

The coming of age of German security policy

German strategic culture between continuity and change

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TITELBILD

Abgabe einer Regierungserklärung durch Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel, 13.03.2014.
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ABSTRACT

Despite predictions that after its reunification, Germany could strive for greater unilateral power and become increasingly assertive in its international relations, the foreign and security policy of the Federal Republic has remained remarkably true to its traditional principles. This is mainly due to the existence of a strong antimilitarist strategic culture that limits the options available to decision-makers and thus restrains the use of military force. The present study examines the relationship between strategic culture and foreign policy behaviour by analysing the programmes of the two major German political parties CDU and SPD since the end of World War II. It is found that the German stance towards the use of force has adapted conservatively, due to its stable strategic culture. Put in another way, strategic culture has a delaying effect on the impact of external factors on policy behaviour.

KEYWORDS

Strategic culture, Germany, use of force, Bundeswehr

With the completion of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan in 2014, the evolution of German military involvement abroad since reunification appears remarkable, not only when it comes to the geographic scope of deployments. But even so, the German use of military force abroad remains highly restrained. The puzzle at hand is, why Germany after reunification abstained from developing greater power ambitions in its foreign and security policy, and why the German attitude to the use of military force is still marked by such a great degree of reticence. As an alternative to the once dominant paradigm of Neorealism, the present study follows the concept of strategic culture. It is found that, first, due to the existence of a strong pacifist and antimilitarist strategic culture, German foreign policy after reunification remains highly restrained in its use of military force. Furthermore, this is unlikely to change in the near future. Second, despite its essentially continuous nature, German strategic culture has been, and still is in a process of adaptation.

In order to advance these arguments, the study analyses the programmes of the major German parties since the foundation of the Federal Republic. In particular, the focus of analysis is on preferences about the use of military force, the state's perceived role and responsibilities in international relations, and on institutions used to pursue national goals. Therefore the study outlines the common points of the political parties and analyses them throughout the decades. Following the concept of strategic culture, the foundational elements are expected to

remain constant, whereas smaller changes and adjustments in policy are anticipated over time. While the development of German strategic culture has been subject to numerous studies in the past years, the examination based on party programmes constitutes a novel approach.

NEOREALISM'S BLIND SPOT

In the wake of the Cold War in the early 1990s, a debate ensued in security studies about how the newly united German state would behave in its foreign and security policy. Some were afraid that Germany, grown considerably in size and released from the constraints of the Cold War world order, could choose to pursue a more assertive foreign policy in the new international environment and also make use of military force. Scholars of the dominant paradigm in international relations theory at that time – Neorealism – had their own perspective on the situation.¹

In the neorealist view, the logic of the anarchical international system forces states into being constantly occupied with questions regarding survival and deterrence. Uncertainty about the appropriate distribution of power in the system, the intrinsic lack of confidence between states and a generally pessimistic estimation of the opponent's intentions inevitably result in a security dilemma. Therefore, Germany should feel pressured to pursue power maximization in order to tilt the balance of power and model the international structure in its favour (Rittberger 2001). As Kenneth Waltz puts it, "Germany

1 For a comprehensive overview of contending paradigms in the field see for example: Collins 2007; Reus-Smit and Goodin 2010; Buzan and Hansen 2009; Dunne, Kurki and Smith 2007. For a prominent attempt to reconcile the two paradigms see Bull 1977 (The English School). For an overview of theory comparison in this context see: Katzenstein 1996; Longhurst 2004; Rittberger 2001; Duffield 1998.

may ultimately find that reunification and the renewed life of a great power are more invigorating than the struggles, complications, and compromises that come during, and would come after, the uniting of Western Europe” (1993: 70). Accordingly, neorealist theory predicted that reunified Germany would strive unilaterally for greater independence, maximize power, step up deterrence, and seek to expand power to achieve regional hegemony (Mearsheimer 1990: 7; Orden 1991; Stürmer 1992; Gordon 1994; Duffield 1998: 3; Longhurst 2004: 6).²

With the benefit of hindsight though, hardly anyone today would argue that Germany’s behaviour has met the expectations of neorealist scholars when it comes to the magnitude and direction of change. It appears that the rationalist black box-perspective on international relations falls short of accounting for the events of the early 1990s and the years after. Thus it fails to adequately explain the continuing reticent attitude of Germany after reunification and its reluctance towards the use of military force (Berger 1996: 318).

THROUGH THE LENS OF CULTURE

As an alternative, the concept of strategic culture promises to provide a more satisfying explanation. It is firmly rooted in the theoretical realm of constructivism that challenges the dominant approach of international relations theory with its emphasis on ideational factors such as norms, beliefs, and identity. While not entirely disputing the influence of the anarchical system and the role of a state’s power capabilities, constructivists argue that these aspects matter only in the light of beliefs, norms and ideas.³ These collectively shared ideas replace the notion of the rational actor and utility-maximising *homo oeconomicus* that is central to realist theory. As Theo Farrell puts it:

“Constructivists recognise norms as having objective existence. Norms are not simply ideas floating around inside peoples’ heads. Rather norms are shared beliefs that are ‘out there’ in the real world, in the meaning they give to material things, and the practices they yield.” (Farrell 2002: 60)

In this view, the social context limits the range of possibilities and options available to the decision maker and creates preferences for one kind of behaviour over another.

er. Christoph Meyer (2006: 20) reflects this in the definition of norms as “beliefs about what is appropriate, legitimate or just regarding the goals, ends and modalities concerning the use of force”.

The concept of strategic culture in particular relates back to the notion of political culture originally introduced by Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba in 1963. It made its proper entry into the field in the late 1970s and came to challenge the dominant paradigms in security studies in the 1980s and 1990s.⁴ Whereas not an invention of the 20th century,⁵ it was notably Jack Snyder in 1977 coining the term “strategic culture” in his original title. Focusing on the Soviet security elite’s stance on nuclear strategy, Snyder argues that a process of socialization results in a shared “set of general beliefs, attitudes and behavioural patterns” (1977: V). He suggests that political elites develop a unique strategic culture in security policy and be socialized into a distinct mode of strategic thinking (1977: 8). The semi-permanent nature of policy patterns, according to Snyder, places them on the level of culture, rather than mere policy.

While emphasizing the cognitive component of policy- and decision-making, Snyder provides a first definition of strategic culture that most of the subsequent work in the field builds on:

“Strategic culture can be defined as the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behaviour that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other [...]” (Snyder 1977: 8)

According to Snyder, culture provides for a large degree of continuity in policy, since concepts and attitudes only change marginally over fairly long periods of time.

In order to further advance the concept, Alastair Johnston introduced a positivist research design (1995: 48). Johnston combines common elements of political culture terminology to conclude that strategic culture consists of “shared assumptions and decision rules” that create an “ideational milieu” and impose limitations on behavioural choices (1995: 46). In his definition, strategic culture is an “integrated system of symbols [...], which acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs” (Ibid.).

2 Currents within structural/neorealist theory disagree over how much power a state will seek, i.e. be a status quo power according to the defensive realists vs. strive for hegemony as offensive realists would argue. Compare: Waltz 1979, 1993; Walt 1987; Mearsheimer 1990, 2001; Gilpin 1981. For classical realism see Morgenthau and Thompson 1985. For the wider debate see also: Legro and Moravcsik 1999; Behr and Heath 2009; Shimko 1992.

3 For different accounts of the constructivist approach see: Kratochwil 1982; Wendt 1992, 1995; Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein 1996; Lapid/Kratochwil 1996; Adler 1997; Onuf 1998; Checkel 1998; Desch 1998, 2005; Widmaier 2005; Atkinson 2006.

4 For the concept of political culture see also: Geertz 1973. For key works on strategic culture see Snyder 1977; Pipes 1977; Gray 1981; Jones 1990; Johnston 1995.

5 Jeffrey Lantis (2002) points out that the writing of Sun Tzu and Thucydides, from the 6th and 4th century BC respectively, and much later Carl von Clausewitz in the 19th century already contained thoughts on strategic culture.

For a workable and operational research strategy, the link between preferences, assumptions and rules on the one, and policy behaviour on the other hand has to be established. In order to expand the body of empirical research on strategic culture, Johnston points to the importance of observable indicators that can be traced through the process of foundation and socialisation up to the actual beliefs held by decision-makers. Thus, what sets Johnston's methodology apart from other approaches in strategic culture, is a positivist epistemology that yields falsifiable predictions about state behaviour. The criterion of falsification is most important in order to demonstrate that strategic culture is what Imre Lakatos (1970: 120) calls a progressive research programme: The benchmark of theory testing according to Lakatos' method of sophisticated falsification is whether or not the theory can offer novel predictions. For strategic culture this means that it can be deemed a progressive research programme if it is able to explain existing puzzles more satisfyingly than previous theories.

In order to do so, Johnston divides the system of symbols into two parts. The first part consists of basic assumptions about a state's strategic environment. Questions to be addressed here are assumptions regarding the role of war in human affairs, the nature of external threats, and the efficacy and appropriateness of the use of force as a policy instrument. Taken together, these basic assumptions constitute what Johnston calls the central paradigm of any strategic culture. The second part of the system of symbols follows from these basic assumptions and refers more to the operational level. According to Johnston it presents the strategic options available and views with respect to their efficacy in dealing with the threat environment (1995: 47). These strategic preferences flow logically from the basic assumptions of the central paradigm and determine where along a continuum between the extremes of soft *idealpolitik* and hard *realpolitik* an actor is located (Ibid.). Strategic preferences may vary accordingly, for example from accommodation and mediation to sabre rattling or brinkmanship.

This is the point where strategic culture begins to affect behaviour directly. According to Johnston, "(...) the essential empirical referent of a strategic culture is a limited, ranked set of grand-strategic preferences that is consistent across the objects of analysis (e.g., textual sources for potential answers to the central paradigm) and persistent across time." (1995: 48). For this, it is important to start the analysis at the earliest point in time possible, at the supposed foundational period of the strategic culture in question.

UNVEILING STRATEGIC CULTURE

The field of German strategic culture has been studied more or less explicitly by numerous authors in the past years⁶, and accordingly, it is rather well explored. The empirical basis of these studies is mainly composed of executive documents, parliamentary debates and speeches. In order to avoid repeating previous studies and add greater empirical content to the research programme, the present study approaches the subject on the basis of party programmes of the two major German parties *Christlich- Demokratische Union* (CDU) and *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD). Focusing on party programmes in particular constitutes a rather original approach to the subject, expected to deliver valuable results on the content and evolution of German strategic culture. This follows the assumption, as John Duffield points out, that strategic culture is the "property of collectivities rather than simply of the individuals that constitute them" (1998: 23). According to Boekle *et al.* (2001: 91-92), party and election programmes in democratic systems are suitable indicators of collectively shared and value-based expectations about (in-) appropriateness of policy behaviour. They are the result of the work of political party elites and active party members, trying to pick up and articulate societal expectations. As such, party programmes express policy expectations and norms in society as a whole.

This appears to be especially true in the case of Germany, where the political parties play an important role in the democratic process of political decision-making, compared for instance to the US-American system. Critiques could argue that with this approach, it becomes impossible to distinguish between societal expectations and interest-driven demands. Hence, it is important to note that Boekle *et al.* only consider party programmes to be valid indicators of societal norms when they show a great degree of commonality. This means that a societal value-based expectation of behaviour must at least be articulated by two major parties (Boekle/Rittberger/Wagner 2001: 91). In the case of Germany this means CDU and SPD.

Another challenge that comes with this approach is the chronologically uneven distribution of programmes and their slow capability to reflect changes. Since political parties only publish proper basic programmes every few years, linking changes in programmes to distinct developments is difficult. Nevertheless, the programmes can be grouped into distinct historical periods according to their year of publication: first, from the foundation of the Federal Republic and throughout the Cold War era (CDU 1953⁷; CDU 1968; CDU 1978; SPD 1959); second, the 1990s up to the Kosovo War (CDU 1994; SPD 1989; SPD

6 See Berger 1996; Duffield 1998; Banchoff 1999; Boekle/Rittberger/Wagner 2001; Lantis 2002; Longhurst 2004.

7 The first CDU programme after World War II was published in 1949, two months after the entry into force of the new German constitution. Apart from aspects on foreign trade it does not contain relevant content in foreign and security policy relevant to this discussion.

1998⁸) and finally, the period after the Kosovo War with the latest programmes (CDU 2007; SPD 2007).

In the scope of this analysis, the basic policy statements of the parties are selected as sources. Other publications such as election platforms, discussion papers and speeches are not considered. Following the structuring method of qualitative content analysis, selected sections and sentences relevant to the research question are identified and examined in each programme. This is a meaningful standard procedure for text analysis in social science, proposed by Philipp Mayring (2010: 602; 2008). For this, the following three questions have been designed prior to the examination to help categorize the material:

- I. *What are the goals for the use of force? Is it considered an efficient and effective instrument of politics?*
- II. *What is the perception of the position and role of Germany in international affairs and what ambitions, rights and responsibilities are derived from this perception?*
- III. *What is the preferred mode of co-operation, (i.e. multilateralism/unilateralism) especially with regard to the use of military force?*

The questions serve to structure the examination and help to identify the positions and attitudes of the parties regarding the use of military force. This reveals the underlying assumptions and preferences and allows for a comparison of the programmes in different periods. The points of continuity and evolution are traced and compared to the historical background. As pointed out above, congruencies and divergences of policy positions in different time periods can indicate the existence and evolution of a strategic culture.

GERMAN STRATEGIC CULTURE: STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

A close look at the party programmes reveals a double finding: first of all, German strategic culture remains consistent in its core elements since the foundation of the Federal Republic. Second, it went through a certain transformation and adjustment in policy preferences and standpoints, especially with regard to the use of force in the decades since the end of the Cold War. As the following shows, an opening of the stance as to when and where military force can be used can be observed in the latest programmes of both parties in 2007 as compared to the previous programmes published in the early 1990s and before.

In their first party programme after World War II, in 1959 the social democrats state that the armed forces can only be used for the purpose of national defence (SPD: 1959: 7). The strength of the military has to be devised as ap-

propriate to the political and geographical situation of the state and stay within the confines that have to be respected in order to create the prerequisites for international *détente*, an effective and controlled disarmament, and the reunification of Germany (Ibid.). For the SPD, the key element to foreign and security policy is *Friedenspolitik* (SPD 1989: 15, 16; 2007: 3, 25, 29), following a positive definition of peace.⁹ It is fundamental to the peaceful coexistence of the people and goes beyond the mere abstention from the use of force. In 1989, the SPD programme states that ultimately *Friedenspolitik* aims to redundantise the armed forces (SPD 1989: 13). Whereas the updated version of that programme still contains this sentence (SPD 1998: 16), the objective was removed from the 2007 programme entirely. Instead the SPD recognises that “with the division of Europe overcome and the German reunification completed, the *Bundeswehr* has taken greater responsibility within our cooperative peace and security policy” (SPD 2007: 26).¹⁰ A similar development is visible when the 1989 SPD programme states that the *Bundeswehr* “has to serve the purpose of territorial defence exclusively” (SPD 1989: 13). In 2007, with the missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan in mind, the SPD states that “the deployment of the *Bundeswehr* always has to be embedded in a concept of political, diplomatic, economic, developmental and cultural measures” (SPD 2007: 25). These measures can be seen as a necessity that results from an understanding of national security that extends beyond Germany’s national borders and NATO territory. Before the rearmament of Germany is realised with the founding of the *Bundeswehr* in 1955, the Christian democrat party emphasises in their 1953 programme that even if Germans eventually carry defensive weapons, their policy remains a policy of peace which is not of an aggressive character (CDU 1953: 20). This policy is conceived explicitly in the context of the unity of the European people and most of all, the North Atlantic Alliance. In 1978, the programme goes further into detail when the party “rejects the threat or use of force as a means of politics” in general (CDU 1978: 161). This had already been voiced in a very similar wording in the previous CDU programme (CDU 1968: 76).

Interestingly, the tone changes slightly in the 1994 programme, when the party states “the willingness on all sides to the renunciation of force is an essential condition for peace” (CDU 1994: 64). Here the CDU recognises that Germany has to face its increased responsibility in international politics and contribute its share to the peaceful resolution of international conflicts (Ibid.: 10). The party emphasises the readiness of the nation to assume rights and responsibilities to the full extent (Ibid.: 60). They also express the view that freedom, peace, de-

8 The 1998 SPD programme is an updated version of the 1989 programme and matches the latter in standpoints relevant to this analysis.

9 For further details on the concept of positive and negative peace, see the definitions by Johan Galtung (1996).

10 All quotes from party programmes in this paper are own translations of the original German source.

velopment, and prosperity can only be achieved through international cooperation, which is the fundamental basis of the German stance in international politics (Ibid.). In sum, the 1994 CDU programme cautiously expresses a new sense of international responsibility, which is assumed in close consultation with the nation's partners and neighbours. Also the CDU for the first time in their programmes states, that in times of globalisation, national borders become less and less important - not only for goods and people, but also for the security and the well-being of Germany (CDU 1994: 61). This linkage between the stability of virtually any country in the world on the one hand, and German security on the other hand is one of the major trends in foreign and security policy of the past decades. It can also be seen as foreshadowing the expansion of the conception of national security beyond national borders, where failed states in particular provide space for retreat to transnational terrorism and international organised crime.

This widening of scope is finally stated more explicitly in the latest CDU programme published to-date in 2007. Here, the Christian Democrats state, "we want to further intensify international relations, in order to resolve conflicts of interest, as possible, cooperatively and non-violently" (CDU 2007: 104). The insertion of "as possible" is most telling and exemplifies the opening of the stance towards the use of force. The introduction of the rule of law and democracy in faraway regions directly serves German interests and provides the stability that the country relies upon as an export-dependent nation. Hence, Germany has to be prepared and ready to assume greater responsibility, together with other democracies in the framework of international organisations, not only regionally, but also globally (CDU 2007: 106). In this context the Christian democrats recognise, that "the duties of the *Bundeswehr* can no longer be delimited to classic national and alliance defence on German territory" (CDU 2007: 110). Rather, it is "an indispensable instrument (...) for international crisis prevention and crisis management" (Ibid.). Although this does not directly contradict the rejection of force as a means of politics, the adaptation to a wider concept of defence and military force becomes visible. This is similar to the view expressed by the SPD on the greater responsibility of the *Bundeswehr* introduced above. Therefore, in the latest programmes of both parties, the acceptable objectives of the use of force are adapted to the war in Kosovo and the Afghanistan mission and reflect an adaptation of standpoints of a more pro-active foreign and security policy. Essentially two aspects led to this development: the realisation of an increased responsibility of Germany in international affairs on the one, and the greater awareness of the link between development and stability of other countries and regions to the nation's own security and well-being on the other hand.

While the principle of non-aggressiveness remains valid, the discourse assumes a more assertive and pro-active voice with regards to German duties within the international community in the latest programmes of 2007. While the SPD speaks of "preventing" conflict and "creating" peace in their 2007 programme (SPD 2007: 19), the CDU in the same year calls to "stand up" for freedom and peace (CDU 2007: 104). Thus, the increased use of the *Bundeswehr* in missions outside of NATO territory translates into the extension of the concept of national defence and a greater sense of international responsibility. Nevertheless, the 2007 SPD programme states that they "oppose any form of war of aggression or preventive war" and that the use of force remains *ultima ratio* (SPD 2007: 19).

In sum, despite visible developments in certain points, the analysis of the party programmes reveals great continuity in fundamental positions and norms regarding German foreign and security policy. Whereas elements such as non-aggressiveness and multilateralism prevail, certain aspects of German strategic culture have become obsolete and others have been added in reaction to the changed security environment after the Cold War. This is reflected in a more pro-active and robust use of the German military abroad. The participation in the 1999 Kosovo War and the contribution to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan serve as examples here. These adaptations, according to Kerry Longhurst, are consistent with the culturalist concept and show that German strategic culture has not changed since the end of the Cold War but rather "successfully adapted" (2004: 147). John Duffield (1998) pointed in the same direction when he predicted that German foreign policy would continue to be marked by a degree of multilateralism, anti-militarism and reticence that is unusual compared to other countries of this size. Indeed, it could be argued that for Germany, multilateralism goes beyond mere instrumental utility. It has become a goal in itself and as such, an unwritten constitutional principle (Prem 2013).

From a historical perspective, multilateralism as a policy choice is the outcome of an act of balancing between two fundamental policy positions in Germany, that have been in place since the end of World War II: a culture of reticence and rejection of a greater power role in international affairs on the one hand, and avoiding international isolation and insignificance on the other (Jonas/Ondarza 2010). As a result, the logical policy preference is expressed in a strong commitment to peace and the reliance on international cooperation and multilateralism. These foundational elements remain in place today, as the latest party programmes repeatedly suggest: unilateral paths are never considered an option.

As a result, the analysis of the party programmes largely confirms previous research on German strategic culture. The programmes reflect the wider German security community and policy positions at their time of publication.

By tracing different policy elements through different periods in time, from their inception after World War II to the present, the argument for the existence and continuity of German strategic culture is conclusive. Nevertheless, changes and points of evolution and adaptation are identified as well. But, rather than touching the core elements of German strategic culture, these changes occur mainly on the operational level. This is also reflected in the ongoing process of structural transformation of the German security architecture, as envisaged in national strategic documents such as the 2006 *Weißbuch* or the 2005 and 2011 defence policy guidelines.

Interestingly, there appears to be a time lag between the occurrence of certain policy behaviour or decision-making and the point in time when this is reflected in party programmes. For example, the programmes up to the Kosovo War, including the closest one to the event in 1998 on part of the SPD, do not show significant signs of an opening towards the use of force yet. The following programmes from 2007 however, show a change in the way the use of force is regarded. Strategic culture has an impact on the way external factors and changes in the structure are reflected in policy behaviour and decision-making. This impact may be to delay or even prevent changes in behaviour and keep the pattern of decisions along established lines. As the interaction goes both ways, strategic culture is transformed in the process as well. This in turn, is reflected later in the party programmes.

WAYS FORWARD

25 years into German unity, the debate about the use of military force in Germany is still marked by a great degree of discomfort and by far not as assertive and proactive as neorealist observers had predicted during the 1990s. At the same time however, the established norms have been visibly challenged, as the increase in out-of-area deployment and combat involvement of the *Bundeswehr* in the past two decades shows. The German military has gone from an army of territorial defence and deterrence to a military in action, deployed more or less successfully in robust peacekeeping, counterinsurgency and state building. Even though military involvement abroad remains relatively hesitant for a country of this size and economic power, a sense of an increased role and responsibility emerged within the political elite during the past two decades. The statements given across parties from Federal President Gauck, Minister of Foreign Affairs Steinmeier, and Minister of Defence von der Leyen during the 2014 Munich Security Conference gave latest evidence to this (Hellmann/Jacobi/Stark-Urrestarazu 2015).

Policy decisions such as the increased number and greater geographical scope of *Bundeswehr* missions since the early 1990s in general, or the engagement in combat in Kosovo and in Afghanistan in particular, have raised concern about a possible militarisation of German foreign

policy. Still, on a declaratory level in party programmes the discourse remains stable and close to the foundations. As a consequence, it can be assumed that the central elements of German security policy remain equally stable, as predicted by the theoretical framework on strategic culture. The increased use of the military in missions abroad cannot be attributed to a substantial change in the German attitude towards the use of military force, but rather to a successful adaptation to the challenges of a changed security environment after the Cold War.

This supports the constructivist perspective on international relations, where the subjective historical and cultural experience of a nation limits the range of options for action and creates preferences for foreign policy behaviour in decision-makers and political elites. As such, in contrast to predictions of traditional materialist and structuralist scholars, German foreign policy and the attitude towards the use of force has largely remained consistent over the past decades. Germany has not become the destabilizing force with a belligerent foreign policy as some have feared during the 1990s. Nonetheless, establishing the causal link between culture and policy behaviour remains a daunting task. Michael Desch (2005) proposes an appealing middle ground when he argues that the concept of strategic culture may be most meaningful when used to supplement conventional theories. In that sense, strategic culture is understood as the setting in which policy decisions are made, and it then works by limiting certain options. But even so, if this setting repeatedly turns out to be no longer useful or appropriate, it is challenged and at some point new ideas and norms may be adapted. For this reason, strategic culture as an ideational background can delay innovations in policy. In other words, the impact of external factors is thwarted in its immediacy, translated and reformed, and in some cases possibly even prevented. Accordingly, the changes brought about by the end of the Cold War - the reconfiguration of the international system and the reunification of the German state - had their impact on German foreign and security policy. Nevertheless, with the existing strategic culture, the basic assumptions prevailed and the preferences regarding the use of force only changed cautiously and in due time.

The present study thus largely confirms its assumptions, despite the expected limitations of research done on the basis of party programmes. Lately, some authors have argued that in the wake of the statements by Gauck, Steinmeier and von der Leyen in Munich, a new debate on German security policy is emerging and likely to be reflected in the Federal Foreign Office's "Review 2014" process as well as in the new Defence *Weißbuch* scheduled for publication by Minister von der Leyen in 2016. A next round of publications of party programmes can be expected with view to the general elections in 2017, and it can be assumed that the current change in tone will be reflected in there.

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