RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Slow Path Towards 'Normality': German Strategic Culture and the Holocaust

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Despite being the largest, richest and most populous country in Europe, and despite being situated at the centre of Europe and thus affected by most developments in Europe, Germany is still somewhat reluctant to take on a leading role in Europe – most notably when it comes to security issues. The reason is that German strategic culture is still highly influenced by the collective remembrance of the Holocaust and the lessons Germany has drawn from it. The Holocaust Nation discourse has so far limited and delayed all attempts to develop a more active Germany within foreign and security policy. Germany *may* be on its way to becoming a more active great power, but it is happening at a slow pace, and the situation is still far from 'normal'.

Keywords: Germany; Holocaust; strategic culture; *Historikerstreit*; foreign policy; security policy; identity

Introduction

Historically, declining powers have been slow to accept a more modest role in world events. Conversely, 'rising states have not infrequently failed to expand their external involvement in step with increases in the relative national power' (Duffield, 1999, p. 768). How can this inertia be explained? This essay tries to explore the 'underexpansion' or 'underbalancing' (Reichwein, 2012) of one particular state, namely Germany, by studying its strategic culture.

After Russia's war in Ukraine, after Brexit and especially after Trump moved into the White House, there has been a surge in calls for Germany to take on a leading role in Europe – also with respect to security issues. The German government is not turning a deaf ear to these calls – even if the government may be somewhat hesitant. After meeting Trump several times, Germany's Chancellor, Angela Merkel, has said that it is time for Europe to pay more attention to its own interests 'and really take our fate into our own hands' (Smale & Erlanger, 2016). Germany's former Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen has stated: '[W]e are ready to lead' (Bundesregierung, 2016). Then Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier has even talked of 'Germany's New Global Role' (Steinmeier, 2016). However, prophecies of a more 'normal' German state behaviour on foreign and security issues – that is, a behaviour that is more focused and based on power politics, as seen in other historical great powers and hegemons – will most likely prove to be overly optimistic. Here, it is thus argued that German strategic culture is still highly affected by the memory of the Holocaust, and despite the pressure from government circles and other groups who favour a more activist foreign policy, Germany's elites are still not ready to take on a decisive, leading role in Europe, especially when it comes to hardcore security issues. Germany's collective self-understanding is essentially held in place by the Holocaust Nation discourse (Giesen, 1993) and framed by two concepts or historical lessons from the Second World War: 'Never again war' and 'never again Auschwitz'.

This essay includes six main sections. The first section establishes the theoretical and methodological framework chosen, namely, strategic culture. The second section examines the German Holocaust Nation discourse in the post-war period, while the third section looks at the *Historikerstreit* – the German historians' controversy – in 1986–1987. The fourth section outlines the 1990s' calls for Germany to become a 'normal state', knit together in the so-called 'normal state' debate of the mid-1990s. The fifth section goes through

the debate on the NATO led intervention in Kosovo in 1999, the debate on participation in the US led war in Afghanistan from 2001 onwards, the debate on abstention from the US led war in Iraq in 2003 and the debate on the NATO led intervention in Libya in 2011. Finally, the sixth section studies the Gauck-von der Leyen-Steinmeier-initiated debate in 2013–2014 on a possible increased German military role in the world.[1]

Strategic Culture: Literature Review and Theoretical Position

It is widely acknowledged that it was the Jack Snyder's report to the RAND organisation in 1977 on the Soviet Union's use of nuclear weapons that established the concept of strategic culture and gave it analytical value (Gray, 2006: 9; Johnston, 1995: 36; JS Lantis, 2006: 6).[2] Recognising that the Soviet Union was quantitatively superior to NATO in conventional weapon systems, the US and NATO had in the 1960's prepared strategies for the limited use of tactical nuclear weapons. These 'flexible' response strategies were based on the assumption that Soviet decision-makers would act in a similar manner to Western decision-makers, if they were faced with similar problems. Snyder challenged this assertion of rationality and claimed that '[n]either Soviet nor American strategists are culture-free, preconception-free game theorists' (Snyder, 1977, p. V). Therefore, he argued, if the Soviet Union was faced with new strategic problems, they would not be 'assessed objectively' – that is, according to Western assumptions of rationality – but rather be 'seen through the perceptional lens provided by the strategic culture' (Snyder, 1977, p. V). Thus, Snyder believed that the Soviet military system had a predilection for preventive, offensive use of power, and that the reason for this was found in Russian and Soviet history with its lack of security and authoritarian control. Initially, he defined strategic culture as: 'A series of general beliefs, attitudes and behavioural patterns with regard to nuclear strategy' that had 'achieved semi-permanent status' in the Soviet Union (Snyder, 1977: V). Elaborating on the issue, Snyder later defined strategic culture as 'the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other' (Snyder, 1977).

Snyder focused exclusively on nuclear strategic culture, but the concept is not limited to this issue. In another influential, albeit somewhat different study Alastair Iain Johnston argued that most proponents of strategic culture would agree that 'elites socialised in different strategic cultures will make different choices when placed in similar situations. Since cultures are attributes of and vary across states, similar strategic realities will be interpreted differently' (Johnston, 1995, p. 35). In his study, Johnston identified three generations or successive waves[3] of strategic culture research. He saw Colin Gray and David Jones as the main proponents of the first generation which Snyder had initiated. The second wave sees strategic culture as a tool of political hegemony, represented for example by Bradley S. Klein's study on U.S. nuclear strategy (Klein, 1988). The third wave, which emerged in the 1990's, focused its variant of strategic culture studies on explaining deviations from the expected (neo)realist outcome (Johnston, 1995).

The third wave of strategic cultural explanations of state behaviour was based on a rejection of the influence of structural factors on strategy, especially a rejection of neorealism which was not seen as an adequate explanation (Desch, 1998, p. 141; Johnston, 1995, p. 35). The end of the Cold War and, in particular, the fact that none of the established international relations theories seemed to be able to explain the fall of the Berlin Wall or correctly predict its immediate consequences for Europe, resulted in a realist tradition in disarray (Wivel, 2002) and led to a renewed focus on cultural studies. Among the theorists who were seen as part of the wave after the Cold War, Desch emphasises authors such as Peter J. Katzenstein (Katzenstein, 1996),

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[1] Thus, I have here chosen to only look at a few of the many significant public debates that have raged over the years in post-unification Germany. Among the important public debates from the reunited Germany that have been left out in this report are: the (re)unification debate; the debate on Botho Strauss and the new right; the Goldhagen debate; the Holocaust Mahnmal debate; the Walser-Bubis debate. For an analysis of these and a more in-depth analysis of the *Historikerstreit*, the 'normal state' debate and the debate on the Berlin Republic, see (Staun, 2002). Please note that debates that took place the *Historikerstreit* in the mid-1980's and the 'normal state' debate in the mid-1990's are analysed with focus on changes in the strategic culture, in the understanding of the Holocaust and in Germany's historical lesson that could precipitate a more activist (or normal) German foreign policy.

[2] The idea that the national character could have a significance for states' foreign and security policy was included in the analysis, long before Snyder invented strategic culture as a concept. Thus, studies of the influence of cultural factors on the use of military means surged following the Second World War. The crucial issue after the war was whether it was possible to map distinctive national features of the Axis powers, which could explain that the states had acted in a similar, belligerent way. Comprehensive studies of the 'national character' in Japan and Germany in the late 1940's formed the first basis for an analysis of how national peculiarities influenced the view of war and the use of military power (Desch 1988: 145).

[3] Johnston's classification of the 'generations' has been challenged by Michael Desch, who takes a wider and more non-English-speaking view of the debates on strategic culture. He argues that there are three waves of focus on culture in strategic studies, namely the Second World War, the Cold War and the Post-Cold War (Desch, 1998).

Thomas U. Berger (Berger, 1998), Jeffrey W. Legro (Jeffrey W., 1997), Alastair Iain Johnston and Elizabeth Kier (Kier, 1995) (Desch, 1998).[4]

Two central authors are Thomas U. Berger and John S. Duffield (Berger, 1998, 2002, 2012; Duffield, 1999), who both try to invigorate the concept of strategic culture. Berger claims that cultural beliefs and values act as distinct national lenses which shape perceptions of events. Thus, 'information that reinforces existing images and beliefs is readily assimilated,' whereas information that is inconsistent with the prevailing worldview tends to be 'ignored, rejected or distorted in order to make them compatible with prevailing cognitive structures' (Berger, 1998, p. 24).[5] Writing on political culture and state behaviour, John S. Duffield has argued that the 'overall effect of culture is to predispose collectivities toward certain actions and policies rather than others. Some options will simply not be imagined. Of those that are contemplated, some are more likely to be rejected as inappropriate, ineffective, or counterproductive than others. To be sure, culture is not deterministic. It may not and often does not precisely determine behaviour. But it can significantly narrow the range of actions likely to be adopted in any given set of circumstances' (Duffield, 1999, p. 772). In this way, culture sets the standard for meaningful and appropriate behaviour. This multifaceted use of the concept of strategic culture – and other cultural-based explanations – has been criticised by some scholars who believe that strategic culture has ended in some sort of 'last resort of explanation' that seems to explain everything but, in fact, explains nothing (Echevarria II, 2013; Glenn, 2009, p. 530; Hudson, 2009, p. 118).

One of the problems in the strategic culture literature has been the widely accepted understanding of culture as 'ideas-plus-behaviour' – taking its point of departure in Snyder's definition (Lock, 2018, p. 4). In 1995, Johnston criticised this as a conflation of ideas and behaviour which, in his eyes, produced 'claims, where strategic culture "as cause" cannot be distinguished from the effects it is said to produce' (Lock, 2018, p. 4). Responding to this critique, Colin Gray in 1999 published an article named 'Strategic Culture as Context: The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back' and thus kicked off the so-called 'Johnston-Gray' debate (Bloomfield, 2012, p. 442; Libel, 2018, p. 5). In his article, Gray argued that 'culture is ideas, it is the evidence of ideas, and it is behaviour', citing Raymond Williams and refencing common definitions in the Oxford and Webster's dictionaries (Gray, 1999). Colin Gray's position is that it is impossible to distinguish between strategic culture as ideas and strategic culture as behaviour (and artefacts) because they are inherently interwoven. He thus argued that 'culture is behaviour, because those responsible for the behaviour necessarily are encultured' (Libel, 2018). But if one cannot distinguish between context and behaviour, or structure and agency, one risks having problems to explain change.[6] This central problem has remained unresolved for many years (Bloomfield, 2012, p. 438), but there seems to be attempts to resolve it in what some label the fourth generation or wave of strategic culture (Haglund, 2014, p. 317; Libel, 2018, p. 7). These authors were purportedly trained and worked during an era of 'analytic pluralism' which in Libels understanding seems to mean constructivism. They primarily focus on change in rather than stability of strategic cultures, arguing that change originates in different strategic subcultures competing for hegemony, and they generally seem to focus on elites (Libel, 2018, p. 8).

This essay places itself theoretically in continuation of the fourth wave, inspired by constructivism, and follows the line of Edward Lock (Lock, 2018). Strategic culture is described as 'consisting of common ideas regarding strategy that exist across populations'. Thus, strategic culture is narrowed down to common ideas rather than ideas plus behaviour, thereby hopefully avoiding the above mentioned problems.[7] Lock defines strategy as 'matters pertaining to organised violence' – that is, the legitimacy and efficacy of the use of military force (Lock, 2018, p. 1). The word 'matters' is important here. Because in the German context, these matters are manifold and follow from questions of German collective identity on 'who are we', 'what or who threaten us' and 'what is our role in the world'.[8] These matters and these collective identities are not part

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[4] Jeffrey S. Lantis is also connected with this wave which, in 2002, he argued had become fashionable in mainstream international relations theory, adding authors such as Stephen Peter Rosen and Robert D. Putnam (Lantis, 2002).

[5] As Michael Foulon argues, governments are relatively unable to 'consider alternative views once they have established an image about another actor'. Robert Jervis labels this as 'cognitive bias' and 'cherry-picking'. Thus, he argues that 'governments adopt data that supports the pre-established image at the expense of more valid data that would undermine it' (Jervis qouted from Foulon, 2015, p. 652).

[6] Gray argues that 'strategic culture(s) can change over time, as new experience is absorbed, coded, and culturally translated. Culture, however, changes slowly' (Gray, 1999, p. 52).

[7] The definition of strategic culture here implies a distinction between ideas and behaviour. The behaviour is a result of the ideas of that strategic culture, which sometimes – if they are strong and receive sufficient backing – are institutionalized and thereby, in the second order, influences the ideas and worldviews of which the strategic culture is composed (Bloomfield, 2012).

[8] See Caroline Hilpert for a similar understanding (Hilpert, 2014, p. 8).

of German strategic culture per se, but they do affect the elites' perception of the legitimacy and efficacy of the use of military force. In this sense, strategic culture is here seen as the overall worldview (Weltbild)[9] (Wittgenstein, 1989, pp. 174, § 122) of the foreign and security policy elite which sets the discursive limits for what is deemed meaningful in terms of foreign and security policy.

Thus, this essay mainly pays attention to the beliefs and values of the German foreign and security policy elites, as expressed in the numerous public debates of which Germany has plenty. The German elites are seen as perhaps unusually manifold and broad due to the entrenched democratic nature of post-war German politics and maybe extraordinarily interested in foreign and security policy (Schmitt, 2012, p. 64). Furthermore, there is a strict parliamentary prerogative on all armed military deployments outside the NATO area, institutionalised in the 1994 ruling by the Constitutional Court and the 2005 *Parlamentsbeteiligungsgesetz*, the law on the rights and duties of the German parliament on mandating the use of German military in international missions abroad (Bundesministerium der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz, 2005). The parliament is endorsed with a prerogative to withdraw troops already deployed, and it must renew all mandates for international missions on an annual basis, thereby limiting the tendency towards 'mission creep'. These legislative powers essentially mean that the Parliamentary Committees on Foreign Affairs and Defence are closely involved in preparation and monitoring of all international military deployments (Bergstrand & Engelbrekt, 2016). It essentially gives parliamentary debates – and thus, by extension, public debates – a significant say on German foreign and security policy. Furthermore, as Julian Junk and Christopher Daase argue, this 'complex web of checks and balances in German decision-making on foreign and security policy … results in a constant consensus-finding exercise' (Junk & Daase, 2013, p. 144), which limits or slows down all attempts to create change.[10]

To shed light on how public opinion influences strategic culture, this investigation analyses a set of the most important public debates on the future of German statehood, identity and foreign and security policy, notably the *Historikerstreit* and the 'normal state' debate which are seen as the founding debates of the so-called Berlin Republic.[11] I then study the debates on Germany's participation or non-participation in the wars in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, after which I focus on the renewed push by the German government in 2013–2016 for an enhanced German role in foreign and security policy. In all of these debates I focus on how the participants have used history, notably the two main nodal points of the Holocaust Nation discourse, namely 'never again war' and 'never again Holocaust', and try to determine how these positions are used in the debate. Thus, the method of this essay is informed by discourse analysis. It is argued here that discourses on foreign policy organise knowledge systematically and delimit what can meaningfully be said and what cannot. These discourses set the frames or the limits for what is considered politically feasible policy directions (Wæver, 2005).

Essentially, the view taken here is that (Germany's) strategic culture is a sort of 'end product' of a funnel process, which – both in terms of participants and discourses – is wide at the top, where the country's self-understanding, its 'role in the world', is formed through a range of public debates on different topics, in Germany's case often debates related to the issue of German identity and the Holocaust. On the other hand, at the bottom of the funnel, you find Germany's strategic culture – which is much more narrow in terms of participants (mostly top bureaucrats and top politicians) – as well as discourses (more focussed on security, less on identity).[12] Mainly for practical reasons, I have chosen not to divide the interventions in the public debates into analytical categories such as 'elite', 'bureaucratic elite' or 'electorate'. I also refrain from trying

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[9] Iver Neumann and Henrikki Heikka argue that the sets of norms studied by strategic culturalists 'may add up to the German concept of Weltanschauung, which captures the holistic dimension that the literature of strategic culture attempts to address'…'. Thus, strategic culture is ultimately tied to fundamental philosophical questions about the meaning of life and the relationship between self and other' (Neumann & Heikka, 2005, p. 7).

[10] Elisabeth Pond even argues that German foreign policy has become increasingly responsive to domestic pressures, in fact 'German politicians are now constrained by public opinion in ways that are different from the past' (Kundnani & Pond, 2015).

[11] The primary organising criteria for characterising a debate as a 'debate' is that the participants themselves or external observers refer to the exchanges as part of a 'debate'. It is thus essentially a self-referential system of meaning, which aims to summarise the preceding discussions, views and considerations expressed in a common concept, such as *Historikerstreit*. The emphasis is therefore on criteria like internal referencing, understood as footnotes and references to previously published articles, references to common authors, reactions to the speeches, references to nodal points, common concepts etc. The term 'nodal point' is taken from Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe who, in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* from 1985, define the term as a 'privileged discursive point' with 'partial fixation' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) – a keyword or an underlying, perhaps unspoken, mutual understanding of what the debate is all about. For more on the criteria of 'debates', see Staun, 2002, pp. 84–85, (Wæver, 1992), (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), and (Walker, 1993).

[12] Please note that the funnel process metaphor has a methodical implication for the essay since it essentially implies that one has to start with a rather wide examination of the public debates on Germany's self-understanding before narrowing the search down to the present shape of Germany's strategic culture.

to differentiate between hidden motives or vested interests behind politicians' use of specific discourses to specific audiences. Not to say that politicians do not use language instrumentally – they most certainly do – but it is a complicated and essentially normative task to determine when a speech actor (Austin, 1962) uses a discourse in an instrumental way and when it is used in a 'genuine' way. Neither do I try to distinguish between official discourses employed for internal audiences versus external, or foreign, audiences.[13]

The Post-War Basic Consensus: From *Sonderweg* to Normality

It took almost twenty years after Germany's defeat in the Second World War before German historians seriously started addressing the relationship between Nazism, anti-Semitism and German national identity (Kulka, 1985, p. 609).[14] Beginning in the early 1960's, a shared understanding of the Holocaust started to build in German public life. Inspiration for this shift came not least from the Adolf Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961 and from the resumption of the Auschwitz processes in Frankfurt am Main in 1963. From then on – and with enhanced momentum after the student revolt in 1968 – the Third Reich was no longer regarded as an unfortunate parenthesis in German national history, but as the very culmination of Germany's national romantic tradition (König, 1996; Kulka, 1985; Pohl, 1997) (Kulka, 1985) (König, 1996; Pohl, 1997). Thus, the 1970's and 1980's saw the formation of a consensual thesis on the development of German nationalism and the power state as a *Sonderweg*, a special German development path which was understood negatively, leading straight to the gas chambers of Auschwitz.[15] This led to a widely held understanding that Germany (FRG) should never again follow a political course which would let history repeat itself – the discourse 'nie wieder Krieg' (never again war) took the forefront of the public debate and the concept of West Germany as a purely civilian power developed (Maull, 1990). In 1983, Wolfgang Mommsen argued that the German issue had been moved back to the historical *Normallage* (normal situation), understood as 'a German cultural nation in the middle of Europe, which is split into several German nation states'. 'The phase of the common nation state from 1871–1933 was an episode in German history, and now we again, this time at a higher level, have reached the state which existed in Germany after 1815, namely that of a plurality of German states with a common cultural national affiliation'(Habermas, 1990, p. 207).

Historikerstreit – The Historians' Controversy 1986–1987

The heart of the so-called *Historikerstreit*[16] – the German Historians' Controversy – was not just how Nazism and the Holocaust should be understood, but what place this remembrance should be awarded in interpretations of the German past.[17] If Nazism and the Holocaust should be understood as unique German phenomena, one would not be able to 'reprocess', 'work through' or 'normalise' history, meaning that the horrors of the Holocaust would remain history's burden on the German nation for all times. However, if one could compare the Holocaust to other genocides – for the conservative historians first and foremost the Stalinist genocide – Holocaust could be historicised and relativised as one genocide among others, thereby freeing the German nation from the destiny of 'having for all eternity to bend its neck in guilt' and making it entirely legitimate to seek to recreate a German national identity feeling. The conservative side wanted the

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[13] See Ieva Berzina (Berzina, 2015) for a rather successful attempt at precisely that.

[14] Naturally, the process of coming to terms with history started much earlier (Berger, 2012). The question of German collective guilt is for example discussed most thoroughly in Karl Jaspers' *Die Schuldfrage* from 1946 (Jaspers, 1946). Here, I refer mainly to the debate among German historians, and how this was affected by the Eichmann trial and the Auschwitz processes.

[15] The precise time when this 'basic consensus' achieved a hegemonic position in West German political self-understanding obviously depends on how you define 'basic consensus', and what the term covers. Martin Brozat argues that already from the late 1950's, there had been an element of political orientation (*Gesittung*) towards the Holocaust in West German self-understanding, including a specific self-critical view of history ('Historikerstreit'—Die Dokumentation der Kontroversen um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung ('Historikerstreit'—The documentation of the controversies surrounding the uniqueness of the nationalsocialist extermination of the Jews), 1988). Habermas instead considers the early 1980's to be the time when this understanding had become widespread in West German public awareness (Habermas, 1987). Also Jarausch sets the timeframe to the early 1980's (Jarausch, 1995), whereas Dieter Pohl operates with a marked shift between the late 1970's and early 1980's (Pohl, 1997). Rainer Zitelmann argues in turn that this understanding of history was of a leftist cut, and that the left in the 1970's and 1980's had achieved a 'cultural hegemony' in the FRG intellectual discourse (Zitelmann in (Weidenfeld, 1993)). Here, I mainly follow (Kulka, 1985); (Pohl, 1997; Weidenfeld, 1993).

[16] The following account is based on a collection of opinion pieces ('Historikerstreit'—Die Dokumentation der Kontroversen um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung ('Historikerstreit'—The documentation of the controversies surrounding the uniqueness of the nationalsocialist extermination of the Jews), 1988). It should be noted that the first letter to the editor from Andreas Hillgruber in FAZ on 23 August 1986 is not included in the collection.

[17] Among the most famous participants in the debate were Jürgen Habermas, Rudolf Augstein, Robert Leicht, Ernst Nolte, Andreas Hillgruber, Klaus Hildebrand, Joachim Fest, Michael Stürmer and Kurt Sontheimer (Historikerstreit, 1988). Karl Christian Lammers counts more than 400 individual posts in the debate (Lammers, 1992).

West Germans to be able to identify positively with their country's history and thereby come to love their nation again. According to the conservatives, a national community could (and can) not merely rest on an idea of reason based on *Wirtschaftswunder* (materialism), post-nationality and constitutional patriotism.[18] As Michael Stürmer argued: 'Pluralism of values and interests will, when it can no longer find common ground, no longer be mitigated by growth, no longer be dampened by debt, sooner or later lead towards civil war, like at the end of the Weimar Republic' (Weidenfeld, 1993, p. 77).

The standard interpretation of the result of the *Historikerstreit* is that the German left 'won' the debate (Staun, 2002, p. 369). The Holocaust was thus interpreted as a specifically German historical phenomenon that could not be compared to other genocides or, at least only to an insufficient extent, be subjected to comparison: The Holocaust was unique (*Einzigartig*). The wish of Nolte, Hillgruber and Stürmer for a 'normalisation' of history and the desire once again to 'be able to stand up straight' was pronounced. The result was that any attempt to reintroduce the concepts of power, state and national interests as natural parts of German political and historical thinking was interpreted as a right-wing and national romantic attempt to once again lure the Germans along the forbidden tracks of the romantic power state (*Machtstaat*) – a path that would necessarily lead directly to the gas chambers of Auschwitz. Thus, the 'never again war' discourse was still the dominating discourse on Germany foreign policy, but the debate had left open a discursive space which was to be used in the 'normal state' debate.

The 'Normal State' Debate

In 1989, the Berlin Wall came down, and West and East Germany were united in the FRG in 1990. This set another general discussion in motion, the so-called 'normal state' debate on what kind of foreign and security policy the united Germany should lead. The participants in this debate were also a rather diverse group.[19] They were not just Germans, just as the debate was not limited to German media outlets, but were joined by a variety of international academics speaking through all sorts of international journals, primarily *International Relations*.[20] However, the international debate is assumed only to have had limited impact on the German debate (Staun, 2002, pp. 84–96). A central theme in the discussion – which raged from the time of the reunification of Germany in 1990 until 1995, when the debate on the Berlin Republic took over (Staun, 2002, p. 445) – was the idea that after reunification, Germany had returned to normality, as opposed to the post-war division of Germany in two separate states (GDR and FRG), which from this point on was seen as a *Sonderweg*. It was a process of moving from having Bonn as (a provincial) capital during the period of the two-state solution, towards having the big city of Berlin as its capital, with one government presiding over a united Germany.[21] Implicit in this notion was the idea that the nation-state was (and is) the standard societal unit in world history.[22] Furthermore, there was a growing consensus that the Germans might have been divided into two states, but as a cultural nation, as a culturally defined people, they had never ceased to belong together.[23] Thus, the 'normal state' debate broke with the 'basic consensus' of the Bonn Republic that the historical normality was two (or more) German states in the centre of Europe.

Another critical point in the debate was about power. Thus, the 'normal state' advocates argued that the reunited Germany had not just regained its position as a 'normal state' but – because of its increased territory, population and the size of its economy – it was also a 'normal great power'. Here, a normal great

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[18] The concept of *Verfassungspatriotismus*, or constitutional patriotism, originates from Dolf Sternberger, a student of Karl Jaspers, but was popularised by Jürgen Habermas (albeit in Habermas' version). See (Sternberger, 1990), and (Habermas, 1998).

[19] Peter Glotz divides the participants into two main groups. Thus, he speaks of 'normalisation-nationalists' among whom he enlists Arnulf Baring, Joachim Fest, Brigitte Seebacher-Brandt, Botho Strauss, Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, Karl Heinz Bohrer and Karlheinz Weissmann. To these, he adds leftist critics of the concept of normalisation, including Peter Brandt, Herbert Ammon, Karl Otto Hondrich, Wolfgang Templin and Tilman Fichter. Konrad H. Jarausch adds historians like Christian Maier and Heinrich August Winkler, whom he sees as taking a middle ground position (Jarausch, 1995).

[20] For some contributions to the international part of the 'normal state' debate, see (Waltz, 1993); (Ash, 1993; Mearsheimer, 1990), (Wæver, 1989, 1991, 1992; Wallace, 1991).

[21] A central element of the debate was the Bonn versus Berlin controversy, framed as a dichotomy between provincialism and urbanity (and, implicitly, small state versus great power). One of the debaters who played a leading part in the development of the concept of provincialism as an integrated characteristic of the Bonn Republic was the literary critic and writer Karl Heinz Bohrer. Bohrer described the Bonn era as '[a]n escape from world politics into the fairytale forest, where no one will find us anymore, apart from the good fairy who announces that world peace has broken out' (Bohrer, 1990, p. 1100). Instead, Bohrer wanted the reunited Germany to throw away its mantle of insecurity and fear. He wanted Germany to be willing to take risks and to take on responsibility.

[22] Thus, inherent in the notion of normality was also a *kleindeutsche Lösung*, that is, a small Germany solution, since Austria was seen as a separate and independent and essentially non-German state.

[23] See, for example (Ignatieff, 1993; Probst, 1996; Smyser, 1995).

power was understood as something similar to the UK or France, and there was, therefore, an implicit element of *Westbindung*, of integration into Western and European structures, in this discourse. Thus, it was the Western world's version of normality that Germany should strive to achieve. If Germany should be a Western-style normal great power – essentially, if it wanted to remain a part of the West now that it had become a major power – it had to re-establish the connection between political power and military means. So, implicitly, the debate focused on what kind of foreign and security policy Germany should conduct.

A further characteristic of the 'normal state' debate was the revival of geopolitical discourses which focused on the importance of Germany's location at the centre of Europe, represented by concepts such as *Mitte* (centre), *Mittellage* (central position) and *Mitteleuropa* (Central Europe), a location which along with Germany's increased geographic, demographic and economic size, for the normalisers assigned Germany with a special responsibility for events in Eastern and Central Europe. Thus, the conservative historian Arnulf Baring argued that '[u]ntil now we were a purely Western country, now we are again, whether we like it or not, a Central European (mitteleuropäischen) [country]' (Baring, 1991, p. 9).[24] In his book *Die Zentralmacht Europas – Deutschlands Rückkehr auf die Weltbühne* from 1994, the conservative historian Hans-Peter Schwarz was critical of the government's 'provincial incomprehension' (p. 61). He also criticised the widespread idea of Germany as a 'civilian power' which had made up its mind only to deal in 'doing good' (*Gutestun*), possibly supplemented by 'chequebook contributions for peacekeeping operations', 'unless it smells of powder, in which case it would let its allies have precedence' (Schwarz, 1994, p. 177). In his eyes, Germany was essentially a 'traumatised giant', neither willing nor able to play the role of a 'normal', albeit very large country in the European Concert (Schwarz, 1994, p. 20). Instead, politicians wanted to pretend that Germany was just 'a big Switzerland' (Schwarz, 1994, p. 20). 'The country must, though it thereby loses its world politics innocence, adjust to a role that goes beyond that of civilian power broker working through engineering, credit and foreign trade' (Stürmer, 1994, p. 10).

To sum up: In the 'normal state' debate, the normality metaphor primarily functioned as a discursive position which saw the nation-state as the normal unit of history and Bonn as a unique phase in history, and which argued in favour of a return to the Clausewitzian connection between political power and military means. In most cases, it was employed as one part of a dichotomous pair with the *Sonderweg* term, arguing that for Germany to continue the Bonn tradition of a restrained foreign policy would have been 'abnormal', essentially a *Sonderweg*, a special path of development, which at worst would have led Germany away from the West and, if not back to the horrors of the Holocaust, then at least to the erroneous policy of pre-First World War Germany. Now, Germany was again a normal great power at the heart of Europe and should shred its propensity towards civilian power only. The 'never again war' discourse had lost its dominating position.

The Berlin Republic and its Foreign Policy

A few years later, on 24 March 1999, German soldiers were engaged in offensive military operations for the first time since the Second World War. German Tornado fighter-bombers took part in the first wave of air strikes on Serbian military positions in Kosovo. All in all, 15 German aircraft and hundreds of support troops participated in NATO's Operation Allied Force over the next 78 days. As Stephan Speicher put it in *Berliner Zeitung*, 'the last victim of the fall of the Wall was German pacifism' (Lantis, 2002). In parliament, Scharping invoked the Holocaust Nation discourse when arguing that Germany had to take part in Operation Allied Force: 'It is a commitment based on the experiences of the first half of this century' (Deutscher Bundestag, 1999, p. 2424). Furthermore, he said that NATO's intervention was intended to stop an 'incipient genocide' (Wunsch, 2012, p. 282). The German Foreign Minister and leader of the formerly pacifist party, the Green Party, Joschka Fischer faced strong opposition in his party. However, Fischer paved the way for German participation in the war by referring to the lessons Germany should have learned from the past: 'If we have learned the lesson from our history and the murderous first half of the 20th century, there can in Europe no longer be warmongering' (Deutscher Bundestag, 1998, p. 23142), and in preventing this, 'reunited Germany has a special responsibility' Fischer argued (Deutscher Bundestag, 1998, p. 23142). After the debate in parliament, the German Bundestag supported sending German troops to war in Yugoslavia with 503 out of 584 parliamentarians voting in favour, 63 against and 18 abstaining (Brunner, 2012). Still, the Green Party was very close to collapsing at a special congress held in Bielefeld a few months later, where the party members embarked on a vivid debate between so-called 'Fundis' (fundamentalists) and 'Realos' (realists). During the discussion, Joschka Fischer was attacked with a paint bomb that punctured his eardrum and

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[24] Other German historians who shared this view were Hagen Schulze, Eberhard Jäckel, Hartmut Boockmann and Heinz Schilling.

left him splattered with red paint. Undeterred, he continued his speech: 'Peace', he thundered, 'means that men aren't murdered, women aren't raped and people aren't driven from their homes' (Joffe, 1999). Furthermore, he argued that 'Auschwitz is incomparable. But I stand on two principles, never again war, never again Auschwitz, never again genocide, never again fascism' (Der Spiegel, 1999; Vied, 2010). In the end, the party members decided to endorse the leadership's course (444 in favour; 318 against) (Harnisch, 2001).

In essence, in order to legitimate Germany's active participation in the Kosovo campaign, Scharping and Fischer argued that the ethnic cleansing underway in Yugoslavia was comparable to the atrocities of the Third Reich – even though Fischer publicly had to say that the Holocaust was incomparable – thereby implicitly adopting the same position as the one the conservative historians fought for, but lost, in the *Historikerstreit*: that the Nazi Holocaust could be compared to other genocides. 'The evils of Nazism, although unique in terms and scale and viciousness, were not uniquely German. Other countries as well committed similar crimes' (Berger, 2012, pp. 76–77). Furthermore, Scharping and Fischer furthered the understanding that because of the atrocities committed during the Second World War, Germany had a special responsibility to help stop the killings in Kosovo. 'Never again Auschwitz' had trumped 'never again war' with Germany playing an active role in preventing future genocides.

Germany's course towards an enhanced foreign and security policy activism took another step forward in 2001. After the terrorist attacks on Washington and New York on 11 September 2001, Germany pledged 'unlimited' (uneingeschränkt) solidarity with the United States. Chancellor Schröder's pledge was backed by all parties, except the left wing PDS. Germany also supported the invocation of NATO's Article 5, its collective defence mechanism. However, the German public and elite had some reservations regarding the use of force. Public reticence focused on the fear that the US might overreact, unilaterally escalating the conflict in the wider Middle East (Buras & Longhurst, 2004, pp. 231–232). While no party would publicly question the US's right to pursue al-Qaeda, there was no great enthusiasm among Green Party members to see German troops in what was deemed a risky military campaign. Thus, getting the Bundestag to mandate German participation in the Afghanistan endeavour was not easy. To secure a majority, the Schröder government underlined the 'robust' mandate by the UN Security Council under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the fact that Dutch and Danish troops would be part of the German led contingent, and that the attack on the United States was an attack 'against us all' and 'a declaration of war against the entire civilised world' (Schröder, 2001). Schröder had to turn the vote on making the altogether 3,900 Bundeswehr troops available for action in Afghanistan into a vote of confidence, a measure used only twice before in the history of the FRG, and still, the government just survived on a small margin of 10 votes, with 336 voting in favour and 326 against (four members of the government party, the Green Party, voted against and four in favour to nullify the effects of the internal party protest). It was clear that Germany was far from united over the war in Afghanistan (Buras & Longhurst, 2004, p. 234), and in reality, the German parliament came close to preventing the new step toward foreign and security policy activism.

German war scepticism only grew as the Bush administration's 'war on terror' rhetoric around 2002–2003 turned towards 'rogue states' in the 'axis of evil', including Iraq, Iran and North Korea. It became even more and more entrenched as the US argued for war against Iraq followed by regime change because Iraq's Saddam Hussein supported al-Qaeda and had a secret weapons of mass destruction programme which threatened the West – claims, which turned out to be completely unfounded. Initially, German officials were restrained in their criticism of the US. Large parts of the reasoning behind the decision not to go to war with the US in Iraq was based on strategic thinking and scepticism regarding the US case for war on Iraq. However, the German historical lesson also played a marked role. With upcoming elections and poor showings in the polls, the SPD had mobilised the anti-war sentiment in the German electorate. In an election-campaign speech, Minister of Justice, Herta Däubler-Gmelin, argued that George W. Bush wanted to go to war in Iraq due to 'domestic difficulties'. 'That is a popular method. Already Hitler used it'. (Der Spiegel, 2002) Franz Müntefering, General Secretary of the SPD, invoked the *Sonderweg* discourse when he talked of a special path for Germany on the question of Iraq: 'Independently of what the UN decides, there must be a German way, we must decide for ourselves what is to be done. That decision for us means no involvement in any … conflict or war in Iraq' (Hooper, 2003). At the 39th Munich Security Conference in 2003, Joschka Fischer famously clashed with the US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld over the US case for war in Iraq with the words: 'Excuse me, I'm not convinced' (Weiland, 2003), and Schröder had employed the discourse of the conservative side of the 'normal state' debate when he argued that Germany was now a 'self-confident' country: 'We're not available for adventures, and the time of cheque book diplomacy is over once and for all' (Hooper, 2003). On 5 March 2003, Germany – at that point a non-permanent member of the Security Council – issued a joint statement with France and Russia, stating that they would not allow a UN Security Council resolution authorising the use of force in Iraq to be passed ('Full text of the joint declaration', 2003).

In 2011, Germany's embedded reluctance to go to war came to the forefront once again when Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) and Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle (FDP) chose to abstain from voting on UN Security Council Resolution 1973, authorising intervention in Libya. Both feared that German involvement in another foreign intervention with an unclear outcome would sit poorly with the electorate on the eve of regional elections. Much of the opposition came from the foreign minister and his staff, who – because of the decision-making procedure concerning German participation in international military operations – has to give his consent and formally pass the bill to parliament. By abstaining from the UN-Security Council vote, Germany broke with its position as a proponent of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine, opposed its EU partners and NATO allies and instead joined ranks with Russia, China and Brazil (BRIC). The decision was hotly debated in the Parliament in as many as five different debates, between 23 February and 24 March 2011. Westerwelle argued that the 'decision was not easy for us to make. It was preceded by a difficult process of weighing for and against' (Deutscher Bundestag, 2011, p. 11137). Then CDU leader Angela Merkel argued that in the case of Libya – in contrast to Afghanistan – there was no direct threat against Europe and Germany (Merkel, 2011), and several lawmakers expressed scepticism over the prospects of a stable solution in Libya after the fighting stopped. The decision to abstain was deemed a 'low point', 'a disaster' and a return to the old Bonn Republic's mentality of caution and restraint which would lead Germany towards 'isolation' and 'going-it-alone' (*Alleingang*) (Müller, 2011) (Hyde-Price, 2015). Essentially, the arguments invoked the *Sonderweg* discourse (turned upside down) so that it was not German military activism, but the lack thereof that would lead Germany towards the abyss, referring to the conservative side of the 'normal state' debate. Joschka Fischer lambasted it as a 'scandalous error' caused by 'provincialism'. Thereby, he drew on the provincialism-urbanity dichotomy of the 'normal state' debate: 'The country seems to solidify its inside-looking provincialism and that at a time where its potential, and well, yes, its leadership, is needed more than ever' (Fischer, 2011).

The Renewed Push for 'Normality': *Gestaltungsmacht Deutschland*

The official break with Germany's allies in Libya did not sit well with large parts of the German elite and just two years later, there was a new push towards 'normality'.[25] Thus, on 3 October 2013, German Unity Day, President Joachim Gauck attempted to start a new public debate on a more active German foreign and security policy. In his speech, Joachim Gauck quoted Germany's partners, labelling Germany 'a sleepwalking giant' and a 'spectator of global affairs'. 'This begs the question', he added, 'is our engagement on a par with the weight that our country carries? Germany is populous, lies at the heart of the continent and is the world's fourth-largest economy' (Gauck, 2013). Here Gauck echoed the 'normal state' debate of the 1990's, touching on the enhanced size of the country after reunification – through a 'weight' metaphor and measurement of Germany's economic strength – and, using the *Mitte* metaphor, placing Germany at the 'heart of the continent'. Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen also drew on key arguments from the 'normal state' debate in her speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2014. She argued that 'indifference is not an option for Germany' due to its 'major economy' and 'significant size' (von der Leyen, 2014). Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier warned that 'a culture of restraint for Germany' should not 'become a culture of standing aloof'. The reason for this, Steinmeier argued, using central arguments from the 'normal state' debate, was that 'Germany is too big to merely comment on world affairs from the sideline' (Steinmeier, 2014). In an article published in *Foreign Affairs* in the summer of 2016, Steinmeier tried to sum up the German position in the notion of Germany as a 'reflective power': Because of the country's 'historical experience' – that is, the Second World War and the Holocaust – the German public 'shares a deeply held, historically rooted conviction that their country should use its political energy and resources to strengthen the rule of law in international affairs', he argued. So whenever Germany's partners walk an extra mile in order for diplomacy and negotiations to work, Germans expect their government to 'walk one mile further, sometimes to our partners' chagrin' (Steinmeier, 2016). In essence, the notion of Germany as a 'reflective power' echoes the understanding that not only has Germany learned from its past, it also has a 'special responsibility' to avoid policies that lead to violence and war or at least to walk an extra-extra mile in order to avoid violence because of this 'historical lesson'. Thus, in reality, Steinmeier here followed Joschka Fischer's conceptual pair of 'never again war' and 'never again Auschwitz', implying a special moral responsibility for Germany due to its history. Furthermore, the concept of 'reflective power' is closely related to the two intertwined concepts of 'think twice' and '*Führung aus der Mitte*' (leadership

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[25] Please note that the debate on *Gestaltungsmacht Deutschland* is somewhat different from the other debates, especially the *Historikerstreit* and the 'normal state' debate, in the sense that it is a more intra-elite debate, consisting mainly of interventions by politicians and civil servants.

from the centre) presented by Ursula von der Leyen at the 51st Munich Security Conference in 2015. Here, she argued that due to 'the painful history of Germany in the 20th century [which] has become part of the DNA of our people', Germany has a 'moral obligation' to do the right thing (von der Leyen, Februar 2015a). Thus, underneath the whole debate was an idea of a German historical *Verantwortung* or *Pflicht:* a historical responsibility or moral obligation to do the right thing in accordance with its enhanced weight and central position, because Germany has learned from its painful history.[26]

However, despite the intentions of Gauck, Steinmeier and von der Leyen of pushing Germany towards a more active role internationally, the immediate results showed that it was a 'course correction' rather than a 'new direction' (Hyde-Price, 2015, p. 604). Thus, the German bureaucratic elite still had great difficulties, not least with the semantics of its imminent role of Germany as a 'great power' or 'medium power' (*Grossmacht* or *Mittelmacht*). Not even the term 'rising power', which would be part of the standard non-German vocabulary describing a state with the cut and shape of Germany, was *côme il faut*. Instead, German foreign policy bureaucrats went out of their way to avoid using these historically charged words and came up with the term *Gestaltungsmacht*, (semi-) officially translated as 'shaping power' or 'new player'. Seen from a German point of view, this has a clear advantage: It avoids not just the term 'great power' (*Grossmacht*), but also the term 'civilian power' (*Zivilmacht*), thereby circumventing the split between the two wings in the 'normal state' debate and positioning itself somewhere in-between these two concepts. However, the term 'shaping power' was still too strong a word for the foreign and security policy elite, which has done its utmost to avoid using it in descriptions of Germany. In neither of the two major government white papers, 'Shaping globalization – Expanding partnerships – Sharing responsibility' (German government, 2012) and '*Weißbuch* 2016' (German government, 2016) – which were seen as contemplating the new enhanced role of Germany – can the term be found as a designation of Germany. The 2012 white paper is marked by a belief in the coming multi-polarity in the international system with the rise of BRIC, due to US decline and a series of crises in the EU. It is within this group of up-and-coming or rising powers – though without designating them as such – that Germany finds its equals. From the perspective of the German government, these countries 'are more than just emerging economies. They are new players with a voice in the conduct of world affairs' (German government, 2012). The word 'power' is not popular among the bureaucratic elite which agreed on the content of the white paper:[27] It is only used seven times in the entire document (in the German version *Macht* is only used three times. Also, apart from one occurrence where the English version of the white paper calls for a fairer distribution of world power in the Security Council (and implicitly for a seat for Germany) and one where the white paper assures the reader that arbitrary use of force will never happen again in Germany (that is, Hitler will not come back), 'power' is only used in combination with positive connotations such as 'bio fuel power' (p. 39), 'solar power' (p. 40), 'peaceful use of nuclear power' (p. 43), 'empower women' (p. 63) and 'negotiating power' (p. 64). The word 'player', on the other hand, is very popular. It is used 101 times and often in places where non-German writers would use the word 'power'. The word 'shaping' is also used a lot, namely 47 times (15 times in the text, the rest in the watermark at the bottom of the white paper) (in the German version *Gestalten* is used 43 times: 14 times in the text, the rest in the watermark), and most often along the lines of the concept of *Gestaltungsmacht* or 'shaping power' in sentences such as '[s]haping the multipolar world together' (p. 5), 'shaping globalization' (p. 5) or 'shaping international and/or global governance' (p. 5).

In the 2016 defence white paper, *Weißbuch* 2016 (German government, 2016, p. 22), Germany is described as 'die weltweit viertgrößte Wirtschaftsmacht' or 'the world's fourth largest economic power' (p. 22) and a 'key player in Europe' (p. 22). It is seen as a country that is 'highly interconnected with the rest of the world', and which – 'due to its economic, political and military significance, but also as a result of its vulnerabilities – has a responsibility to actively participate in shaping the global order'.[28] Furthermore, the white paper states that 'Germany is prepared to provide a substantial, decisive and early stimulus to the international debate, to accept responsibility and to assume leadership' (p. 23), echoing the Gauck, Steinmeier and von

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[26] Gauck, Steinmeier and von der Leyen were not alone. A number of German analysts supported their positions. Thus, Herfried Münkler from the Humboldt-Universität argued that 'if the Germans fail, there is no alternate or reserve candidate standing ready, which can jump in and take over this role … If Germany fails its task as Europe's central power, Europe fails' (Münkler, 2015). Also, see (Bittner & Nass, 2014; Schönberger, 2012).

[27] In contrast to, for example, defence policy guidelines which are written solely by the German ministry of defence, the white papers are the work of several ministries and thus reflect a broader view on German foreign and security policy (Junk & Daase, 2013). In *Weißbuch 2016,* this group was enhanced by including independent external experts.

[28] Part of this argument seems to rest on the Mitte metaphor.

der Leyen debate. The international system is said to be in the process of changing towards 'multi-polarity' (p. 30), characterised by a process of increasing 'diffusion of power' (p. 30). However, if we take a closer look, it becomes clear that the bureaucrats in the defence ministry also here have gone out of their way to use words that are mostly non-offensive and soft-spoken, especially in descriptions of Germany's supposedly increased role in the world.[29] Thus, the word 'power' (or *Macht*) is very rarely used in the white paper and never too describe Germany. Even the central term *Gestaltungsmacht* or 'shaping power', which is supposed to be the new value-free buzzword, is nowhere to be found, not even in the description of Germany as such – even if it is clear that the German bureaucrats from the foreign and security circles believe Germany to be precisely such a power (Hellmann, 2016). Instead, the term *Gestaltung* (from the verb *Gestalten* or 'to shape') is used in a number of ways: *Gestaltungsanspruch* or 'aspiration' (pp. 68, 88, 138), *Gestaltungswillen* or 'ambi-tion' (p. 117), *Gestaltungsfelder* or 'areas of engagement' (pp. 56, 62) and *Gestaltungsbereiche* (essentially 'areas of engagement', but no translation is offered in the English version) (p. 107).

As mentioned, the word 'power' is rarely used and only in descriptions of Russia's annexation of the Crimea and subsequent war in Ukraine in 2014. Thus, it is stated that Russia's actions have led to a 'renais-sance of traditional power politics, which involves the use of military means to pursue national interests and entails considerable armaments efforts' (p. 38), and that 'struggles for regional hegemony' (p. 38) endanger the stability of the international system. In the conclusion, it is furthermore argued that 'effective collective defence is crucial to our very existence on account of the renaissance of traditional power politics' (p. 138). It is clear that power and power politics are seen as something of the past, something which should be avoided and something which Germany, in particular, should stay clear of – despite the official intentions of Gauck, Steinmeier and von der Leyen. Angela Merkel's remark after speaking on the phone with Vladimir Putin during the Ukraine crisis in 2014, that he was living '[i]n another world' (Baker, 2014), rings true to the worldview of the German foreign and security policy establishment.

Conclusion

The widespread expectations of a more 'normal' German state behaviour within foreign and security policy – understood as a type of behaviour that is focused and based on power and power politics, like the one many other great powers have been prone to historically, and which has surfaced after the Ukraine crisis, Brexit and Trump – are still somewhat premature. Despite being the largest, richest and most populous country in Europe and despite being situated at the centre of Europe and thus affected by most developments in Europe, Germany is still reluctant to take on a leading role in Europe – at least when it comes to security issues. The reason is that German strategic culture is still highly influenced by the collective remembrance of the Holocaust and the lessons Germany have drawn in this respect. Thus, the Holocaust Nation discourse is still the central 'unwritten constitution' of the FRG, even though it has been 'amended' somewhat over the years. Whereas the collective lessons drawn from the abyss of the Holocaust in the Bonn Republic were *nie wieder Krieg* (never again war) and led to Germany's position as a purely civilian power and a culture of marked restraint in foreign policy and total abstinence with regard to security issues, the collective lesson of the Berlin Republic is *nie wieder Auschwitz* (never again Auschwitz). This is also a culture of restraint with regard to security issues, but not a culture of complete abstinence. Rather, it is the belief that Germany, due to the Holocaust, has a moral obligation to prevent another Holocaust from happening ever again and, if need be, to use military power to do so.

The discursive movement from the Bonn Republic's general pacifist and civilian power only consensus has been slow and non-linear, despite a number of attempts to rearticulate it. The first major attempt to change the status quo was the *Historikerstreit*, which left open a small crack in the general consensus of the Bonn Republic. In the debates after the German reunification, this opening was used as a lever by the 'normal state' advocates to press for a more active role for Germany in foreign and security policy. However, the 'never again war' discourse still had strong advocates, especially on the German left wing. In 1999, when vying for support for German participation in the Kosovo war, Foreign Minister and Green Party leader Joschka Fischer had to say out loud that Holocaust was a unique German phenomenon, thus supporting the 'never again war' discourse. He also said though that the reunited Germany had a special responsibility to prevent genocides from ever happening again in Europe. Thus, he stood on two princi-ples, 'never again war' as well as 'never again Auschwitz', thereby opening up for German participation in the war in Kosovo.

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[29] Please note that some of the civil servants in Germany's ministries are politically appointed, namely the so-called *Staatssekretäre*.

   In other policy areas, such as the economic or political, Germany has over the years shown that it is fully willing to take on a leading role. Not from the front, though, but from the middle – that is, with its movement of freedom limited by Western institutions, partners and allies. There is an aversion to going-it-alone and a predilection for pursuing multilateral solutions. Furthermore, the 'amended version' of the Holocaust Nation discourse is that there is a shared understanding in German public life and within the foreign and security policy elite that Germany is morally obligated to 'make amends' for past wrongs and to counter developments that could lead 'towards Auschwitz'. Thus, the debate does not focus on *if*, but on *how much* Germany should take its difficult past into account in its foreign and security policy. Moreover, since Germany's use of military force so far and in each case, in one way or another, has been framed as an exceptional measure – an argument structure which worked well with the war sceptic German public – German politicians have built up distinct limits to Germany's ability to use force. However, not all conflicts can be drawn up as black or white, good or evil, thereby limiting the freedom of movement of Germany's future use of military power and its ability to lead on high politics issues. Essentially, Germany is moving towards a more active and even military activist, foreign and security policy, however, at a slow pace.

Competing Interests
The author has no competing interests to declare.

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