concerns regarding Turkey's understanding of democracy, the rule of law and human rights take a back seat as long as the security scenario does not change. However, since the process is characterized not only by a revitalization of existing multilateral cooperation but has also reinforced the bilateral structural setup, the development clearly has the potential to provide a foundation for sustainable collaboration in the future, even in a changed security environment. What follows from this assessment is that Turkey already enjoys some form of privileged partnership with the EU, and in particular with Germany, and that, at the same time, the revitalized relations have the potential to bind Turkey closer to Europe,⁵⁴ as long as Turkish leaders do not question Turkey's republican Westernization project as such, and as long as the conception of Turkey is not limited to that of a buffer zone or bulwark against the influx of refugees.

53 H.-L. Hauge and W. Wessels: EU-Turkey Relations and the German Perspective, in: E. Nuroğlu, E. Bayrak Meydanoglu and E. Bayraklı (eds): Turkish-German Affairs from an Interdisciplinary Perspective, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015, p. 34.

54 G. Seufert: Turkey as Partner of the EU in the Refugee Crisis, SWP Comments, January 2016, http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2016Co1_srt.pdf (accessed 10.02.2016).

Conclusions: German change and the implications for the EU's foreign and security policy

Niklas Helwig

An often-recounted joke about the former German foreign minister during reunification, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, might not be hysterically funny, but it is short and to the point: “Two airplanes meet over the Atlantic, Genscher sits in both”. With the miles that Angela Merkel clocked up during her crisis diplomacy on Ukraine, Syria and Greece, the joke is easily applicable to the incumbent German chancellor as well. As the various authors' accounts in this report confirm, Germany has played a leading role in the crises facing the European Union. But apart from the immediate crisis management, the domestic debates in Germany and the country's growing role in an often leaderless EU foreign and security policy represent a broader development, extensively analysed in this report. Germany's new role is a balancing act between its identity as a civilian power on the one hand, and the expectations and pressures stemming from its status as the EU's leading member state on the other.

Germany's approach to the foreign policy challenges is to a large degree characterised by continuity. Berlin is gradually pursuing a process of greater assertiveness, while adhering to its civilian power principles. The discussion on the use of military force is a case in point. Despite an increase in German military engagement, for example through training, weapon deliveries as well as direct engagement in the Syrian conflict, the use of force is not an easy option for Germany and will remain the very last resort. Other foreign policy tenets based on Germany's historical experiences, such as the close alliance with the US and the deep embedding in the European Union, remain the coordinates for German action. The resilience of the strong transatlantic alliance was again confirmed after the NSA spy scandals, and the

German public's resentment of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) did not inflict any damage on the close partnership on a wide range of political and security issues. Despite Germany's push for sanctions against Russia, its *Ostpolitik* tradition continues to inform Berlin's foreign policy, which more often than not is willing to build bridges with Moscow when possible. Germany's European vocation and strong preference for other multilateral institutional arrangements, such as the OSCE or the P5+1¹ format, remained unaltered and became visible in Germany's approach to seeking a political solution to the Ukraine crisis as well as fighting the root causes of the refugee crisis.

While continuity is as strong a feature of German foreign and security policy as it ever was, Berlin is assuming as much responsibility as possible within its sharply defined historical parameters. Take, for example, Germany's attempts to build its leadership on traditional power resources. First and foremost, leadership by power for Germany means using its economic power. Setting up a comprehensive sanctions regime against Russia did not compromise Germany's traditional aversion to military force. However, it demonstrated the country's willingness to back up diplomatic approaches with the leverage of its expansive economy, even if the move hurt its own business interests. In terms of military power, Germany is unlikely to be the first to put the military option on the table. Nevertheless, Berlin learned through the experiences of Kosovo, Libya and, more recently, Syria that it can sometimes be better to be a constructive part of a mission with Western partners than to stand on the side-lines and end up with less political clout.

Other changes are visible. While Germany still focuses on multilateral institutions and the EU, it has become more pragmatic in picking and choosing optimal frameworks and has started to go "venue shopping" for alternative decision-making settings and instruments. In that context, the OSCE enjoyed a revival and became a key instrument for multilateral dialogue and in monitoring the security situation on the ground in Eastern Ukraine. Faced with the inability of the EU and its member states to control the Mediterranean Sea borders and activities of human traffickers, in early 2016 Germany proposed a NATO mission to support Greek, Turkish and European patrol and border forces with surveillance tasks. For Germany, a European approach to foreign and security challenges is not automatically an exclusively EU approach.

1 German officials prefer to call it "E3+3", highlighting the engagement of the Europeans (France, the UK and Germany) in the process.

Berlin's ability to act bilaterally or in other mini-lateral settings is nothing new, but it has become the 'new normal' and is here to stay.

Germany's efforts to lead through facilitating consensus is a prominent feature, either within the European Union, or with third parties through preventive diplomacy in international crisis situations. However, it is becoming more and more difficult for Germany to root for win-win solutions in a world that is increasingly perceived as a zero-sum game. In this context, the diplomatic achievements in Eastern Ukraine and the resulting roadmap for peace are seen as a success in Germany, as was the positive 2015 result of the Iran nuclear talks, in which the German government was heavily involved on the European side.

The main reasons behind Germany's new leadership role would appear to be located at the international level. Without the crises of recent years and the lack of leadership in Europe, Berlin would not have shown the same level of ambition and assertiveness. That said, the authors of this report identified clear German agency over the question of how to implement greater international responsibility. Germany did not choose to lead, but Germany chooses how to lead. This learning process was driven mostly by the foreign policy elite in Berlin – and to a lesser extent by other societal and economic factors. The changes in German engagement were carefully choreographed in part: think tank reports on Germany's role were followed by key speeches by the German president and a number of ministers, which in turn led to more concrete discussions on the role of the Federal Foreign Office and German defence capabilities. During crisis situations, such as those in Ukraine or Syria, the key drivers are also to be found in the Berlin foreign policy community. For example, business interests did not undermine the primacy of politics and Germany's firm position on Russia's violation of international law. There is also little indication that Germany's military involvement in Syria was driven by a shift in public opinion, even though the public is becoming more accustomed to German military engagement. The party debate on the military engagement in Syria was controversial, but its impact on the parliamentary mandate to assist France, which was quickly pushed through by the grand coalition majority, was limited, however. Even though the discussion in Germany is lively at all levels, as can be witnessed during the current refugee crisis, decision-makers in the executive branch and opinion-makers in think tanks and the media are the real drivers of external relations, and they adhere to the traditional German foreign policy tenets as their navigation system.

So what do the incremental shifts in German foreign and security mean for EU institutions and partners? First of all, expect Germany to be engaged also in the future and to possibly increase the level of engagement further. The experiences since reunification have shown that this is a learning process, which – with some setbacks – generally advances in only one direction: towards more international responsibility. The globalisation that made Germany an economic engine confers responsibility on Germany to become a political engine. As the contributions to this report showed, its focus will thereby remain on institutions and diplomacy with the aim of creating a cooperative and rule-based international order.

The focus of Germany's international engagement in the field of diplomacy, crisis management and security is also likely to continue to shift in relative terms from the EU institutions towards alternative decision-making settings and instruments. As the results of this report show, Germany continues to invest heavily in the development of EU policies and, for example, actively contributes to the refinement and progress of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the CSDP. Nevertheless, it also seeks to develop synergies between the EU frameworks and other international organisations. The neighbourhood policy to the east is backed up by the activities of the OSCE, and German policy-makers are proposing ways of more closely integrating the CSDP into NATO, with the latter still remaining the anchor of German defence. With hopes fading for decisive integration steps in matters of EU foreign and security policy, Germany will further seek to broaden its toolkit and network.

That said, the EU remains a central institutional framework for foreign and security matters for Germany and its partners. The development of the CSDP might be sluggish, the EU's soft power waning, or the EU High Representative excluded from some international negotiations. Yet the EU Council formations and committees, the European Parliament and the offices and hallways of the EU diplomatic service remain the places where information is shared, opinions are shaped and positions are coordinated. For member states that lack the necessary clout vis-à-vis certain international matters or that are outside of frameworks such as NATO, the EU remains the linchpin that connects them to the power of the "big three" member states, as well as to the economic leverage of the European Commission instruments. The Russia sanctions showed that Germany is determined to use the EU to reach a coherent position among member states, while the refugee crisis has shown how costly it is for Germany if member states are divided. The costs of non-Europe

are especially high in Germany, which needs the EU not only for trade, but also to preserve the crucial balance on the continent and to promote stability in the world.

Finally, a word of warning is required. An excessive reliance on and trust in German leadership in keeping the EU together and managing international crises is not a good idea. Germany's healthy political and economic development might experience setbacks. The domestic pressure on Merkel to better manage the refugee crisis shows how quickly public opinion can turn and governments can slide into crises – also in Berlin. Germany's economic success is largely built on its export industry and is thus vulnerable to possible downturns in the world economy. EU partners and institutions must be resilient to stress when their core is weak.

But even if Germany's economic and political development remains stable in the longer run, it will not be able to provide stability and security in Europe and in its neighbourhood on its own. A partnership with the UK and France is indispensable for the EU's legitimacy and muscle. At the same time, Germany needs its partners in southern Europe, especially – but not only – to find a solution to the refugee crisis. Berlin's planned 130 billion- euro investment in defence up to 2030 is notable. However, Germany will never be strong enough to play the role of a security provider for Europe, as the US endeavours to be for the world. Berlin's investment is aimed at enabling Europe to build a common capacity and policy to tackle security challenges, which is also reflected in proposals for the development of the CSDP as well as NATO. Ultimately, that is what Germany's leadership – predominantly focused on fostering institutions and shaping consensus – is all about: empowering a strong and resilient Europe in which its partners need fear neither German dominance nor weakness.

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Europe's New Political Engine

Germany's role in the EU's foreign and security policy

Niklas Helwig (ed.)

At the beginning of this decade, the EU's foreign and security policy was leaderless, while several crises put Europe under pressure. The economically strong Germany had to become Europe's new political engine. The way in which Germany took up its new and unusual role and the implications that German leadership has for the EU's foreign and security policy are analysed in this report.

Germany fulfilled the leadership role that it never applied for. It pushed for a diplomatic solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine and led the Russia sanctions policy of the West. Germany not only followed the French call for military assistance after the Paris attacks, but is also heavily engaged in diplomatic efforts to solve the Syrian conflict. Berlin is central to the development of broader EU policies, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy. It is in the driver's seat when it comes to relationships with key international actors, such as Russia, Turkey and the US.

Germany has become an unlikely and unusual foreign policy leader, which still differs in various aspects from traditional foreign policy powerhouses. It leads through institutions and diplomacy rather than military power. It seeks European solutions rather than national ones. However, the success and sustainability of Germany's approach depends on securing Europe's unity and resilience in the face of crises in the neighbourhood and the effects of globalization.