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## **German Actorness in EU-Russia Relations: An Analysis in the Renewable Light of the Energiewende**

Schenk, Lena

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German Actorness in EU-Russia Relations – An  
Analysis in the Renewable Light of the *Energiewende*

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BSc International Relations and Organisations

Lena Schenk

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Second Reader: Nikoleta Yordanova

## Abstract

In the past few years, several events have posed as key points in EU-Russia relations, with Russia increasingly violating international norms such as the territorial integrity of states or human rights. To be able to effectively sanctions such behaviour, the EU depends on the willingness of its member states to do so: With the nation of Germany carrying particular weight in these decisions. This thesis sets out to explore what constitutes the main driver of German foreign policy determining EU-Russia relations. The main factors considered are the energy-dependency and therefore economic dependence on Russia Germany experiences, over the past few years lessened through the *Energiewende* constituting a switch to increasingly renewable energies, and the idea of Germany as a civilian power, internationally highlighting the importance and value of international norms regimes. These factors of influence, economic and normative concerns, are tested for their relevance through a content analysis utilising German parliamentary debates dealing with three cases in time, the 2008 Georgia War, the 2014 Ukraine Crisis and the 2020/21 backsliding of democratic norms and civil liberties in Russia. Comparing the handling and positions taken regarding these events with their respective sanctioning outcome on an EU-level, this paper will be able to establish economic concerns to be the most prominent factor in determining German actorness; nevertheless, it is concluded that a lessening of economic interdependencies, as given through the *Energiewende*, gives way to normative concerns and international law advocacy to play an increasing role when determining German policy towards Russia.

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## Introduction

Recent years have seen a rise in the general need of the European Union (EU) to sanction Russia: Be this due to events such as the Ukraine crisis, democratic backsliding, human rights violations or the treatment of political opposition such as Kremlin critic Navalny. How efficiently the EU mechanism works in sanctioning countries like Russia heavily depends on the willingness of its member governments to engage in such processes though, with restrictive measures which require community action having to be adopted through the Council (European Commission - External Relations, 2008). Germany as a member state and therefore actor within the Council of the EU carries great weight and influence within this and all other EU institutions, being the most populous but also the economically strongest state in the block (Statista, 2020b). Additionally, Germany poses as the traditionally most significant trading partner of Russia's in the EU: The trade imports on the German side constituting this interdependency mainly concern energy imports, making them the main source of pro-Russian economic interests and German dependence on Russia (Götz, 2007). Nevertheless, it is to be taken into consideration that within Germany, the *Energiewende* should have minimised the outlined dependency on Russia and therefore made sanctioning through the EU easier: Retaining an increased focus on renewable energies while simultaneously minimising the use of dirty energies such as coal or nuclear power. Projects like the Nord Stream pipelines nonetheless do send other signals (Surwillo, 2019).

To investigate EU-Russia relations, it is therefore of importance to investigate Germany as an actor and the impact its domestic policy changes have on EU mechanisms and foreign policy options. Germany on the international stage generally poses as a trading state and civilian power (Spanger, 2020): The former outlining a focus in actorness dependent on defined national economic interests and interdependence with other, the latter highlighting the importance of international norm regimes (Tewes, 2002). These concepts taken together are expected to determine relations with Russia: For Germany, but also for the whole of the EU, considering that the former does carry particular weight in the latter's decision-making process. By determining what drives the German position, we expect to gain a deeper understanding of why the case of Russia and possible sanction regimes on an EU-level are being handled the way they are; setting out what concerns mostly need to be tackled or opinions enhanced to be

able to more effectively take measures against the violation of norms through Russia, but also other states that engage in such violations.

The research question set out through this paper therefore reads: *What drives German policy on EU-Russia relations?* To investigate this query, I will set out to first outline the most important pre-existing literature on the topic and provide a theoretical basis to my analysis; I will then through a content analysis examine a selection of German parliamentary debates concerning themselves with what were chosen to be the most critical points in relations with Russia of the past few years: The 2008 Georgia-War, the 2014 Ukraine Crisis and the 2020/21 backsliding of democratic norms in Russia. This evaluation will show that economic factors play a role in determining German foreign policy towards Russia, but that the partial elimination of the given trade-dependency offers a chance for normative concerns to take over in effectively determining measures taken against the violation of international norms.

## Theoretical Section

### Background: The EU, Germany, and relations with Russia

Historically, the EU and Russia are interlinked in many ways: One of the recently very prominent sectors outlining a great interdependency is the energy industry. Russia as such in particular carries importance within the European energy and electricity security and availability due to its position as a major gas- and crude-oil-supplier, while also being the biggest supplier of coal (Amineh & Crijns-Graus, 2018). This might pose as an issue and threat to European stability, with Bilgin (2009) analysing the previous 2009 halting of all gas transfer into the EU from Russia through the Ukraine as exposing a lack of reliability on part of the Russians. This development feeds into the idea that an increased securitisation of the energy question had been taking place previously and had been exuberated through the 2014/15 Ukraine crisis with a possibility of transforming the energy supply into an energy weapon: meaning Russia could refuse a supply to the EU and in this way exercise pressure to achieve political goals (Siddi, 2017; Amineh & Crijns-Graus, 2018). Such developments create a need for the EU to become less dependent on Russia more generally; all while inner-political developments in Russia such as human rights violations and democratic backsliding taken together with external agendas such as the annexation of Crimea in the context of the Ukraine crisis increase the need for EU-sanctioning of Russia.

This EU-policy response of implementing effective sanctioning against Russia has been analysed as being hindered through one member country specifically: German rapprochement policies towards Russia post-Ukraine are seen as a hurdle to EU capabilities more generally (Dyson, 2016; Ikani, 2019). This has to do with two factors: In a first instance the general impact which Germany carries as an actor within the EU decision-making process, being the most populous country of the block and therefore obtaining the highest single number of seats in the European Parliament, but also the highest number of votes in the Council, where most issues are voted on using particular voting systems such as the qualified majority voting (Council of the EU, 2020). This is enhanced through the economic strength Germany has to present for itself, but also the extent to which it functions in policy-setting leadership roles in a multitude of EU-internal negotiations. In a second instance the effect of German policy on EU sanctioning mechanism effectivity is determined through the country's personal relationship with Russia.

Pleasant (2014) determines Germany to be amongst those EU countries maintaining the highest degrees of energy dependency on Russia. Additionally, German leaders and politicians continue to further cooperate and engage in personal relations with Russian leaders in recent years, leading to a willingness of the German government to strive for primarily harmonious relations with their Eastern partner (Spanger, 2020; Kazantsev, 2012). Reaching deeper than the past decades since the German reunification, this historically prominent approach of maintenance of good relations engages the idea of Germany as a civilian power and trading state. While the first conception is analysed by Spanger (2020) as rooted within the constitutional tradition the country maintained in the 19th century, the latter relates to the export-driven growth Germany has experienced in the past decades.

This idea of a civilian power is taken up by Eberle and Handl (2020), outlining the idea as the basis for the conceptualisation of a stable self in security questions in the case of Germany, giving it an autobiographical narrative function. This is seen to play into the state of German-Russian relations as a strategic modernisation partnership, grounded in the idea of multilateralism and international trade and cooperation, which is inherent to the civilian power concept. That is supported through findings by Maull (2008), analysing German actorness through the idea of a coalition-builder, meaning exactly this preference of international cooperation over unilateral endeavours. An opportunity offers itself from this approach,

ascribing Germany a leading role in for example EU diplomacy and sanctions, helping shape the EU's own civilian power role through the uncontested status of the concept in Germany domestically (Koenig, 2020).

Wolff (2013) takes the notion even further, outlining how Germany aims to replace the military power sphere of the international system through applied norms and legitimacy principles, being guided by democratic values in its external affairs. Nevertheless, they also remark that the relationship with Russia and related policy thus far have barely been impacted by normative concerns and instead been marked by continuity. Other authors agree with the apprehension of German foreign policy as a legacy of strong moral convictions (Dyson, 2002; Karp, 2009): Still, some like Karp (2009) argue that a more integrated approach towards the characterisation of German actorness is of need, to reflect both normative concerns and strong economic interests. Identity in itself cannot be stable and unified, and such economic interests can in some cases pose as a threat to the civilian power principle, for example in the case of German arms exports which might not always follow the highest normative moral standards but be guided by material concerns (Urrestarazu, 2015).

Further, some authors use the notion of the trading state, primarily dependent on economic partnerships, or outline German actorness as a shaping state. The latter also comprehends a foreign policy shaped through economic interests but adds the dimension of a geopolitical power with the ability to 'shape' the international stage through other than economic means, for example military (Szabo, 2017; Berenskötter and Stritzel, 2021). These concepts inherently prescribe a preferential treatment of economic interests over normative concerns, meaning a maintenance of good relations with Russia is essential due to trading relationships and energy import dependence: Framing Germany as a state greatly dependent on cooperation within a rules-based international order, the basis to any efficient trading partnership. And while such an adherence to a rules-based international order generally is seen as being able to explain the final sanctioning of Russia in light of the Ukraine crisis, the overall relations to Russia are defined and constructed through the goal of compromise and seeking of stability (Spanger, 2020).

This gives way to the establishment of path dependency claims describing the German-Russian relationship as modernisation partnership focussed on mutual cooperation and continuation of good relations (Westphal, 2014). Nevertheless, relations with Russia were affected by recent



domestic changes in the energy sector: The *Energiewende* is the German term used for a general restructuring of the energy sector and change in energy policy in Germany specifically, underway since its legal confirmation in 2010. It entails the phase-out of all nuclear energy, to be completed by 2022, as well as a general aim to significantly lower the energy sector's carbon dioxide output by replacing traditional energy sources such as coal and gas with renewables such as wind and hydroelectricity (Rehner & McCauley, 2016). This change poses as a response to emerging threats to energy security, but also to an increased demand of sustainable energy solutions prompted through the international climate crisis discourse. Hillebrand (2013) uses an ecological modernisation framework to show how this systemic change builds the international energy policy actorness of Germany, seeing the country as an advocate of climate protection policy globally while domestically benefitting from the development through increased energy security, but also the creation of jobs and tax revenue through the environmental industry. Gillessen, Heinrichs, Hake & Allelein (2019) maintain that this increased energy security effect of the *Energiewende* in return also significantly lessens German dependency on Russian energy.

Taken together, normative concerns and international regimes as well as economic and materialistic factors are seen as essential to the establishment of German actorness: Highlighting a focus on two differentiating factors. This paper therefore sets out to inspect both of this, to be able to finally determine what drives German policy on EU-Russia relations.

## Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

As outlined above, the pre-existent assumptions on German actorness in its relations to Russia consider two main factors. To be able to sufficiently reflect both of these ideas, this thesis will work with two differentiated theoretical framework assumptions on the search for a determining factor of German foreign policy towards Russia and the reflection of such on an EU level. On the one hand, to consider the idea of German trade dependency on Russia, expected to be lessened and to be measured through the *Energiewende*, the commercial peace theory will be used. The theoretical notion of civilian state on the other hand will be applied to give justice to the concept of international norms and moral concerns as a segment to German actorness.

Interdependence through trade as a condition to lasting peace between nations was already established by Kant in 1795, developing what today is known as the Kantian Triangle. Together with commerce, democratic foundation of states and an international regime furthered through international organisation membership were seen as enabling factors (Castellano, 2013). The idea of a trading state and commercial peace would assume that in a first instance trade interdependence works as the significant factor in the EU-Russian relationship when it comes to the maintenance of positive relations.

Patapan (2012) establishes the idea, originally developed through Montesquieu, that commerce as a soft power maintains the ability to further peace. This *Doux Commerce* theory is supported through findings by other authors such as Bennett and Stam (2004): Their research identifies trade dependence as decreasing conflict, with overall moderate effects and a strong effect on some significant dyads they had examined. Interdependence has the power to deter militarised violence and conflict more generally, as the opportunity costs of such are shaped through trade: The economic value at stake might outweigh potential benefits of conflict (Gartzke & Westenwinter, 2016). This type of influence is for example impacted by state leader's expectations on future trade but can also carry weight through the provision of a forum: Economic and commercial institutions provide regular meetings between political leaders of concerned countries, reducing commitment problems and building trust (Bearce, 2003). In the case of Germany and Russia this would effectively mean a lessening of the German openness towards sanctions aimed at Russia on an EU-level, due to its national commercial relations and economic dependencies.

This notion of commercial peace can be seen as embedded in the concept of liberal governmentality within EU studies. Moravcsik (1993; 1995) outlines how decisions taken on the supranational level are determined through intergovernmental bargaining: This applies to EU institutions such as the Council, an organ essential to important decisions such as sanctions applied (Naurin, 2018). National interests are constrained by microeconomic influences, but it is maintained that ideological motives can possibly carry weight if economic motivations are uncertain or weak. Generally, supranational actors only carry marginal influence vis-à-vis domestic ones, as policy preferences are being determined through domestic political equilibria (Moravcsik, 1993). This applies to the case of Germany and its policy preferences towards Russia: On a domestic level, economic elites are close to the political ones, if not identical, a good illustration of such being the case of former Chancellor Schröder: now the head of the

shareholder's committee of the Nordstream AG, a Baltic gas pipeline and German-Russian project (Kazantsev, 2012). As it is within these elite's primarily material interest to maintain good relations with Russia this is reflected on an international level such as within the Council of the EU.

Further, the concept of commercial peace can be related back to the general grand theory of liberalism within international relations. Such constitutes a focus on cooperation through channels of multilateral institutions and international regimes, as well as policy choices shaped through trade interdependence (Keohane, 2012). Some authors have noted a trend, apparent in recent years: With liberalism in itself being embedded in international relations, the international sphere has started prescribing larger importance to the ideas of legalism and morality, combining the social purpose of liberal democracies with their geopolitical power (Keohane, 2012; Skogstad, 2015).

This focus on morality is mirrored through the idea of a civilian power, though this concept is rooted in the grand theory of constructivism (Dyson, 2002). Constructivism itself, a major school within international relations since the 1980s and 1990s, highlights the importance of historically and socially constructed identities and ideas as determining factors to the state of the international system: Civilian power describes an identity tailored to the German historical experience and moral legacy. Set out by Maull (1990) in an essay analysing the narrative of the self of Germany and Japan post-World War II, it essentially contains the notion of multilateral cooperation, supranational regimes and norms as well as a concentration of soft power over military means. According to the author, this refocussing was made possible through a general change in the international system, away from a focus on military-political to social and economic developments: Favouring an increase in German power and rehabilitation on the international stage, due to its strong economy based on cooperation and allyship within Europe and across the Atlantic Ocean since the Second World War.

Historical memories as such as well as moral convictions and a highlighting of international cooperation play a role in the making of German foreign policy: The concept of civilian power therefore poses as essentially Kantian content as well (Dyson, 2002). Cooperation on the international stage serves German interests, as intergenerational learning and experience haven proven the value of strong international institutions. These are to be seen as grounded in a foundational respect for law and social justice with an aim of strengthening international law

in itself (Berenskötter & Stritzel, 2021): The idea of morality of civilian powers is rooted in the conceptions of identity, discourse and culture. And while this emphasis on norms and obligations is what makes the theory applicable and meaningful to the case of German-Russian relations, this is also the point which though still within the frame of Kantian thought distinguishes civilian powers from trading states: Policy is determined not through the international system or material rationalism but rather through domestic culture and values. Instead of economic and political elites as outlined through the domestic in Moravcsik's (1993; 1995) liberal intergovernmentalism, the domestic in this case refers to the German identity, through Dyson (2002) analysed as being most strongly embedded institutionally in the Foreign Ministry and Minister as well as the foreign policy division of the German Chancellor's office. In this institutional setting, being a civilian power should be seen as embodying a path-dependency determining policy outputs, operating through the logic of appropriateness. German foreign policy more generally can be seen then as taking account of their strong normative convictions and norms (Karp, 2009).

One can therefore derive two working hypotheses from these theories and conceptions: The first concerning economic interdependence and the second international norms. Commercial peace states that mutual trade relations and benefits will alter the stakes and costs of conflict so that conflict will be avoided: We can assume that German elites would be opposed to for example sanctioning Russia as they fear they might carry related costs. An erosion of German-Russian interdependence through the increased use of renewable energies is therefore anticipated to cause less stable relations, leading to a lessening of the hurdle Germany might pose in the EU process of effectively sanctioning Russia. Operating under the idea that the *Energiewende* leads to less dependency and increased energy security, the first working hypothesis A for this thesis therefore reads: *The lesser energy-dependent Germany is on Russia, the more the German government supports the imposition of sanctions on Russia at the EU level.*

The second hypothesis relates to the idea of Germany as a civilian power. If this concept is essential to the identity of the country, entailing a focus on international regimes and norms, as well as international law and morality, it is to be expected that a violation of such norms by Russia would beg an appropriate response on the German side, for example sanctions, even if an economic cost should occur. The second working hypothesis B for this thesis therefore

reads: *The more Russia is perceived as breaking international norms and rules, the more the German government supports the imposition of sanctions on Russia at the EU level.*

Having established these hypotheses, the following section will outline the research design and methods chosen to test the assumptions.

## Research Design

### Method and case selection

The aim of this paper is to conduct an analysis into what factors decisively influence German foreign policy concerning Russia and therefore the implementation of sanctions and penalties against it on an EU-level. To be able to do so, the method used will be a quantitative content analysis using German parliamentary (Bundestag) debates as data utilising the MaxQDA analysis software (2008: 3 documents, 39 pages; 2014: 2 documents, 50 pages; 2021: 4 documents, 23 pages). This allows for the analysis of the use and frequency of words or sentence structures within these debates as well as the patterns they form to finally be able to draw inferences about the data's meaning and intention (Halperin & Heath, 2017, p. 336). Key words and categories were chosen based on the theoretical framework above, with exemplary excerpts being illustrated in the table below (see *Table 3*); data itself comprises two debates per case, supplemented through individual written and oral questions posed by Members of Parliament (MPs), overall yielding 183 coded segments. With the use of this method, it will be possible to determine the extent to which the factors set out as independent variables are present, to evaluate what influence they carry on the output of EU-Russia relations. Reliability in the frame of a content analysis refers to the consistency maintained when re-coding the same data over time (Colorado State University, 2021): Within this research it is produced through the repeated coding of my data, with several rounds of coding producing the same results. This leads to the conclusion of internal coherency for the applied coding system, meaning the findings could be replicated by another researcher through the use of the same coding system. Nevertheless, it is to say that a full interpretation of results remains subjective and might slightly differ if conducted through another researcher. Concerning the generalisability of results it is to maintain that this thesis poses as a case study of German policy, and therefore cannot be applied to other states and their respective foreign policies: Still, a generalisability exists in the case of Germany. Results carry value beyond the handling of Russia and could

also be applied to German relations with other norm breaking states which share a sort of interdependence with Germany.

The debates themselves form a selection from three points in time, representing three significant events in German and EU-Russia relations: The 2008 Georgia War, the 2014 Ukraine Crisis, and the recent backsliding of democratic values and norms in Russia centred around the 2021 prosecution of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny. All these events represent violations of international norms, the first two concern the norms of sovereignty and territorial autonomy of states, while the last regards civic liberties and human rights law. This selection allows for the analysis of German position and response to such violations in comparison to other, similar instances: The overtime factor also grants the opportunity to compare results with varying levels of German dependency on Russia, considering the ongoing *Energiewende*. The German governmental side throughout all selected events also constituted of a coalition government of the same two parties, *Christliche Demokratische Union Deutschlands* (CDU) and *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD), making up the cabinets Merkel I, III & IV. Further, the first two events of 2008 and 2014 actually even saw the same combination of political leadership, with Angela Merkel as Chancellor and Frank-Walter Steinmeier as Foreign Minister, while the last and most recent one still saw Angela Merkel as Chancellor with Heiko Maas as German Foreign Minister by her side.

### Dependent variable and sanctioning behaviour

The dependent variable in the scope of this research is the factor of EU-Russia relations, to be seen as greatly impacted by German actorness and policy. These are evaluated through the output of sanctions, empirically illustrating the state of the relationship. As the aim of this paper is to determine the source of German policy regarding Russia, and therefore to determine the presence of independent variable factors, we can pre-establish the dependent variable through the operationalisation of sanctions for the three chosen events in time: The 2008 Georgia War, the 2014 Ukraine crisis, and the 2020, respectively 2021 backsliding of democratic norms and civil liberties. Concerning these sanctions, the decisive actor on an EU-level is the Council of the EU (Giumelli, 2013). It maintains the implementing power and has to decide and approve regulations regarding any sanctions member states might want to realise. Types of sanctions can range from economic sanctions and diplomatic measures to restraints put on individuals and organisations (European Council, 2020).

Regarding the cases, we can establish the following outcomes in relation to EU-Russia relations and sanctioning behaviour (see *Table 1*).

The 2008 Georgia War caused “no more than a temporary cooling of relations” between the EU and Russia (European Parliament, 2020, p.1). Though sanctions were considered on side of the EU, none were ever actually implemented. It is to remark that nonetheless, concerns about the ongoing situation were remarked, for example through German Chancellor Merkel, who called for the respect of Georgian territorial integrity (Bundeskanzlerin, 2008).

Following the 2014 Ukraine Crisis and subsequent annexation of Crimea through Russia, a clear condemnation of Russian action and call to respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine were issued through the EU. This case, in contrast to the Georgia War, was actually followed up with the imposition of sanctions against Russia, reaching from diplomatic to individual measures (European Council, 2020). Since then, sanctions have continuously been extended and are still in place at this point in time.

The democratic backsliding and increased disregard of liberties, highlighted through the prosecution of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny in 2021, also provoked sanctions implemented against Russia: The Council of the EU imposed penalties on individuals seen to carry responsibility in the sentencing (Herszenhorn & Bertrand, 2021). Under a Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, measures were imposed for the widespread and systematic repression of freedoms through Russian officials (Council of the EU, 2021).

<b>Event</b>	<b>Sanctioning outcome</b>
2008 Georgia War	Temporary cooling of relations, sanctions considered, no actual sanctions implemented
2014 Ukraine Crisis	Large-scale implementation of individual-restrictive / diplomatic / economic sanctions, still in place as of Spring 2021
2020/21 Backsliding of democratic norms and civil liberties	Sanctions implemented, individual-restrictive

*Table 1* – Outcomes on the dependent variable: EU sanctions against Russia over time

## Independent variables: Decrease of dependence through the *Energiewende* and civilian power actorness

The existence of two differentiated hypotheses concerning drivers of German foreign policy leads to the establishment of two individual independent variables: Firstly, concerning the economic factors we can define the impact of the German energy-dependence on Russia, altered through the *Energiewende*, as independent variable A, and therefore its willingness to sanction a breach of norms on an EU-level. Secondly relating to the regard of international norms we can name the impact of the identity of a civilian power as independent variable B.

The *Energiewende* generally provides an increase in energy security, and a decrease in dependency on gas and therefore Russia more generally, curbing trade interdependence (Gillesen, Heinrichs, Hake & Allelein, 2019). Considering the specific numbers, we can determine that this restructuring of the energy sector has successfully taken place: With the gross electricity production through renewable energies in 2008 scoring at 94,1 billion kWh rising up to 230,9 kWh in 2018 (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie, 2021). Stating this in proportionate shares, the German Ministry for Economics and Energy in their latest report on renewable energy developments states that in 2005 7,2% and in 2019 in comparison 17,1% of the gross energy consumption in electricity, heating and traffic were being satisfied through renewable means (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie, 2020; see *Table 2*). This increased share of renewable energies production is matched by a decrease in gas imports: While in 2008 gas imports into Germany equalled the value of 29,58 billion Euro, in 2014 numbers sank to 27,02 billion Euro and in 2020 they only reached 20,45 billion Euro (Statistica, 2021a). From this we can conclude that the general dependence on Russia through energy imports has since the first event of 2008 decreased, as the *Energiewende* effectively commenced providing alternatives.

	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
	<b>(%) Renewable Energies of the gross product</b>										
<i>Electricity</i>	10.6	18.3	21.0	23.6	25.3	28.2	30.9	32.3	34.6	38.0	N/A
<i>Heating/Cooling</i>	7.7	12.1	12.6	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.0	13.4	13.6	
<i>Traffic</i>	4.0	6.4	6.5	7.3	7.3	6.9	6.6	7.0	7.0	7.9	N/A
<b>Gross energy consumption</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>11.7</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>17.1</b>

*Table 2* – Renewable Energies in German gross energy consumption over the years (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie, 2020)



Nevertheless, Germany continues to send mixed signals and keeps holding on to shared projects: Such as the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, to be completed this year (Surwillo, 2019). This means that though a general decrease of energy-dependency is given, economic concerns regarding the maintenance or in this case non-maintenance of good relations with Russia are given amongst the German elites (Ikani, 2019; Dyson, 2016). The effect of the *Energiewende* on dependence is given, nevertheless the impact of energy-dependence will be operationalised through the existence and mention of economic concerns, the value of German-Russian economic and financial cooperation as well as the straight-up opposition of measures.

The second independent variable, as outlined above, is the impact of the identity segment of civilian power to German actorness. This concept inherently describes the determination of national foreign policy through a focus on international cooperation and norms, such as the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, or the maintenance of democratic and human rights standards (Maull, 1990; Wolff, 2013). Should this theory hold, and the principle carry inherent value to the German national identity when acting within the international sphere, one would expect a reaction to any type of behaviour violating such norms, even if economic and material values might be at stake (Dyson, 2002). How prevalent such moral concerns are in reality, will be determined through the operationalisation of the civilian power principle: The condemnation of the violation of the specific norm through Russia by the German government, the call for the sanctioning of such behaviour and a decrease of trade with non-liberal states as well as a broader acknowledgement of in the past established norms such as peace or non-military intervention and their value to their international community will be remarked as weighing into the consideration of civilian state in German identity.

To accurately reflect these two variables and be able to indicate their empirical occurrence in the chosen German parliamentary debates, the following coding system applies.

Independent Variables	Indicator	Explanation	Examples
<b>A – Impact of German energy-dependence on Russia</b>	A1 – Economic concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mention of energy dependence</li> <li>• Indication of economic cost of measures</li> </ul>	‘Whoever wants to put the Baltic Sea gas line into question, will first have to show up an alternative for EU energy supply.’ (Bundestag, 2008a)
	A2 – Value of German-Russian (EU-Russian) cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlighting of longstanding partnership</li> <li>• Highlighting the importance of German-Russian dialogue</li> <li>• Mention of German-Russian joint projects</li> <li>• Pleading to understand the actions Russia’s</li> <li>• Call for more cooperation with Russia</li> </ul>	<p>‘The goal should remain to include Russia in a network of shared security and economic cooperation’ (Bundestag, 2008a)</p> <p>It can never be too late to find a political solution in cooperation with Russia. (Bundestag, 2014b)</p>
	A3 – Opposition to sanctions, measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlighting the international condemnation as grave enough without additional actual sanctions</li> <li>• Outright opposing statements to sanctions</li> </ul>	‘We should remain cautious of wrong measures towards Russia, such as an exclusion out of the G8, the blockage of Russia’s WTO membership accession or a hardening of the visa regime. We would only hurt our own goal of achieving change in Russia through partnership.’ (Bundestag, 2008a)
<b>B – Impact of identity segment of Civilian Power</b>	B1 – Condemnation of violation of norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call for the regard of norm (e.g. territorial integrity)</li> <li>• Words indicating displeasure over Russian disregard of norms</li> </ul>	‘The annexation of Crimea through Russia is a clear violation of international law.’ (Bundestag, 2014b)
	B2 – Emphasis of the value of established norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlighting of established norms and their importance</li> <li>• Call for focus on such norms in intergovernmental talks / negotiations / summits</li> </ul>	‘The force Europe’s – peace, economy, stability, future opportunities – is now needed in the discussion on Russia and the Ukraine.’ (Bundestag, 2014b)
	B3 – Call for sanctions, measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call for sanctions</li> <li>• Speech indicating agreement indicating agreement with possibly already taken measures (post-sanctions)</li> <li>• Call for increased consideration of the state of democracy and the rule of law when choosing (trading) partners</li> </ul>	<p>‘Should Russia not be willing to aid the solution of the crisis in the Ukraine, more and tougher sanctions are needed.’ (Bundestag, 2014c)</p> <p>‘Impactful sanctions need to be the response to violations of human rights.’ (Bundestag, 2021a)</p>

Table 3 – Operationalisation of the independent variables and examples

## Background to the case / data

As outlined above, data concerning three different events at three different points in time was chosen to be analysed: The three cases being the 2008 Georgia War, the 2014 Ukraine Crisis and the 2020/21 backsliding of democratic norms and civil liberties, reaching its peak in the sentencing of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

### The 2008 Georgia War

The Georgia War of 2008 concerned itself with the independence of South Ossetia. This region is recognised internationally by most states to be part of Georgia, though it is de facto not under Georgian control: It is recognised as a state only by a handful of countries worldwide, including Russia. Georgia, South Ossetia and Russia all belong to the area which makes up the former Soviet Union: After its fall, the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast declared its independence from Georgia in 1991; but instead of being acknowledged as independent by the Georgian government, the state response instead was to abolish the previously maintained autonomy of the region (Eisler, 2014). The following years saw a worsening of Georgian-South Ossetian relations, leading up to the 2008 events. On August 1<sup>st</sup> of the year, South Ossetian local forces commenced shelling Georgian villages, to which Georgia responded with military means and an occupation of the self-proclaimed Republic of South Ossetia by August 8. This in return caused a response on side of the Russian, launching an invasion of part of the Georgian territory including South Ossetia in the name of peacekeeping and to prevent further aggression against the state of South Ossetia, therefore breaking international norms of territorial integrity of states (Bayulgen & Arbatli, 2013). Russian troops were seen to leave only a couple days later under an internationally negotiated ceasefire agreement: Nevertheless, casualties on both Georgian and South Ossetian sides were remarked, as well as a significant number of displaced persons (Eisler, 2014). Since the 2008 incident, the Georgian government categorises South Ossetia as Russian-occupied Georgian territory.

Two debates will be analysed in the context of this event (Bundestag, 2008a; Bundestag, 2008b). These took place in the frame of a broader discussion on a 2008 European Council meeting and therefore the EU and German foreign policy concerning the case itself, as well as the budget of the German Foreign ministry. The debates will be supplemented through a pair

of oral and written questions posed by MPs, as well as the affiliated response through the German government.

### The 2014 Ukraine Crisis

The Ukraine Crisis of 2014 unfolded after the then Ukrainian President Yanukovich in late 2013 suspended preparations for an Association Agreement with the EU: Leading to wide-reaching pro-EU protests within in Kiev, now known as the Euromaidan, prompting the ousting of said former President Yanukovich (Matveeva, 2018). This again motivated unrest by pro-Russian supporters of Yanukovich in Southern and Eastern parts of the country, home to a Russian minority: The Russian invasion of some of these parts and subsequent annexation of the formerly autonomous Crimean Peninsula further fuelled the conflict. It followed pro-Russian insurgencies by separatists and military engagement of such in the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, fighting the new Ukrainian government, often supported and supplied through Russian forces (Howorth, 2017; Karolewski & Cross, 2017). The Russian engagement throughout the conflict and especially its annexation of Crimea sparked international outrage as it was seen as a clear violation of international law and the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty of states.

Two Bundestag debates were chosen to illustrate the response to the 2014 event (Bundestag, 2014b; Bundestag, 2014c). These discussed the Ukraine crisis in context of a European Council meeting and as a so-called *Aktuelle Stunde*, a debate consisting of five-minute contributions of MPs of differentiating parliamentary fractions to discuss a recent topic generally interesting to all (Bundestag, 2014a). These will also be supplemented through some questions posed by MPs to the German Foreign and Defence Ministries.

### The 2020/21 Backsliding of Democratic Norms

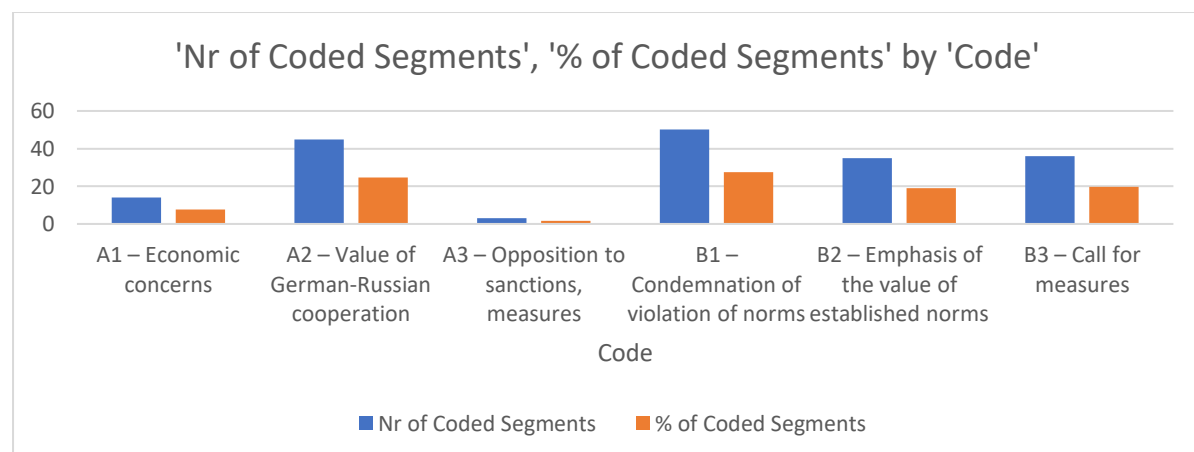
The events of 2020/21 concern a general backsliding of democratic norms and civil liberties within Russia, highlighted through the prosecution of Kremlin critic Navalny. Freedom House (2021) on a scale outlining the state of democracy, reaching from zero to 100 with zero being the lowest value and 100 the highest, in its latest report records a score of 20 for Russia: On political rights it maintains 5 out of 40 points, on civil liberties 15 out of 60. This puts it in the category of ‘not free’. And while this generally poses as a bad sign on the state of democracy

in Russia, it is the 2021 events concerning blogger and Putin critic Navalny that begged a response from side of the EU: Anti-corruption campaigner Alexei Navalny who had been flown out to Germany while in a comatose state due to a poisoning attack suspected to have been ordered by the Russian government itself; was arrested upon his return to Moscow under the account of having violated the terms of his parole stemming from a previous sentencing by leaving the country and not sufficiently informing his parole officers (Boffey, 2021; BBC News, 2021). The EU in response imposed sanctions against individuals responsible for the arrest, prosecution and sentencing of Navalny, in its first use of the Magnitsky Act – passed in late 2020 – allowing for the sanctioning of human rights abuses (Boffey, 2021; Council of the EU, 2021).

Data analysed concerning this event constitutes of two parliamentary debates (Bundestag, 2021a; Bundestag, 2021d), discussing the case in context of the working program of the European Commission 2021 and an *Aktuelle Stunde* on the state and decline of the rule of law in Russia. The debates are supplemented through written and oral questions posed by MPs and the corresponding governmental answers.

## Presentation of data

The following section presents the analysis of the selected parliamentary data according to the previously outlined coding system, as output collected from MaxQDA. It is to remark that only statements and contributions by members of the governing parties CDU and SPD were taken into consideration, and that all quotes taken from the debates and questions were translated from the German language by me.



Graph 1 – Overall coding results

As graph 1 shows, a general distribution of textual segments relating to the economic variable and indicators A1-3 and the normative variable and indicators B1-3 exists to some extent. A balance between the more toned-down indicators, namely a highlighting of value of German- / EU-Russian cooperation and a condemnation of the violation of varying norms such as territorial integrity of states or human rights, is given. What seems interesting is the variance in therewith connected calls for non-action and respectively action to be taken through the clear opposition or support of sanctions or measures more generally. While throughout all three events measures of speech advocating for non-action or lesser action is very limited, calls for action are very much given. A closer analysis of the three individual cases will provide more insights.

## The 2008 Georgia War

Code	Nr of Coded Segments	% of Coded Segments	Appears in nr of documents
● A1 – Economic concerns	5	12,82	2
● A2 – Value of German-Russian cooperation	18	46,15	2
● A3 – Opposition to sanctions, measures	2	5,13	1
● B1 – Condemnation of violation of norms	6	15,38	2
● B2 – Emphasis of the value of established norms	8	20,51	2
● B3 – Call for sanctions, measures	0	0,00	0

*Table 4* – Coding results for the Georgia case

The 2008 debates concerning themselves with the violation of territorial integrity of Georgia show a high number of variable A indicators versus variable B, measuring at 64.1% versus 35.9%. A number of economic concerns are to be found within the data, for example clearly stating that ‘Whoever wants to put the Baltic Sea gas line into question, will first have to show up an alternative for EU energy supply’ (Bundestag, 2008a). Such concerns are supported through a significantly high number of text passages highlighting the value of cooperation and friendship with Russia, and a need to maintain dialogue and understanding for the other: ‘Communication is the right response, especially in tougher times.’ (Bundestag, 2008a). As another section outlines hopes for Russia to remain ‘a partner of the future’ (Bundestag, 2008a) and a ‘a need to engage in cooperative partnership and behaviour’ (Bundestag, 2008b), generally empathetic feelings towards the nation can be analysed in all documents dealing with the case. This is mirrored through the highest number of actual opposition to measures amongst all three events, as well as the lowest call for measures to be taken, with exactly zero such



remarks being made. As one section strongly expresses, ‘We should remain cautious of wrong measures towards Russia, such as an exclusion out of the G8, the blockage of Russia’s WTO membership accession or a hardening of the visa regime. We would only hurt our own goal of achieving change in Russia through partnership.’ (Bundestag, 2008a). This shows a low willingness on part of the German governmental parties to actually take action and sanction the violation of international norms through Russia in the 2008 case, while instead giving priority to economic concerns in discussion.

Nevertheless, it is important to remark at this point that, still, a general condemnation of Russian behaviour was present within the documents: Though blame was also assigned to the opposing state within the conflict, namely Georgia. ‘The military intervention in Georgia in violation of international law stands in contrast to our friendly neighbourhood. It is possible to criticise the Georgian government. But none of its behaviour justifies the fact that Russian troops marched into Georgia.’ (Bundestag, 2008a). Further, already in this case remarks on the general state of democracy were made, even if in very limited number, with one statement outlining ‘I regret deeply that the inner-political development within Russia has taken a path back to more autocracy.’ (Bundestag, 2008a).

## The 2014 Ukraine Crisis

Code	Nr of Coded Segments	% of Coded Segments	Appears in nr of documents
● A1 – Economic concerns	5	5,68	2
● A2 – Value of German-Russian cooperation	14	15,91	2
● A3 – Opposition to sanctions, measures	1	1,14	1
● B1 – Condemnation of violation of norms	25	28,41	2
● B2 – Emphasis of the value of established norms	23	26,14	2
● B3 – Call for sanctions, measures	20	22,73	2

*Table 5 – Coding results for the Ukraine case*

The analysis of data concerning the Ukraine Crisis paints a different picture. While a good amount of statements highlighting the value of cooperative behaviour towards Russia is still given, the largest difference compared to the 2008 case lies within the number of calls for actual measures and sanctions towards Russia to be implemented, scoring at 22.73% of all coded segments. That number becomes especially interesting when compared to the amount of coded sections posing as opposition to measures, which lies at just one, therefore making up a total of only 1.14% of segments. This puts the overall number of A-type indicators at 22.7% versus 77.3% of B-type indicators, a clear change compared to the Georgia case which also

concerned itself with the violation of territorial integrity of a state. Generally, it is to remark that the data on the Ukraine crisis received the highest amount of coded segments compared to the other two cases: This can be traced back to the fact that the documents concerning this event are slightly longer, with the Ukraine Crisis receiving a high level of prominence within the German government.

Interestingly enough, even comments highlighting the need for communication and cooperation are bound to conditions, namely dialogue in the frame of sanctions. Stating ‘A three-level plan of sanctions is the right response, as all levels leave enough room for dialogue to develop.’ (Bundestag, 2014b), one section outlines the inclusion of an option for communication with Russia within plans made for differently weighing sanctions: This is supported through accounts such as ‘An automatism into a spiral of sanctions needs to be avoided. It can never be too late to find a political solution in cooperation with Russia.’ (Bundestag, 2014b). This shows a general willingness to cooperate with Russia, but only under certain conditions: Yet the message conveyed in large parts of the text is clear, ‘The annexation of Crimea through Russia is a clear violation of international law.’ (Bundestag, 2014b). Variation in the level of willingness of opposing Russian behaviour and the condemnation of such can still be remarked, ranging from a simple declaration of norm violation, ‘We cannot refuse to recognise this [violation of international law] just because it goes against our felt need for peace’ (Bundestag, 2014c) to a much heavier weighing categorization of Russia as ‘back to being the country which spreads fear and terror.’ (Bundestag, 2014c).

These accusations are supported through statements outlining the willingness and readiness to jump into action through additional measures, as well as the positive judging of sanctions already taken. ‘The European Council will make clear that should the situation worsen, we will be prepared to take measures of the third level: This will definitely also include economic sanctions.’ (Bundestag, 2014b), Merkel herself declares, while clearly being backed by MPs belonging to her government: ‘The most recent handling of the situation [through the implementation of sanctions] by the Chancellor and Foreign Minister was appropriate.’ (Bundestag, 2014b). One section raises a sense of urgency to stand by these measures taken by appealing to the concept of Europe and the therewith connected values, setting forth that ‘If Europe idly watched the destruction of the Ukraine, it would give up on itself.’ (Bundestag, 2014c). These values that are seen to be connected with the idea and existence of the EU and Europe make further appearances in the analysed data, emphasizing the values of norms



established on the continent throughout time: ‘The force Europe’s – peace, economy, stability, future opportunities – is now needed in the discussion on Russia and the Ukraine.’ (Bundestag, 2014b). Established norms and international law are further highlighted to make a case for the association of the Ukraine with the EU more specifically, with one section referring to the pro-EU protests as had been witnessed in frame of the Euromaidan, articulating that ‘It is uncontested that according to international law, that peoples have a right to self-determination.’ (Bundestag, 2014b), outlining an empathy towards the Ukrainian people and their state’s possible integration within Europe over the foreign policy objectives and maintenance of friendship with Russia.

Generally, the 2014 case shows increased dissatisfaction with actions taken through Russia compared to the 2008 Georgia War, pointing towards a possible change in attitude towards the cooperation between the EU, respectively Germany and Russia: With a clear condemnation of the violation of norms, it can be seen as conditioned to better international citizenship and adherence through norms on the part of Russia; as for example seen through the highlighting of cooperation but in the frame of a sanctions regime, as outlined above. Economic concerns seem to have played a lesser role in the case of the Ukraine Crisis compared to the events of 2008.

### The 2020/21 Backsliding of Democratic Norms

Code	Nr of Coded Segments	% of Coded Segments	Appears in nr of documents
● A1 – Economic concerns	4	7,14	1
● A2 – Value of German-Russian cooperation	13	23,21	2
● A3 – Opposition to sanctions, measures	0	0,00	0
● B1 – Condemnation of violation of norms	19	33,93	2
● B2 – Emphasis of the value of established norms	4	7,14	1
● B3 – Call for sanctions, measures	16	28,57	3

*Table 6* – Coding results for the democratic backsliding / Navalny case

The 2021 debates concerning the state of democracy and civil liberties and a backsliding of such, as well as the case of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny in their analysis outcome are to some extent comparable to the 2014 case. Though they actually score a slightly higher number on codes regarding economic concerns and the highlighting of the value of cooperation with Russia, this set of data pieces also is the only one with zero expressions of opposition to sanctions and measures taken, and the one with the highest number of sections coded as a

condemnation of the violation of norms and a clear call for measures to be applied. Nevertheless, it marks a lower number of textual parts referring to the general emphasis of established norms, putting it at 30.4% of type-A indicators concerning themselves with the economic independent variable, versus 69.6% of type-B indicators belonging to the normative independent variable. This ratio is slightly less extreme but still comparable to the 2014 Ukraine Crisis, though still significantly different from the 2008 Georgia War.

An interesting aspect of the data regarding this event concerns the indicator of economic concerns regarding a dealing with Russia. Though higher than within the Ukraine case, scoring at 7.14% of all coded segment in the section, these mostly concern one specific asset of German-Russian economic cooperation: The Nord Stream 2 pipeline. One section outlines that ‘Whoever generally questions Nord Stream 2 – and you can have that opinion – will also have to think about, at least geo-strategically, what consequences this will have on the influence Europe has on Russia.’ (Bundestag, 2021a), while another asserts ‘To make Nord Stream 2 an example of hardship towards Russia seems a bit too simplified.’ (Bundestag, 2021a). This might indicate that while generally, economic concerns remain a factor in German foreign policy towards Russia in the case of democratic norms and human rights violations, these might be more case-bound than of general overshadowing influence. This is underlined through the nature of text sections highlighting the importance of maintenance of cooperation between the two nations. While some still specify attempts to keep up means of political communication, voicing that ‘Even through all the issues the Federal Government is trying to maintain channels of dialogue with Russia.’ (Bundestag, 2021d), they do not deny the existence of issues; others go a step further by emphasising that with cooperation at this point in time also is bound to clarifying the European stance on the violation of norms and condemnation of such: ‘Of course we have to talk with Russia. But beyond our cooperation we also finally have to take a clear stance towards Russia.’ (Bundestag, 2021a). These sections show that generally, there is little empathy left for Russian behaviour and disregard of international law, even if this not always allows for the prioritization of economic goals.

The disregard of international norms is condemned very clearly in the case of Navalny, reading ‘[the prosecution of Navalny] is arbitrary and politically motivated. [...] Russia needs to fulfill its obligations under international law and immediately release Navalny.’ (Bundestag, 2021c); but not only regarding the Kremlin critic but also the suppression of the Russian people more generally: ‘After the unacceptable imprisonment and prosecution Navalny’s we can now see a

gruesome and unacceptable suppression of protesters.’ (Bundestag, 2021a). It is also here that participants to the debate openly blame Russian leader Putin for the events, voicing the opinion that ‘Even before the pandemic, the freedom to protest and civil liberties were suppressed, even before the pandemic President Putin over years initiated a decline of democracy and the rule of law. This is the truth.’ (Bundestag, 2021a); and ‘Together with Joe Biden we now, this year and in the ones to come, have to show Putin the price he will have to pay for his murders and evermore aggressive behaviour.’ (Bundestag, 2021a). This illustrates a need amongst the German political leadership to still rely on multilateral channels and allyship, for example with the United States as partner, but maybe not so much anymore on cooperation with Russia and Putin more specifically. The continued violation of international norms through the state is no longer being written off as a misstep which can still be resolved solemnly through communication, like in the 2008 case of Georgia, but instead is seen as an issue which demands a clear response. A sense of responsibility to act is felt amongst German governmental party MPs, stating that ‘We will have to, if necessary, implement sanctions.’ (Bundestag, 2021a), and clearly outlining the fact that ‘Impactful sanctions need to be the response to violations of human rights.’ (Bundestag, 2021a).

## Discussion

Evaluating the outcome of the conducted content analysis yielding overall 183 coded segments, we can perceive a change in German attitude and behaviour towards Russia across the three cases and time. The 2008 Georgia War saw Germany in a phase of still great energy dependence of Russia, and little end of such in sight: The *Energiewende* had not yet been formulated. This is mirrored in the evaluation of the Russian invasion of Georgian territory. Though a condemnation of actions did take place, hinting at the value the German government nevertheless prescribed to international law, economic concerns were voiced loudly and in large quantity. It is the only case out of the three maintaining a clear inclination towards economic over normative value, with type-A indicators standing for the understanding of Germany as a trading state and bound by its interdependence to Russia outweighing type-B indicators relating to normative value and the German identity as a civilian power by far. The actions taken by Russia are outlined as a violation of international norm: But no calls for action followed. This can explain the sanctioning outcome of the case, namely no sanctions implemented.

In 2014, a time after the *Energiewende* found its legal basis in German policy and renewable energies had commenced to be an inherent part of such, we can register a change in attitude compared to the Georgia case: with the expression of economic concerns weighing in a very limited fashion, and clearly being outweighed by both the condemnation of norms and a call for measures to be taken, respectively a feeling of content being voiced over measures already taken. Cooperation with Russia was still being highlighted as an important pointer of German foreign policy, but now in the scope of a sanctions regime: It was clarified that channels of communication needed to remain open as Russia had the power to aid the finding of a political solution for the Ukraine. This German-Russian dialogue is therefore still seen as inherently important, but now is also greatly seen as serving a purpose. Pressure was to be applied through sanctions while discourse with the Russians played a role in conveying international norms and in a practical way aiding the adherence to such by searching for solutions in partnership. Economic concerns were pushed to the lower ranks of German policy agenda compared to the highlighting of international norms: And exactly this highlighting took place in even greater numbers than calls for sanctions were given. I argue that this is due to the nature of the violated norm, territorial integrity and sovereignty of states. This norm has been one of great tradition and value in Europe for a long time, and a non-adherence to it by for example Russia automatically created a threat European countries had not properly seen in this form since the Second World War. By invading a different state and annexing part of its territory, Russia suddenly posed as peril to all its neighbouring states.

One might claim then that the 2008 invasion of Georgia should have already posed as a sort of wake-up call to European nations on the measures Russia was willing to take to meet its foreign policy goals. I maintain that a difference between these cases is given for several reasons, the major one being contained in the first hypothesis set out by this paper, the more energy-dependent Germany is on Russia, the more the German government will oppose the imposition of sanctions on Russia at the EU level. In 2008, the *Energiewende* was not yet a part of German energy policy, meaning that the energy dependence and therefore trade interdependence with Russia had not been given a viable alternative. In 2014, the *Energiewende* was already taken place, and as outlined earlier in this paper abundance of energy produced through renewable means had increased while gas imports had simultaneously decreased. This lessening of dependence on Russia freed the way to a clearer condemnation and sanctioning of violations of international law. Additionally, the 2008 case presented itself as the first instance of Russian

behaviour of this sort in a long time, leaving room for hopes that it had been the exception rather than the norm. The 2014 Ukraine Crisis on the contrary was already the second instance of behaviour of this sort in the time span of only a few years, increasingly eradicating hopes for the future of a bright partnership between Russia and Germany, respectively the EU.

The 2021 case of democratic backsliding and the prosecution of Alexei Navalny can then be seen as a continuation of the 2014 mentality, with coding outcomes being fairly comparable. It is to say that economic concerns are not yet completely eliminated within the German handling of the relationship with Russia: Naturally, this makes sense as though maybe less significant in volume than a few years ago the energy dependence to some extent still remains. This is clearly illustrated through the nature of economic concerns voiced in the 2021 data, in majority referring to the specific project of Nord Stream 2. Though a general readiness to take a clearer stance towards Russia is given amongst German elites, they are not yet prepared to in the name of morality give up on this project which now is in its end stages already and therefore already harbours investments from many German corporations. To protect these financial inputs it is still in the interest of German elites, political and economic, to conserve the Baltic Sea pipeline. Nonetheless, the highlighting of German-Russian cooperation value outside of this project is now bound to the recognition of the existence of issues and ‘buts’ such as a preservation of communication only being right if it is also made clear that the violation of norms will not just be accepted.

One change between the 2021 data and its previous 2014 counterparts can be seen in the extent to which established norms were highlighted throughout debates: Though calls for measures were higher in 2021, there was lesser mentions of pre-existent international norms. I argue that this can be explained by consideration of the nature of norms which Russia violated. While the Ukraine Crisis posed as a violation of territorial and sovereign norms of other states, and therefore acts as a direct threat to some of Europe’s nations, the Navalny case and general backsliding of democratic and civil liberties stands as inner-political happenings of Russia. They in first line are not a threat to other European states, but instead to the Russian population itself.

Taken together, this allows for the establishment of a notion in regard to the previously set out hypotheses. A significant amount of evidence for the hypothesis A of lesser dependence leading to higher sanctioning due to commercial peace can be found: It is to say that before the

*Energiewende*, hesitations to take measures against Russia had been much higher. Economic concerns nevertheless remain a factor throughout all cases, which seems natural considering that a certain dependence on Russia is still given. The second hypothesis outlining a greater willingness to sanction a breaking of international norms due to the German civilian state identity does find grounds in the data, with all three cases containing segments condemning the violation of international norms, and the latter two calls for measures to be taken due to such. Nonetheless, it is the presence of such calls only in the 2014 and 2021 events that leads me to assert the importance of economic concerns – as the same norm had been violated in 2008 and 2014 - and a conditionality to the rightfulness of the hypothesis B: Only if economic concerns and interdependence are not ultimately determining German foreign policy then can the country fulfil its potential as civilian state. A lessening of trade factors gives the chance to sanction international law violations.

## Conclusion

This thesis set out to explore what drives German policy on EU-Russia relations: Factors considered constitute the maintained energy-dependence between the two countries, lessened over time by the *Energiewende*, and the idea of Germany of a civilian state. Through the creation of a coding system and content analysis of Bundestag debates I was able to conclude the following: Sufficient evidence for hypothesis A of lesser dependence leading to higher willingness to sanction was existent within the data, while hypothesis B concerning higher perceptions of norm violations leading to higher sanctioning outcomes can only be fulfilled under the restraint that economic concerns are not too grave and stand in the way. What this effectively means for the implementation of sanctions against states such as Russia which continue to violate international norms is that to be able to do so on an EU-level in an efficient manner, first and foremost economic sanctions need to be addressed. A greater focus needs to be placed for example on the promotion of alternative sources of energy, be these renewable or bought up from other countries of origin.

Additionally, a remark on the 2021 case should be made: Being of very recent nature, there might still be developments to come concerning the sanctions regime, be it the implementation of new measures or the continuation of already existing ones. The sanctions implemented in response to the Ukraine crisis for example continue to be enforced until today, and every now

and then received additional amendments through the inclusion of new individuals or entities on the actual sanction lists (European Council, 2020). I see no reason why this would not be likely in any way for the measures taken in response to the prosecution of Alexei Navalny: As much as only time will tell if and to what extent these will possibly trigger a reaction on the Russian side. At this point in time Navalny remains imprisoned and set to effectively complete his sentence in a Russian prison labour camp.

I would like to conclude on a final note on the factors considered within this research. The scope of this paper allowed for the analysis of what is in majority determined through previous literature to constitute the two main sources of German foreign policy on Russia: The influence of economic factors and interests, as well as the role international norms and the identity as civilian power of Germany. That being said, this does not mean that there exist no other factors that could have possibly influenced the German response or the European response more broadly to these different events. The EU after all consists of more than one member, and even though Germany might carry the most weight in particular settings it cannot by itself determine all policy outputs. The stance taken through other European countries on the case of Russia might differ, be it due to historical or geographical factors; and in the end of the day all these perceptions and preferences set out by other members of the EU will influence policy outputs, too. Plus, other factors within Germany might carry influence in determining the German preferences: For example on the matter of energy dependence a large-scale environmental dialogue has been developing within its civil society, which has been largely excluded from the analysis in the scope of this paper; as well as other actors such as lobbying groups, for example human rights NGOs, or personal, individual-level relations between German and Russian leaders might play into the response given to certain events. Further research on the determining factors of German foreign policy towards Russia, especially concerning the most recent and in academic literature so far less-explored case of Navalny, should take these into consideration.

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