Before and after Zeitenwende: The change of German foreign policy paradigms due to Russian acts of aggression in 2014 and 2022

Horban, Katharina

BEFORE AND AFTER ZEITENWENDE:

THE CHANGE OF GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY PARADIGMS DUE TO RUSSIAN ACTS OF AGGRESSION IN 2014 AND 2022

Leiden University | Adv. MSc "International Relations and Diplomacy"

Written By

Katharina Horban

Thesis

Advanced MSc "International Relations and Diplomacy"

Leiden University, The Netherlands

In cooperation with

Author: Katharina Horban

Supervisor: Dr. Kaspar Pucek, Clingendael

Second Reader: Dr. Matthew Longo, Leiden University

Date: 22 May 2024

Word Count (incl. references): 23,989

Abstract

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Europe (and beyond) has adopted its foreign policy which meant for many countries providing military support to Ukraine and/ or agreeing to harsh economic sanctions against Russia. However, the German case is special: Due to historical reasons and – at the latest since 1990 – the expansion of political and economic networks, Germany has been heavily involved in EU-Russia relations and became Russia's most important partner in Brussels. Against this background, this thesis attempts to answer the following question: Why did a major foreign policy change in Germany only happen in 2022 after the Russian invasion of Ukraine – and not already in 2014 after the Russian annexation of Crimea? This is done by performing a comparative case study and applying process tracing for the years 2014 and 2022 – enrichened by extensive interview research in Berlin with senior MFA officials, MPs specialised in foreign policy as well as with journalists. This thesis finds that in both years an exogenous political shock triggered the change process – but with a different scope. That is best explained by the reprioritisation and (partly) neglection of core pillars of German foreign policy – *Ostpolitik*, *Wandel durch Handel*, *Westbindung*, non-military foreign policy and historical responsibility – that occurred from 2014 to 2022.

Key Words: foreign policy | foreign policy change | foreign policy analysis | Germany | Ostpolitik | Zeitenwende | Russia | Ukraine

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

In December 2022, the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine even had consequences for linguists in Wiesbaden, Germany. The Society for German Language chose *Zeitenwende* as its word of the year (dpa 2022). This "watershed moment", in English, was announced by Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) in his historic parliamentary speech on 27 February 2022 three days after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The term gained domestic and international popularity, describing (1) the epoch-making breach of international law by Russia and (2) the epochal change in how Germany would react to this. It was "an abrupt, face-saving correction of the German course" (Handl, Nigrin and Mejstřík 2023, p. 514). In 2014, the year of Russia's annexation of Crimea, the Society for German Language had chosen *Lichtgrenze* as word of the year. Translated as "light border", this choice referred to the installation on the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and did not address Russia at all (dpa 2014a).

Against this anecdotal background, the following research question is addressed: Why did a major foreign policy change in Germany only happen in 2022 after the Russian invasion of Ukraine – and not already in 2014 after the Russian annexation of Crimea? Behind this is a broader question – namely the one asking about the conditions in which countries alter the paradigms of their foreign policy in response to exogenous political shocks. By choosing that angle, missing pieces in the literature are addressed and a new perspective is added.
Regarding the exogenous political shock, this thesis only addresses Russia's acts of aggression in 2014 and 2022 – and not other events of contemporary history like the recent escalation of the Israel-Palestine conflict. After all, February 2022 was arguably the biggest foreign policy shock to Germany after reunification.

German foreign policy is understood via the paradigms or core pillars of German foreign policy: The main ones operating vis-à-vis Moscow until 2022 were (1) *Ostpolitik* ("policy towards the East"), (2) *Wandel durch Handel* ("change through trade") coupled with export orientation, (3) *Westbindung* ("Western orientation") including the understanding of collective security in military and (geo-)political alliances, (4) non-military foreign policy and (5) historical responsibility or guilt (Blumenau 2022; Fröhlich 2023). A more concise version is the slogan "never again war, never alone, never revisionist" (Daehnhardt 2018, p. 518).
Hence, the paradigm shift that occurred from 2014 to 2022 was a reprioritisation and (partly) neglection of the listed topoi – as Scholz's *Zeitenwende* speech on 27 February 2022 shows: On the one hand, *Westbindung* – implying the country's commitment to multilateralism in the

context of the EU, UN, NATO and elsewhere – as well as Germany's historical responsibility towards the countries in Eastern Europe were highlighted. The speech distinguished between the people and the government of Russia and stressed Germany's historical guilt towards the peoples in Eastern Europe. On the other hand, *Ostpolitik* and *Wandel durch Handel* were quietly put aside – since those are irrevocably connected with the failure of the gas pipeline North Stream 2 and stand for Germany's (at least partly) failed Russia policy: *Wandel durch Handel* goes back to Egon Bahr (SPD) who introduced this concept at a speech in Tutzing in 1963. Bahr's idea was that an authoritarian regime, at the time the Soviet Union, should be opened politically and societally by offering the incentive of economic openness (Lau 2021). Building up on this a few years later was *Ostpolitik*, developed by Willy Brandt as foreign minister in the 1960s and continued by him as Chancellor 1969-1974. It was about détente with Soviet-bloc countries, recognizing Eastern Germany's government and deepening trade relations with other Soviet-bloc countries (Britannica 2023).

The core pillar of non-military foreign policy, however, underwent the biggest change: Since 2022, Germany is sending weaponry to war zones which had been framed for decades as a red line – although that self-imposed principle had not always been strictly adhered to (Klug 2022). For instance, Germany had agreed in September 2014 on the delivery of weapons, such as assault rifles or anti-tank missiles, to the Peshmerga in Iraq to support them in their fight against ISIS – and thereby already delivered weapons to a war zone. Nevertheless, back then this was small-scale compared to what should go to Ukraine eight years later (interview 14). Against this background, Robert Habeck – former head of Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen and now Vice-Chancellor – had caused a huge outrage in May 2021 when stating during a trip to Eastern Ukraine that defensive weaponry should be delivered to Ukraine (von Bullion 2021).

The research question bears an academical and societal relevance: In an academic context, it constitutes a new approach to the German perspective on Russian aggression against Ukraine which has been a hot topic in IR especially since the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Since 24 February 2022 this interest has only deepened. In fact, "[s]ince 1990, no other country (the US aside) has received as much attention from mainstream IR theory as far as its foreign policy is concerned than Germany" (Hellmann 2009, p. 258). The research goal is to draw a bigger picture than the already published literature: The thesis focuses not only on 2014 or 2022 but conducts a comparative case study on German foreign policy (change) during those two years – since those two exogenous political shocks have not been compared yet.

As for the societal relevance, the implications of February 2022 put decisionmakers such as Scholz, Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock (Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen) and Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (SPD) more than ever in the public spotlight (see Amann et al. 2022; Amann, Schult and Weiland 2022; Gathmann et al. 2022). For instance, in April 2022 Scholz justified his hesitation regarding arms deliveries to Ukraine in a much-noticed interview with *Der Spiegel* – and reiterated that "[n]either the former Foreign Minister [Steinmeier] nor the former Chancellor [Merkel] can be blamed for trying to create an order in Europe in which no country invades another" (Amann and Knobbe 2022). This talk happened in the context of German leaders having been heavily involved in EU-Russia relations for decades and Germany's Russia policy having been central to the EU. Germany became Russia's most important partner and advocate in Brussels (see Bosse 2022; Stent 2022; Szabo 2022). This is why the societal relevance is also shaped by the once good German-Russian relationship after the Cold War: It was not disrupted by border disputes, ethnic or religious conflicts or rivalry for international supremacy. The literature characterises this relationship as "special" (Yoder 2015, p. 50), due to the history of two world wars started by Germany, the reconciliation process after 1945 and since then the expansion of political, economic, social and cultural networks (Chivvis and Rid 2009; Timmins 2011; Yoder 2015). Already in 2011, it was predicted how that special relationship would grow in the future inter alia due to deepening economic interactions and energy relations (Timmins 2011). It would need a major shock-like event to disrupt that.

Process tracing is applied in each analytical chapter in the context of the theoretical framework (see Hermann 1990; van Meegdenburg 2023; Volgy and Gordell 2023; Welch 2005), with the tripartition of the analysis in the steps (1) exogenous political shock – (2) primary change agents such as external pressure by third parties as well as parliamentary actions and internal pressures by salient political groups – (3) governmental decision-making process.
Resulting from this analysis is the following central argument: From 2014 to 2022 the paradigms or core pillars of German foreign policy were reprioritised and (partly) replaced – (most) decisionmakers altered their belief-systems regarding Russia and were more receptive to the change in 2022 (see chapter 3).

This thesis plans to proceed as follows: After the introductory remarks (1) which include an explanation and categorisation of the core pillars of German foreign policy, the literature review (2) structures and reviews the theoretical and case-specific literature around the two years in question – setting the stage for the comparative analysis later. The analytical framework (3) is

built with the theoretical literature on foreign policy analysis (FPA) – mainly with Hermann (1990), van Meegdenburg (2023), Volgy and Gordell (2023) and Welch (2005). In a next step, the research design (4) is outlined with a focus on interview research as exclusive tool of data collection before heading to the analytical section: This part follows the analytical framework as visualised in figure 1. Chapter (5) then addresses the potential political exogenous shock in the context of both years, which provides the ground for chapter (6) which analyses the primary change agents. Based on this, chapter (7) studies the governmental decision-making process in the time frames in question. Asking about the extent of the change, the conclusion in chapter (8) then compares the analytical results of the case study.

2 Literature Review

The literature on German foreign policy change in reaction to Russian aggression has vastly evolved since 2014. First, this literature review will examine the theoretical literature relevant here. Then, following the comparative approach of this study, it will structure and organise the case-specific literature and identify a research gap.

2.1 Theoretical Literature

When it comes to theoretically grasping continuity and change in foreign policy (in 2014 and 2022), the following aspects should be considered in the beginning: In Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), studies have long focused on analysing continuity rather than change. The latter only became interesting with systemic changes in international politics like the German reunification 1990 (Harnisch 2001; McKenzie 1996). After the literature had refocussed on change in FPA, basically all definitions of foreign policy agreed on the fact "that governments are the sole practitioners of foreign policy and that this is a purposeful act that does not include unintended behaviour" (Gustavsson 1999, p. 75). Today, different levels of analysis are studied simultaneously; "individual factors, inputs in the decision-making process and institutional features of the decision-making process itself, as well cultural and societal, domestic and international factors" (Blavoukos and Bourantonis 2014, p. 485).

Against this background, the literature about political shocks in foreign policy provides the argumentative ground for this thesis. Whereas a considerable amount of it addresses exogenous political shocks in the context of international political economy, other authors have chosen the foreign policy angle relevant here (see Ganter 2023; Goertz and Diehl 1995; Gordell and Volgy 2022; Gordell 2023; Haesebrouck and Joly 2021; Rasler 2000; Strycharz 2022; Volgy and Gordell 2023). Relevant publications have increased in the past 25 to 30 years – in line with the end of the Cold War and German reunification. However, political shocks remain understudied as their own topic of study (Gordell and Volgy 2022; Gordell 2023). Nevertheless, they are an important phenomenon in international politics which is why the literature reviewed by Gordell (2023) identifies shock-like events mainly in the context of (1) interstate/ intrastate wars, civil wars, World War I and II, (2) depression, economic reforms and liberalisation, (3) climate-related events and (4) more recent events like Brexit, Trump – or an invasion. The broad list by Gordell (2023) already indicates one problem of this body of literature – the word "shock" is used in an inflationary and often poorly conceptualised way.

In contrast to this, the theoretical argumentation on when a potential shock triggers change is done more carefully: Goertz and Diehl (1995), Hermann (1990), Rasler (2000) and Volgy and Gordell (2023) argue that the exogenous political shock is not enough to initiate a process of change – at some point in time other factors intervene eventually. The existence of a political shock is necessary but not sufficient to initiate that process of change.

Hence, the decisive question is what makes a shock a major disturbance to the status quo. In other words: When is a shock big enough to disrupt the traditional continuity in foreign policy and enable a process of change? Volgy and Gordell (2023) argue that in the beginning one can only speak of a "potential" political shock. Only when the shock-like event leads to a major disruption of the country's status quo, it is fitting to speak of an "actual" political shock. Accordingly, those major disruptions are of dramatic nature no matter if their effects are negative or positive – and they can impact a state's economy or its government. And as soon as an actual shock has occurred, this opens a window of opportunity for policy change.

However, Goertz and Diehl (1995) investigating the impact of shocks on enduring inter-state rivalries adopt a different angle because of their time of publication shortly after the end of the Cold War: They do not even bother to address the question what makes a shock a major disturbance to the status quo, since their two conceptualised types – system shocks and state shocks – automatically do so. With the perspective of 2024, this analysis is limited because shocks of different strength have emerged since then. Similarly, Strycharz (2022) does not care much about the question raised above and treats a shock rather as a means to an end – meaning that it can help consolidating a new dominant narrative such as the one implying the events in February/ March 2014 in Ukraine posed a "threat to compatriots" in Russia.

On the other hand, Rasler (2000) provides a crucial argument for this thesis: She is aware that political shocks do not automatically alter expectancies and belief-systems of decisionmakers and not always lead to change. This is why, for her, the extent of the policy change – making it a major disruption of the status quo or not – depends on the decisionmakers' perceptions of the shock. By arguing so, she proceeds further than Volgy and Gordell (2023): Whereas the latter only state that the potential shock needs to significantly disrupt the country's status quo, they do not specify where the assessment of this major disruption comes from. Rasler (2000) is more concrete here. In conclusion, the literature agrees on the significance of exogenous political shocks but finds different answers to the question when such shocks are a major disruption.

2.2 2014 versus 2022

Case-specific literature about 2014:

Regarding the impact of the Russian aggression in 2014, the first body of literature focuses on the concept of leadership and how Germany has used that in and since 2014 (see Aggestam and Hyde-Price 2020; Fix 2018; Koeth 2016; Oppermann 2019; Siddi 2020; Wright 2018). Those authors argue that Germany took a leading role (in the EU) following the annexation and served as the linking point between Europe's East and West – while navigating expectations from home and abroad. However, they consider the policy change in this context superficial. Berlin – willing to bear the economic costs of it – imposed sanctions, but also relied on dialogue with the *Normandy Format* and the *Minsk Agreements* and still considered a German-Russian partnership desirable. At the time, the view was that – once that conflict was over – the federal government should reinstate the once good bilateral relations with Russia.

The literature concludes that the policy change did not reach the heart of German foreign policy (see Forsberg 2016; Daehnhardt 2018; Daehnhardt and Handl 2018; Siddi 2016; Siddi 2018). And basically every article highlights a dilemma for German decisionmakers: On the one hand, there were the traditionally good post-Cold War German-Russian relations (see Chivvis and Rid 2009; Forsberg 2016; Siddi 2016; Timmins 2011; Yoder 2015) which had formed core concepts like *Ostpolitik* and *Wandel durch Handel* (see Daehnhardt 2018; Fix 2018; Oppermann 2019) – and on the other hand, a critical attitude towards Russia which was still in its infancy (see Forsberg 2016; Siddi 2016; Yoder 2015).

As for the level of change, there is consensus that the annexation was an unprecedented shock for Germany. However, the literature on German strategic leadership in the EU towards Russia sees a greater level of change in Berlin than other pieces adopting a broader analysis of German foreign policy (see Aggestam and Hyde-Price 2020; Fix 2018; Koeth 2016; Oppermann 2019; Siddi 2020; Wright 2018). This is the case because the latter also assess other factors as national identity, history or economic ties that have led to the change following 2014 (see Forsberg 2016; Daehnhardt 2018; Daehnhardt and Handl 2018; Siddi 2016; Siddi 2018). In that regard, Daehnhardt (2018) argues for instance that the external environment underwent a bigger change than German foreign policy paradigms. Others also conclude that Berlin's actions had somehow mixed results which is why for instance Siddi (2018) uses German post-war national identity coupled with the country's historical guilt to analyse the cautious change. Thus, the literature does not deny a significant change happening due to the then unprecedented nature of Russian aggression – but argues differently on the level of change.

Also, it deserves attention what the literature has to say about the drivers of the foreign policy change in 2014: Next to the most obvious one – the exogenous political shock coming from Russia –, Forsberg (2016) for his part distinguishes between three broad categories or "drivers" of change which are power politics, domestic politics with three sub-branches – government and leadership, interest groups and public opinion – and the dynamics of interaction between heads of state and foreign policy elites. Against this background, he claims that the change in 2014 happened because Germany realised that its old policy approach had not worked towards Russia – thus implying a learning approach in the belief-systems of German decisionmakers. By picturing Berlin's approach more as a reaction than a proactive action, Forsberg (2016) disagrees with Daehnhardt (2018) who considers German strategic leadership in the Euro-Atlantic area crucial for having driven the change in 2014. The argumentative ground for Daehnhardt (2018) is provided by Daehnhardt and Handl (2018) who do not go into that much detail as Forsberg (2016) when trying to find those drivers of change. Rather, they claim that the Ukraine crisis is the core event impacting German power and thus driving change. Another angle is presented by Siddi (2016) and Siddi (2018) who focus on the structural factors of history and national identity: Whereas those factors normally do not automatically initiate change, they were used by German decisionmakers in 2014 to support the change process. For instance, in May 2015, Merkel was the only Western European leader who travelled to Moscow to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, engage in talks with Putin there – and demonstrate how she believed in the importance of historical reconciliation with Russia. Steinmeier, who attended a commemoration event in Volgograd with his Russian counterpart Lavrov, went even further by implicitly calling the event an occasion to peacefully solve any disagreements and conflicts between Germany and Rusia (Siddi 2016).

With the knowledge of today, it is noticeable how the tone in that first body of literature is rather positive – highlighting German power and leadership as well as analysing the German dilemma to own its history, maintain good relations with Russia and simultaneously take a stand for international law and European values. For instance, one proud conclusion is that "Berlin is now centre stage in leading European foreign and security policy" (Wright 2018, p. 492). This was perhaps a hasty conclusion for 2014, which is why one should consider the second body of literature.

Case-specific literature about 2022:

Regarding 2022, the second body of literature is completely directed towards one word – *Zeitenwende* (see Blumenau 2022; Bunde 2022; Fröhlich 2023; Handl, Nigrin and Mejstřík 2023; Kamp 2023). Blumenau (2022), Bunde (2022) and Fröhlich (2023) address the core theme of continuity and change in foreign policy by mirroring the German foreign policy principles, as introduced in chapter 1 (= continuity), against the key-term *Zeitenwende* (= change). Another new feature in this body of literature is that two core themes are heavily referred to which were less present before: Whereas the first body of literature focused more on analysing the specifics of the German-/EU-Russian relationship, this relationship is (almost) non-existent after 24 February 2022. This might be why the discourse in this second body revolves more around the themes of (1) security (see Bunde 2022; Dorn, Potrafke and Schlepper 2022; Handl, Nigrin and Mejstřík 2023; Kamp 2023; Mölling, Schütz, and Hellmonds 2023) and (2) national identity, belief-systems, history as well as norms and values (see Bosse 2022; Fröhlich 2023; Schoeller 2023; Tkocz and Stritzel 2023). Those two themes are crucial for the remainder of the thesis – since they constitute two pairs of glasses through which one can look at the two similar yet distinct cases here.

However, there seems to be some disagreement regarding the assessment of *Zeitenwende* – which is mainly due to the simple factor of time: Whereas papers still published in 2022 tend to analyse it less critically and focus on the analytical description of it – because Scholz and others had not yet attracted that much criticism at the time of writing – (Bosse 2022; Blumenau 2022; Bunde 2022), most of the papers published after 2022 tend to picture the events more ambivalently (Dorn, Potrafke and Schlepper 2022; Fröhlich 2023; Mölling, Schütz and Hellmonds 2023; Kamp 2023). For instance, Blumenau (2022) argues how in the future it will be difficult to backpedal on the ambitions announced in the initial weeks after the invasion – since that proclaimed policy change was received rather positively in the *Bundestag* as well as in the German public. On the other hand, Mölling, Schütz and Hellmonds (2023) conclude that the *Zeitenwende* has failed so far because the *Bundeswehr* was still structurally underfunded – despite Scholz's introduction of the 100-billion-special-fund for the *Bundeswehr* (German army) and his announcement of finally meeting the 2% target, a commitment made by NATO member states in September 2014 to spend at least 2% of their GDP on defence. Apparently, the special fund was framed bigger than it actually was: Compared to Germany's aspirations and obligations within NATO, the financial needs across the domains of armaments, personnel, and daily operations were already greater at that time, even without considering the 2% target.

There was the risk of a "hollowed-out army" (Mölling, Schütz and Hellmonds 2023, p. 6), because the *Bundeswehr* looked at first sight operational on paper – but has deficits in personnel, equipment or operational readiness. Whereas basically all authors acknowledge the historical dimension of the *Zeitenwende* and its huge implications on the political, military and economic sphere, there is disagreement in the literature regarding the long-term implementation of it after the first initial months in the *Zeitenwende* mode.

For the drivers of the *Zeitenwende* the literature chooses a norms- and identity-based approach: Be it explicitly or inexplicitly, it is argued how, previous to 2022, German foreign policy was influenced by moral duties based on rights-based norms – but then shifted to values-based norms in the context of German solidarity, cultural as well as national identity and ethical responsibilities towards the peoples in Eastern Europe (see Blumenau 2022; Bosse 2022; Bunde 2022; Fröhlich 2023; Tkocz and Stritzel 2023). The (moral) responsibility by the Germans/ Europeans to protect Ukrainian civilians from atrocity crimes is deemed a crucial driver of the *Zeitenwende* in 2022. Essentially, the type of norms that has influenced the policymaking is seen as changing since Russian foreign policy was becoming more aggressive.

Research gap:

In conclusion, those two bodies of literature as introduced above are not sufficient in exploring the issue of German foreign policy change as reaction to Russian acts of aggression. The research gap lies in the comparative approach: Both situations were analysed with the knowledge of the respective time. Research about 2014 was conducted when the biggest shock so far had been the 2008 Russian-Georgian war. And research about 2022 was conducted while the situation continued to unfold which is why many articles only focus on certain sub-aspects – such as for instance a detailed analysis of the *Zeitenwende* speech (see Blumenau 2022) or a study of Germany's first-ever national security strategy (see Kamp 2023). By collecting own exclusive data and building my own analytical framework, I open new lines of inquiry about the puzzle why German foreign policy change only happened in 2022 and not already in 2014.

3 Theory: Foreign Policy Analysis

Having analysed the state of the art of the literature, this chapter develops an analytical framework based on different pieces of FPA literature. Taking theoretical inspirations from previous literature is fitting to further narrow down the broad field of FPA for the purpose of this thesis: Thus, Volgy and Gordell (2023) together with Hermann (1990), van Meegdenburg (2023) and Welch (2005) serve as the theoretical base on which the framework is built on. It will address large changes with a more immediate impact – contrary to slower long-term change processes (Goertz and Diehl 1995).

Following van Meegdenburg (2023), the visualisation by figure 1 depicts the process in its entirety to facilitate an understanding of the two cases. The framework was inspired by the schematic process of a hypothetical concatenation of mechanisms by van Meegdenburg (2023):

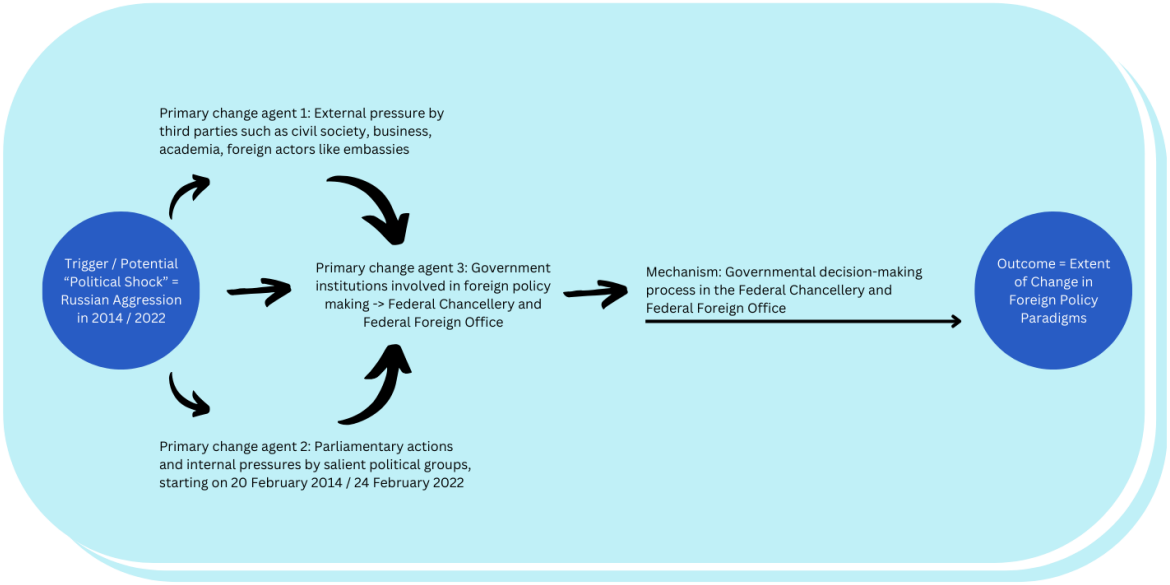

Figure 1: Analytical framework.

First, a potential political shock constitutes the starting point of the framework since it acts as a trigger for the change process. In line with the review of the literature on exogenous political shocks (see chapter 2.1), this thesis adopts the following conceptualisation of political shocks (see Gordell and Volgy 2022; Gordell 2023): Being considered an "event with a set of attributes" (Gordell and Volgy 2022, p. 111), political shocks are (1) "unanticipated/ unexpected", (2) occur "suddenly", (3) are perceived as "unique" by the involved actors and (4) create "a dramatic and major disruption" (Gordell 2023, p. 17). Moreover, political shocks can "occur at any level of analysis" and are "reasonably common occurrences" across the actors in international politics (Volgy and Gordell 2023, p. 65). In addition to this, it should be

considered that endogenously and exogenously created shocks can be "equally salient" for the system on which they act (Volgy and Gordell 2023, p. 65), – implying that both can overcome path-dependencies in domestic and foreign policy. Against the background of considering political shocks a necessary but not sufficient condition for policy change (see chapter 2.1), Volgy and Gordell (2023) include additional factors in their framework to analyse the effects of political shocks in foreign policy: Those are three external change factors – or "primary change agents" in the words of Hermann (1990) – that contribute to shaping the policymakers' reassessment of political conditions and actual policies which then leads to major policy change. They are "external third-party pressure", "internal pressures by salient political groups" and "increased activity by policy entrepreneurs" (Volgy and Gordell 2023, p. 69).

Second, figure 1 includes two, somehow optional, primary change agents: namely, (1) external pressure by third parties such as business, academia, foreign actors like embassies and (2) parliamentary actions and internal pressures by salient political groups (see Hermann 1990; van Meegdenburg 2023; Volgy and Gordell 2023; Welch 2005): Bearing in mind that there need to be other factors besides an exogenous political shock to trigger a change process (see chapter 2.1), there is however some theoretical disagreement regarding the question when the intervention of those other factors happens. Whereas Volgy and Gordell (2023) put the shock in their timeline before the intervention of other external factors like "external third-party pressure" or "internal pressures by salient political groups" (p. 69), Hermann (1990) lists the shock together with other change-inducing factors: "Leader driven" change refers to the key decision-maker, often the head of government, who shapes the change process (Hermann 1990, p. 11). "Bureaucratic advocacy" implies that a specific group inside of the government becomes an advocate for change or redirection (Hermann 1990, p. 11). "Domestic restructuring" implies that a relevant part of society whose support the government needs becomes a change agent (Hermann 1990, p. 12). The "external shock" results from dramatic and often historical change in international politics (Hermann 1990, p. 12). This is why, to enable change in foreign policy, there need to be those external factors acting on the decision-making process.

Third, there is a third primary change agent since the agency of relevant government institutions also needs to be acknowledged. Together with the first two change agents, the third one paths the way for the actual change process itself – the mechanism. Van Meegdenburg (2023) claims that mechanisms are context-dependent which is why one can barely anticipate concrete, case-specific aspects of the change process' nature or its outcome. Nevertheless, some general

observations about continuity and change in foreign policy can be made (see Welch 2005): Inertia is "the normal condition and default expectation in international politics" (Welch 2005, p. 31). After all, governments are more stable than the international environment since inertia in form of rules of procedure, internal beliefs or behavioural norms contributes to stability. This is why MFAs tend to be slow in anticipating change and proactively reacting to it.
Coming from that, Welch (2005) developed three hypothesised assumptions two of which are relevant here: With roots in psychology, the first claim is that "foreign policy change will be most likely when policy fails or either repeatedly or catastrophically, or when leaders become convinced that it will imminently do so" (Welch 2005, p. 46). For this to happen, decisionmakers need to realise that their policy was (partly) wrong or ineffective and personally reflect upon this which is difficult for most people. The only other possibility is when decisionmakers can attribute the errors to other people. This is why major change is rare.
The second relevant assumption stipulates that "leaders are more likely to pay the inherent costs of (and embrace the inherent risks in) foreign policy change to avoid losses than to realize gains of equivalent magnitude. Only prospects of disproportionate gain are likely to motivate foreign policy change" (Welch 2005, p. 46). Policy change bears risks since its result might imply policy gains – but might also cause events with costly consequences. These two hypothesised assumptions by Welch (2005) provide useful insights into the window of opportunity for policy change described by Volgy and Gordell (2023).

And finally, *fourth*, for analysing the extent of change in foreign policy paradigms that has taken place – the outcome –, this thesis follows the view of Hermann (1990) who introduces several types of change. It is considered the most influential categorisation of foreign policy change so far (Hasebrouck and Jouly 2021): There, Hermann (1990) distinguishes with increasing intensity between the still small adjustment changes (which occur on the level of effort and scope of recipients), program changes (which happen in the methods or means which are used to address the issue), problem/ goal changes (which have the original policy issue replaced) and the arguably biggest international orientation changes (which imply as the biggest type of change the redirection of the actor's entire policy).

A constructivist lens for the analytical framework:
Having theoretically examined the different stages of figure 1, another aspect needs to be specified. To put it graphically: Whereas those stages of the change process are the scaffolding of the thesis, the colour in which this scaffolding is painted is the one of constructivism.

This follows the view of a normative German foreign policy, the importance of historical path-dependencies and the emphasis on individuals' belief-systems in change processes (see Crawford and Olsen 2017; Gustavsson 1999; Leithner and Libby 2017). That is important because the extent to which a policy is seen as failing depends on decisionmakers' own expectations, which are shaped by historical memory, national and personal identity as well as their perceptions (see Welch 2005). The complex relationship between German history and its foreign policy is crucial to understand specific foreign policy decisions. German foreign policy follows a historical path – but while it continues to be shaped by the past, the way of including historical memory in foreign policy has been changing over the years: from coming to peace with the consequences of World War II to adapting to the post-1990 reality (Leithner 2009). Here, Welch (2005) again comes into play – stipulating that only the likelihood of experiencing greater benefits that are out of proportion could drive shifts in foreign policy: German leaders will tend to only advocate for change when the prospects of success are high – because German (foreign) policy tends to be risk-averse and hesitant ever since World War II. This behaviour is less due to personal tactics than to the German institutionalised approach to policy making.

Next to history, national identities and interests also matter: The development of foreign policy is due to (1) "self-interest (…) stem[ming] from the essential nature of states", (2) "states depend[ing] on their societies for political survival" and (3) there being "a sense of societal collective identity based on cultural, linguistic or ethnic ties" (Wendt 1994, p. 387). National identity shapes states' interests based on their perceptions of other states – history is crucial in influencing the interaction of Self vs Other (Wendt 1999). Thus, identity formation (Self vs Other) matters for foreign policy formulation (Neumann 1996 and 1999). Siddi (2018) took this further by analysing the Russian Other in German identity and the slow change processes from 2014 to 2022. He argues that it takes an exogenous shock to trigger change, because deeply rooted belief-systems must be altered (see Volgy and Gordell 2023).

In this context, the concept of (historical) path-dependencies also deserves attention according to which decisionmakers act within institutional contexts and are shaped by previous decisions. Institutional structures influence outcomes (Leithner and Libby 2017). This is linked to the initial expectation of policy inertia (Welch 2005): When a state tries reformulating its foreign policy, it needs to overcome those path-dependencies. However, this concept is less clearly defined in FPA with the reasons being that path dependence "does not fit the behavioralist focus on direct observation of political behaviour" (Leithner and Libby 2017, p. 11).

Variables:

Now, the relevant variables are derived and specified – which is done rather briefly since this follows the theoretical introduction of the framework where those were already implicitly introduced in detail. The exogenous political shock is believed to have been the main trigger or independent variable, "X", in 2014 and 2022 (see Gordell 2023; Volgy and Gordell 2023). Then, in each of the two years those two shock-like events initiated a process of change, "M" – the governmental decision-making process in the Federal Chancellery and the Federal Foreign Office (see Welch 2005). In the end, this process led to somewhat changed German foreign policy paradigms, "Y" (see Blumenau 2022; Daehnhardt 2018; Fröhlich 2023; Hermann 1990). This can be visualised as follows:

Independent Variable X	**Mechanism M**	**Dependent Variable Y**
Political Exogenous Shock		(New) Foreign Policy Paradigms

Table 1: Variables.

Coming from that, the central argument of this thesis is: From 2014 to 2022 the core pillars of German foreign policy were reprioritised and (partly) replaced – (most) decisionmakers adapted their belief-systems regarding Russia and were more receptive to the change in 2022. As for 2014, this process was driven by the environment around Chancellor Angela Merkel and Foreign Minister Steinmeier. They believed in dialogue, de-escalation and economic cooperation, with sanctions being the last resort, – based on personal ties with Russia and the foreign policy pillars of *Ostpolitik*, *Wandel durch Handel*, historical responsibility towards Russia and non-military foreign policy. As for 2022, the process was again driven by key government members – this time Scholz, Habeck and Baerbock. Additionally, the *Bundestag* (German Parliament) exerted greater pressure on the government since the invasion was perceived as an attack on the West unlike the annexation in 2014. This changed policy approach was rooted in a change of personal belief-systems after the exogenous political shock of the invasion together with a reprioritisation of the narrative lines "Never again war" (Germany's scepticism towards military means in foreign policy) to "Never again tyranny" (Germany's responsibility to counter acts of tyranny in Europe) (see Tkocz and Stritzel 2023).

4 Research Design

As already indicated multiple times, this thesis performs a comparative case study. The two cases are (1) German foreign policy (change) towards Russian aggression in 2014 and (2) German foreign policy (change) towards Russian aggression in 2022. While being aware of possible methodological dangers of this procedure, the case selection has been performed purposefully meaning that two cases were selected precisely not randomly – but rather based on a logic of inquiry that was already clearly stated and justified when outlining the academic and social relevance of the research. This thesis adopts a most similar case design (see Seawright and Gerring 2008): In its ideal form, the two cases are similar on all the measured independent variables except the one of interest. Here, the two foreign policy change processes in (1) 2014 and (2) 2022 are treated as two distinct, yet very similar, cases. In both cases, the same country (Russia) commits acts of aggression against another same country (Ukraine) – while the somehow different reaction by a third same country (Germany) is being studied. In addition, however, this thesis also acknowledges the realisation that historical cases are never the same. After all, the case of 2022 had a deeper geopolitical shift than the case of 2014 although this is counterbalanced somewhat by the fact that 2022 was preceded by 2014.

Coming from that, the logic of a structured focus comparison is adopted. Developed "to study historical experience in ways that would yield useful generic knowledge of important foreign policy problems" (George and Bennet 2005, p. 97) which is similar to what this thesis does, this type of cross-case comparison evaluates hypothesised causal relationships. Two aspects are important: First, general questions reflecting the research objective should be included and asked in the context of each of the two cases for the sake of standardising data collection – and thereby enabling a systematic comparison. And second, only certain aspects of the cases are examined to maintain structure and focus for the comparison (George and Bennet 2005).

Those aspects are applied in the context of data collection. First, since semi-structured interview research had been a big part of the data collection, standardised questions were asked to enable a systematic cross-case comparison – see the interview questionnaire in the appendix. Also, in the analytical framework built here, aspects or questions were developed in a way that they can be asked for both cases. And second, a focus was also maintained by putting the change of the foreign policy paradigms in the centre of the thesis. After all, foreign policy is such a broad area that some specification was necessary (see George and Bennet 2005).

Since research on foreign policy as a public policy is naturally actor-centred, interview research is a main way to study foreign policy (Deschaux-Dutard 2023). I was able to conduct 14 semi-structured interviews – ten of which on the ground in Berlin. Therefore, the main target group were (1) MPs specialised in foreign and security policy from each democratic parliamentary group, combined with additional insights from (2) senior diplomats from the *Auswärtiges Amt*, the Federal Foreign Office (FFO), and (3) journalists focusing on foreign and security policy – with a certain concentration on interviewees from the *Bundestag* (see table 3). When it comes to understanding foreign policy change centred around discourse on national identity and narratives on Russia, this takes primarily place in the public sphere where political parties compete for dominance (Siddi 2018). Hence, it was deemed crucial to have at least two interviewees from every centrist parliamentary group in the *Bundestag* – the SPD (Social democrats), the Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen (Greens), the FDP (Liberals) and the CDU/CSU (Conservatives). All interviewees agreed to be listed below and have their quotes directly attributed to them after a process of authorisation also common in the German press landscape:

1	Bacherle, Tobias	Member of the parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee @Greens
2	Bütikofer, Reinhard	Member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (European Parliament) @Greens / 2002-2008 co-chair @Greens and 2012-2019 co-chair @European Green Party
3	Erndl, Thomas	Deputy Head of the parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee @Conservatives
4	Froehly, Jean	Head of the Ukraine Recovery Conference Taskforce / former Special Envoy for Ukraine @FFO
5	Hahn, Florian	Defence Policy Spokesperson @Conservatives
6	Hellmich, Wolfgang	Security Policy Spokesperson @Social democrats
7	Krämer, Philip	Member of the parliamentary Defence Committee @Greens
8	Lechte, Ulrich	Foreign Policy Spokesperson @Liberals
9	Lüttenberg, Matthias	Director Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia @FFO
10	Müller, Alexander	Defence Policy Spokesperson @Liberals
11	Otte, Henning	Deputy Head of the parliamentary Defence Committee @Conservatives
12	Schraps, Johannes	Head of the German Delegation to the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference Member of the parliamentary Committee on EU Affairs @Social democrats
13	Schult, Christoph	Der Spiegel / 2005-2010 correspondent in Jerusalem, 2010-2015 correspondent in Brussels, since 2015 in the capital office in Berlin covering foreign policy
14	Wiegold, Thomas	Table Media & Podcast "Sicherheitshalber" & own blog / Freelance journalist specialising in security policy

Table 3: List of Interviewees.

As for secondary sources, this thesis relies on books, journal articles, research reports and transcripts from plenary sessions in the *Bundestag*. Also, it refers to articles published in *Der Spiegel*, *Die Zeit*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Die Welt,* ARD and ZDF which rank among the top ten most cited national media brands in Germany in 2023 (Statista 2024). The intention is to collect data that those media brands have researched exclusively due to their irreplaceable access to decisionmakers in Berlin. Also, pieces by those media often shape the public discourse – a useful addition to the peer-reviewed literature.

Regarding the method of analysis, this thesis uses process tracing – a form of within-case analysis – in the context of FPA (see figure 1): After all, this thesis aims to better understand *how* exogenous political shocks have impacted foreign policy formulation. As a tool of causal inference, process tracing focuses on how situations develop over time and makes causal-process observations by analysing paths of change and causation between a trigger and an outcome (Collier 2011). The reason for conducting a process-tracing study is that the research interest lies in understanding the mechanisms that have shaped different policy outcomes in 2014 vs in 2022 (see figure 1). Importantly, a mechanism is to be distinguished from the process – the latter normally includes several mechanisms. A mechanism is "an analytical construct that defines, in abstract terms, how a given set-up or entity transfers motion in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations" (van Meegdenburg 2023, p. 408).

Process tracing is applied in each analytical chapter in the context of the analytical framework that has been built above – and that has created a theorised mechanistic explanation (see figure 1). A great emphasis is put on the temporal or chronological sequence of events to fully trace the change process. As demonstrated above, the theoretical arguments by Welch (2005) together with Hermann (1990), van Meegdenburg (2023) and Volgy and Gordell (2023) provide the theoretical base for the framework.

5 Exogenous Political Shock

Based on the framework developed above, it first appears wise to examine the factor that triggered the policy change process – that is two acts of Russian aggression in 2014 and 2022. This chapter examines to what extent those two events can be classified as the exogenous political shock they presumably are.

5.1 2014

In line with the criteria by Volgy and Gordell (2023) – treated as spectrums of intensity –, the question is to what extent the events of 2014 are an exogenous political shock. The intention is not to provide a binary answer but analyse the nuances of the circumstances of the time.

First, as for the question of the shock being unanticipated or unexpected, the literature considers the irregularities in the 2011-2012 parliamentary and presidential elections in Russia and the following repressions as a first sign for Germany to cautiously adapt its foreign policy towards Russia. After all, these developments significantly undermined the German cooperation approach towards Russia (see Forsberg 2016; Siddi 2016). Then, in November 2013, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych's sudden decision to reject the EU Association Agreement and align closer with Russia triggered a wave of demonstrations and civil unrest in Ukraine (Forsberg 2016). However, the tipping point was reached in February 2014 when the regime violently cracked down on the protestors in Kyiv. This ended up leading to the collapse and change of the regime – which eventually triggered the Russian aggression. Hence, the annexation of Crimea in February/ March 2014 was the escalation of a crisis that had been going on for some years and did therefore not come as a total surprise. This is backed by senior Eastern Europe experts from the FFO who explained how 2014 was a very strong disillusionment for them or even a confirmation of their worst fears – meaning that there were signs and they were only partially surprised by the events (interviews 4 and 9).
However, there were three other shock-like events besides the annexation: Russia's military intervention in the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine by pro-Russian separatists starting on **12 April 2014**, the kidnapping of 13 OSCE observers, four of which were German, on **25 April 2014**, and the shooting down of flight MH17 on **17 July 2014** by Russian-controlled forces over eastern Ukraine. These three events came unexpected and thus united the positions of EU member states regarding imposing sanctions – and led to Germany becoming the leader in formulating sanctions against Russia (Fix 2018). This claim is supported by Matthias

Lüttenberg, Director of the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia department at the FFO: "In response to MH17, we imposed still in July 2014 the first economic sanctions against Russia. That was completely new territory at the time, and we said to ourselves: 'Wow, what we have achieved as the EU'" (interview 9, transl.).

One can conclude that the main event of the Ukraine crisis – the annexation –, did not come totally unexpected to German decisionmakers since a deterioration could be observed at least since 2011/ 2012. But as soon as EU citizens were involved – see the kidnapping and the downing of MH17 – this was more of an "external shock" for German and Western decisionmakers (Fix 2018, p. 505). In conclusion, the analysis produced mixed results which is why the first criterion by Volgy and Gordell (2023) does not entirely apply. After all, decisionmakers were aware that the crisis was in the making at least since 2011/ 2012.

Second, regarding the question of Volgy and Gordell (2023) if the potential shock occurred suddenly, this is linked to what was argued above: Contrary to 24 February 2022, when Russian tanks rolled over the border and invaded Ukraine, the annexation in 2014 was happening over several weeks as the timeline shows. Following the Maidan Revolution from December 2013 to February 2014, on **4 February 2014**, the Presidium of the *Verkhovna Rada* of Crimea (the acting Ukrainian legislative body for Crimea before the annexation) decided parliamentary autonomy, the issue of amending the Crimean constitution and Russia's demand for guarantees for the rights of the inhabitants of Crimea. On **20 February 2014**, Russia launched its unannounced "special military operation" thereby occupying the Crimea peninsula and the city of Sevastopol. On **16 March 2014**, an illegitimate "referendum" was held which officialised the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia on 18 March 2014 when the *State Duma* gave its approval. On **21 March 2014**, Russian President Vladimir Putin gave Crimea the status of a "federal district". And on **12 April 2014**, Russia started its military intervention in the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine through pro-Russian separatists (Donik and Lindner 2024). This shows how there was no singular date standing out like 24 February 2022 eight years later, despite singular shock-like events also having a considerable impact as for instance the Russian military intervention in the Donbas region. In 2014 a culmination of events led to change. However, the limiting factor is that, with the post-2022 knowledge, one tends to interpret everything that came before as leading up to that. This analysis tries to balance this and carefully conclude that also the second criterion by Volgy and Gordell (2023) – the "sudden" character of an exogenous political shock – does not completely apply. Rather, one finds itself in an in-between-situation.

Third, asking if the events in 2014 were perceived as unique by the involved German actors, experts argue how it was "the most severe confrontation in relations between Russia and the West since the Cold War" (Forsberg 2016, p. 28). Some few ones like German President Joachim Gauck went even further than just perceiving 2014 as unique: Already on **31 January 2014**, at the Munich Security Conference, Gauck had advocated for a more active German foreign policy – in the context of crises in the Middle East and Ukraine "Germany can[not] simply carry on as before in the face of these developments", "Germany should make a more substantial contribution [with regard to conflict prevention], and it should make it earlier and more decisively (…) to be a good partner" (Gauck 2014). Although the President has only a representative role, this speech was understood as a wake-up call for the Merkel administration (Koeth 2016). At the time, relevant actors were indeed convinced that something unique was occurring. After all, Russia had not annexed foreign territory from its independence in 1991 until 2014. This confirms the third criterion by Volgy and Gordell (2023).

And finally, *fourth*, the case of 2014 needs to have created a dramatic and major disruption in international politics to be classified as an exogenous political shock according to Volgy and Gordell (2023): As the interviews with MPs from the centrist parties in the *Bundestag* indicate, there is a remarkable cross-party consensus concerning the assessment of 2014. The bottom line is that, for them, 2014 did not have the characteristics of an open war:

> *"2014 was not interpreted in the dimension of a war. The annexation, which happened quickly, did not meet any significant resistance either. The Ukrainians did not have the military capabilities, and the Russians knew that. Our perspective was to conclude agreements that would prevent war, but also give those regions that were fought over a perspective in Ukraine."*
> *– Wolfgang Hellmich, SPD (interview 6, transl.)*

> *"In 2014 the situation was different, because there was no war in Ukraine. Yes, it is internationally recognised that Crimea was annexed in violation of international law and still belongs to Ukraine. But back then the decisionmakers came together in the Minsk format, the setting was the one of a 'frozen conflict'."*
> *– Florian Hahn, CDU/CSU (interview 5, transl.)*

> *"In 2014, it was not yet a real war in Ukraine. Little green men suddenly appeared. Everyone knew they were Russian soldiers and probably financed by Russia. But they had no national insignia. Under international law, Russia was not waging a war. The annexation happened with formal, yet pretty, dirty actions like a referendum. But Russia did not drive into Crimea with tanks and conquer it with the open use of military force."*
> *– Alexander Müller, FDP (interview 10, transl.)*

> *"The perception of the conflict has changed massively. Russia openly invading Ukraine ultimately gave it a different logic. That was the game changer compared to 2014. In 2022 it was no longer about potentially sending weapons into an unclear crisis zone*

> *with seemingly civil war-like conditions, but we suddenly found ourselves in a classic interstate conflict. This is why we Greens reacted differently and agreed to arms deliveries."*
> *– Tobias Bacherle, Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen (interview 1, transl.)*

For them, the illegitimate annexation was more low-key than the 2022 invasion. "Little green men" appeared, a fake referendum was held to maintain the appearance of legitimacy, the annexation did not meet significant resistance either due to a lack of military means – and soon after February/ March 2014 the international community made use of dialogue diplomacy with the goal of creating a "frozen conflict". Hence, the interpretation of 2014 was different than the one of 2022. In addition to above, Johannes Schraps (SPD) – Head of the German Delegation to the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference and, amongst other things, Member of the parliamentary Committee on EU Affairs – also highlighted how other (inter-)national crises dominated the political discourse in Berlin thus making the 2014 events in Ukraine one conflict of many: "In 2014, despite the events in eastern Ukraine and Crimea, there was a distraction by other shock-like events affecting us: Syria, Iraq, the looming 'refugee crisis', sexual abuse scandals inter alia in the church, floodings in Germany" (interview 12, transl.).
Having assessed this with the perspective of 2024 – which is automatically comparative towards 2014 and 2022 –, it is questionable whether 2014 constitutes a dramatic and major disruption to international politics: After all, not all shocks are created equal. They differ in intensity along the dimensions that Volgy and Gordell (2023) outline.

Thus, it is concluded that a simple binary answer to the question posed in this chapter cannot be provided. Whereas back then the case of 2014 had surely the characteristics of a somewhat shock, this thesis – with the knowledge of 2024 – argues that it was a shock of a lower dimension with only some criteria by Volgy and Gordell (2023) applying. The picture looks differently for the case of 2022, an arguably more intense shock. This nuanced, conceptual differentiation is important for the analysis of the two cases here.

5.2 2022

Regarding the case of 2022, the task is again to assess to what extent it has the characteristics of an exogenous political shock (see Volgy and Gordell 2023). *First*, it needs to be examined to what extent the invasion was unanticipated or unexpected by Berlin – which *Süddeutsche Zeitung* remarkably reconstructed for the weeks before 24 February 2022: "Dozens of conversations with members of the government and high-ranking officials have produced a picture: It shows a country that for too long has refused to recognise how terribly it has miscalculated" (Bauchmüller et al. 2023, transl.). On **23 February 2022**, from 12 to 1pm, the coalition committee met for its weekly conference and the leaders of the SPD, FDP and Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen agreed on increasing the commuter allowance and decided on further Covid-19 measures. The imminent threat of war was not discussed. In the evening of 23 February 2022, at 6pm, Vice Chancellor Habeck met with US Trade Representative Katherine Tai – officially, the occasion for the meeting was transatlantic trade relations. Unofficially, someone from the US Delegation gave Habeck an envelope with information by the intelligence services about the fact that a war was imminent in Ukraine. It is critically asked why the US still needed to inform Germany on the eve of the beginning of the war and convince the Scholz administration of what was about to happen, when Germany has its own federal intelligence service. The *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (*BND*) has long praised itself for its alleged Russia expertise. It even gets more bizarre when considering that Bruno Kahl, head of the *BND*, had travelled to Kyiv on 23 February 2022 for long-planned talks with the Ukrainian intelligence agency – and did not join the evacuation of the German Ambassador to Ukraine, Anka Feldhusen, in the evening of that day. Kahl still believed a meeting with the Ukrainian head of intelligence would happen on **24 February 2022**. In Berlin, key government officials had a different level of information or knew nothing at all on the brink of war: "What is missing is a procedure that does justice to the seriousness of the situation. The fact is: the Chancellor will not convene a crisis meeting this evening" (Bauchmüller et al. 2023, transl.). Thus, the first criterion by Volgy and Gordell (2023) applies to the case of 2022: German decisionmakers did not anticipate at all 24 February 2022.

Second and linked to above, the criterion – or spectrum of intensity – considering the necessity of a potential shock occurring "suddenly" is examined (see Volgy and Gordell 2023): Whereas key government officials had been involved in dialogue attempts or had been at least closer to the information from intelligence services before 24 February 2022 (see Bauchmüller et al.

2023), this did not apply to MPs and the German people they represent. Several MPs described how 24 and 27 February with the *Zeitenwende* speech had come as a shock since they had not been in the picture at all. The Chancellor had informed only his inner circle and even most MPs from his own party were left in the dark. This is why MP Johannes Schraps (SPD) explained:

> *"When I was invited to the special session of the Bundestag, I thought: 'Sure, something will happen.' It was historic that this took place on a Sunday. But when Scholz announced this 100-billion-euro fund, my jaw dropped. I did not expect such a massive change to be imminent. I had assumed clear words, but not that this would be backed up with a monetary value of 100 billion. It immediately became obvious that the 'Zeitenwende' was backed by an unexpected amount of money."*
> *– Johannes Schraps, SPD (interview 12, transl.)*

This state of not-knowing went even beyond singular MPs, as the last meeting of the parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee before the invasion shows. One of the people present there was Ulrich Lechte, FDP foreign policy spokesperson, who remembered:

> *"In the late afternoon of 23 February, the Foreign Affairs Committee came together for a special meeting. I was there and we were aware that the so-called peacekeepers in the Donbas would join the Russian forces already stationed there. But on 23 February even the experts were not aware that a full-scale invasion would happen. 24 February, a turning point for Europe, was as much of a shock as 9/11 was for the US."*
> *– Ulrich Lechte, FDP (interview 8, transl.)*

Hence, 24 February 2022 and the imminent policy reaction afterwards came as a sudden shock to the *Bundestag* and respectively to the population – which leads to another criterion by Volgy and Gordell (2023) applying here.

Third, the fact is considered to what extent the involved actors perceived the case of 2022 as unique: In February 2022, there was remarkable cross-party consensus between the centrist parties in the *Bundestag* – SPD, FDP, Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen and CDU/CSU –, who got their information from the Federal Chancellery and the relevant ministries. Against the background of the interview research, it is even argued that 24 February 2022 was perceived as unique by all involved actors. Thomas Erndl, Deputy Head of the parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee (CDU/CSU), stated for example:

> *"I was surprised because the Chancellor addressed what was necessary, found the right words for the situation and announced the right next steps. I was surprised because – if I am being honest – I would not have expected him to be so clear at the time. And I was glad that the government and parliament signalled that we would not be intimidated, but that we would take note of the reality and draw the right conclusions from it. That was very moving."*
> *– Thomas Erndl, CDU/CSU (interview 3, transl.)*

And finally, *fourth*, it needs to be examined to what extent the case of 2022 constitutes a dramatic and major disruption to international politics (see Volgy and Gordell 2022). In the context of above, this criterion can be quite obviously confirmed. Also, the interview research visualises how the MPs automatically put the events of 2022 in a comparison with the ones in 2014 – thereby implying that 2022 was the more dramatic disruption to international politics. Alexander Müller, FDP defence policy spokesperson, argued: "The case of 2022 is qualitatively different. The fact that Russia openly went into a war of aggression in 2022 came as a shock. This ignition, this hybrid warfare from 2014 had been forgiven by many. But the 2022 attack was a shock" (interview 10, transl.). In addition: The photographic evidence of Russian war crimes in Bucha and other Ukrainian towns around Kyiv – that became public in the beginning of April 2022 after the Russians had withdrawn from that region –, was another dramatic trigger to the change process in Germany and elsewhere (Bosse 2022). This was confirmed by Jean Froehly (Head of the Ukraine Recovery Conference Taskforce and former Special Envoy for Ukraine at the FFO) who stated: "Bucha has shown that Russia is engaged in a war of annihilation, which is carried out while accepting the most serious human rights violations. For us, these images also emphasised the brutality of the actions" (interview 4, transl.). Hence, this added another layer to the dramatic and major disruption to international politics present here (see Volgy and Gordell 2023).

In conclusion, the case of 2022 clearly constitutes an exogenous political shock as conceptualised by Volgy and Gordell (2023). Also, Ganter (2023) claims that it was precisely such a shock that led to those massive changes in Berlin – instead of a slowly emerging rethinking of German foreign policy priorities. The analysis now proceeds to the examination of the primary change agents that acted on the governmental decision-making process.

6 Primary Change Agents

As visualised in figure 1, three primary change agents influence the governmental decision-making process (see Hermann 1990) – "external pressure by third parties", "parliamentary actions and internal pressures by salient political groups" and "government institutions involved in foreign policy making". Hence, this chapter focuses on the first two, whereas the third one has been only included in the framework to acknowledge the agency of the government. The latter will be addressed only in chapter 7. However, in the beginning of this analysis a somehow limiting aspect must be acknowledged: Whereas the business sector, thinktanks or vocal ambassadors surely impacted government policy, it is very hard to analytically prove this. Therefore, this chapter might often only provide indications for this.

6.1 2014

External Pressure by Third Parties:

Three sub-groups of third actors are distinguished when analysing external pressure put on the foreign policy change process. Those are (1) business, (2) academia and (3) foreign actors like embassies who might help overcome the inertia of foreign policy (see Welch 2005). This list is based on and adapted from Blavoukos and Bourantonis (2014).

First, two institutions are crucial when tracing the influence of the business sector on the change process: Those are (1) the *Deutsch-Russisches Forum* (German-Russian Forum) founded in 1993 with the goal of creating an exchange platform for Germans and Russians after the end of the Cold War. Since then, it had direct links to the government due to the support of well-known personalities such as the German Ambassador Andreas Meyer-Landrut or the political scientist Karl Kaiser (Deutsch-Russisches Forum 2024). Until his retirement in 1994, Meyer-Landrut held five posts at the German Embassy in Moscow – most recently as Ambassador (1980-1983, 1987-1989) –, and became one of the Russia specialists at the FFO. After being chairman 2002-2003, he is today an honorary chairman of the organisation (Deutsch-Russisches Forum 2019). Kaiser, on the other hand, was Director of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik (DGAP), German Council on Foreign Relations, from 1974 to 2003 and decisively shaped independent foreign policy research (DGAP 2022).

The other decisive institution is the *Ost-Auschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft* (Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations) made up out of companies and not individuals. Founded in the 1950s, it quickly became the main tool of Chancellor Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*

in the 1960s and 1970s and covers today, besides Russia and Ukraine, 27 countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Siddi 2016). Following 2014, the *Ost-Ausschuss* would reluctantly back the Russia sanctions but consistently call for their easing (Siddi 2020). In the context of *Russland-Kritiker* (Russia critics) versus *Russland-Versteher* (Russia understanders), this "influential" organisation clearly belongs to the latter together with the Social Democratic heirs of Brandt (Daehnhardt 2018, p. 524; Siddi 2018). Out of the business sector, the *Deutsch-Russisches Forum* and the *Ost-Ausschuss* had presumably the strongest influence on the Merkel administration since they have been intertwined for decades with the government.

On **19 March 2014** – three days after the illegitimate referendum on Crimea officialising the Russian annexation –, Steinmeier (SPD) gave the opening speech at the general assembly of the *Deutsch-Russisches Forum*. In 2014, there was not a single Putin critic on its board. Instead, the institution regularly hosted high-level Russian politicians in panel discussions (von Salzen 2014). Steinmeier argued that "security in and for Europe can only be achieved together with Russia and not against Russia" (Steinmeier 2014a, transl.). And: "This realisation remains correct despite the current crisis. The goal of a common [economic] area from Lisbon to Vladivostok remains the right goal" (Steinmeier 2014a, transl.). Core motives were the concepts of *Ostpolitik* and *Wandel durch Handel* which Steinmeier did not see worth adapting. This illustrates the inertia advocated by the *Deutsch-Russisches Forum* and followed by the FFO (see Welch 2005): The policy was to rely on the institutionalised way of handling Russia and stating how "sanctions are not an end in themselves" (Steinmeier 2014a, transl.).

Linked with Steinmeier's speech is the annual German-Russian Raw Materials Conference **from 1 to 3 April 2014** – where a high-level Russian delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich participated: The German positions articulated there displayed the close, two-way interaction of the *Ost-Ausschuss* with the government. The *Ost-Ausschuss* reiterated how "[e]specially against the backdrop of the sometimes prevailing lack of dialogue between the EU and Russia surrounding the Ukraine crisis, the traditional format was a particular focus of public attention" (Kinsbruner 2014, transl.). Russian aggression was framed cautiously, "[t]he meeting in Dresden was certainly not business as usual due to the current political situation" (Kinsbruner 2014, transl.). During 2014, exports to Russia decreased by 20%, endangering 50,000 German jobs – making the *Ost-Ausschuss* express its scepticism towards sanctions and highlighting the danger of negative economic impacts (Forsberg 2016).

Against this background, the Russia-friendly positions of the *Ost-Ausschuss* and the *Deutsch-Russisches Forum* combined with their powerful standing in Berlin become clear. But there were also close ties with Moscow: On **16 May 2014**, the *Deutsch-Russisches Forum* hosted

Vladimir Yakunin – head of the Russian state railway, part of Putin's inner circle and member of the *Forum's* Board of Trustees – who caused a scene on stage when spreading anti-Western propaganda. This made *Der Tagesspiegel* conclude that "the renowned organisation was in danger of being turned into a mouthpiece for the Kremlin" (von Salzen 2014, transl.).

Second, although less powerful, the pressure exerted by academia is noticeable. Some argue that academics and diplomats were further along in their critical assessment of Russia than many politicians (interview 4). Decisive were the two German institutes for political consulting – DGAP and Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.
On **20 May 2014**, an SWP energy expert criticised how Berlin would not have learnt enough from recent crises and argued that it should urgently diversify its gas supply (Balser and Bauchmüller 2014). On **3 September 2014**, a DGAP Russia expert called EU member states naive, criticised their lack of strategic thinking and suggested Merkel and Obama a joint trip to Moscow because Putin would only want to deal with the powerful leaders (Bidder 2014). A reason for this pressure not being overly effective might be: There was an alarming lack of expertise on Eastern Europe at German universities. Since 1990 the funding and capacities for research on Eastern Europe had been decreased since it seemed less necessary after the German reunification. Therefore, in 2014, there were not enough academics to consult politicians and help formulating a competent Russia policy (Miller 2014).
In conclusion, academia did exert pressure on the government by political consulting and well-placed media appearances – but was way less powerful than the business sector due to lack of political interest and defunding.

And finally, *third*, foreign actors also had a considerable interest in influencing the government – like the Ukrainian Ambassador in Berlin, Pavlo Klimkin: On **13 February 2014**, he wrote in an op-ed for *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* (Federal Agency for Civic Education) how he considered his people part of the European family – thus highlighting shared identity, history and appealing to the sense of responsibility of German politicians (Klimkin 2014). On **26 March 2014**, he was invited by the *Bundesakademie für Sicherheitspolitik* (Federal Academy for Security Policy) for a first round of confidential press background talks. There, he reiterated that Ukraine must not remain on the sidelines but should be included in the dialogue (Lorke and Alexandrin 2014). On **15 April 2014**, he advocated in Deutschlandfunk for an intensified dialogue diplomacy with the EU and the US involved, besides imposing harsh sanctions

(Klimkin and Engels 2014). However, the dimension of this public performance is not at all comparable to the one of the Ukrainian Ambassador in 2022 as will be analysed later.
Also, foreign heads of state visiting Berlin such as the Polish President Bronisław Komorowski on **10 September 2014** did not hide the fact that they viewed Russia more critically (and thus more 2022-like). Komorowski's speech in the *Bundestag* indicated this: "The crisis in Ukraine has long since ceased to have the dimensions of a regional bilateral conflict. (…) By attacking Ukraine, Russia is attacking the (…) fundamental principle of the civilised world: the (…) respect for the sovereignty of states" (Komorowski 2014, transl.).

Parliamentary actions and internal pressures by salient political groups:
For 2014, one also needs to consider the second type of primary change agents – political pressure from within the *Bundestag* and, occasionally, from the federal state level.

In the beginning, it is noticeable how the *Bundestag* focused on addressing the, at the time pro-Putin, Ukrainian authorities and did not extensively mention the actions by Russia on 20 February 2014: On **20 February 2014** – the day when the Maidan protests escalated with the result of more than 100 protestors killed by pro-Putin government forces and Russia started its occupation of Crimea (see chapter 5.1) – the *Bundestag* called only on those responsible in Ukraine to put an immediate end to the violence and find a peaceful solution. While the SPD suggested a rethinking the Eastern Partnership policy, the CDU/CSU called for a lasting ceasefire, the Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen was for turning off criminal cash flows of those responsible and Die Linke highlighted that there were also fascist forces on the Maidan (Deutscher Bundestag 2014a). This Russia-friendly and Ukraine-critical approach continued **17 March 2014**: MP Gernot Erler (SPD) – the government's Russia Coordinator and a self-proclaimed "Russia apologist" – said how he was afraid of a "division of Ukraine" since it could not be excluded that Russia would annex more than Crimea. Regarding sanctions which had not yet been agreed upon in March 2014, Erler stated how those would also harm Germany. There must remain the option to return to negotiations since war was not an option (Deutscher Bundestag 2014b).

Regarding the economic sector, disagreements quickly emerged – displaying the party-dependent belief systems and the different prioritisation of *Ostpolitik*, *Westbindung* as well as "Never again war" and "Never alone" (see chapter 1). First, one can observe the cleavage between Erler (SPD) and Habeck (Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen): The latter (then Minister for Energy Transition, Environment and Agriculture as well as Deputy Prime Minister of

Schleswig-Holstein; today Vice-Chancellor) published a guest contribution in *Die Zeit* on **19 March 2014**: Decisionmakers should consider foreign policy also as foreign energy policy. Europe needed to become independent of "dubious governments" with energy transition – to "achieve a large-scale, intelligent networking of supply and demand" and get towards a "regenerative" Europe. This could strengthen the EU (Habeck 2014, transl.).
Second, there was another cleavage in the opposition between Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen and Die Linke: On **10 April 2014**, Jürgen Trittin (Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen) and Sahra Wagenknecht (Die Linke) argued in a joint interview with *Der Spiegel* about the right approach towards Russia. Trittin stated how the Germans would "not want sabre-rattling, but neither do they want to accept breaches of international law. In general, they want (…) civil solutions". He equated this attitude with the core convictions of Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen – like the literature calling post-1990 Germany a "civilian power 2.0" (Fix 2018, p. 510). But Wagenknecht partly blamed the West: "Russia has been deliberately humiliated for years. (…) Moscow was irritated until Putin reacted" (Gathmann and Reinbold 2014, transl.).

Thus, the political climate in Berlin in 2014 looked as follows: Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen was cautiously critical of Russia, Die Linke was openly befriending the Kremlin and the governing coalition of SPD and CDU/CSU was not yet ready to significantly alter their Russia image.
This is reiterated by the following two incidents: Ahead of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (**7 to 11 April 2014**), MP Frank Schwabe (SPD) – Vice-Chairman of the *Bundestag* delegation in Strasbourg – was against the complete exclusion of Russia from this session. Whereas he condemned the annexation, he also stated that a critical dialogue with Russia should still be possible – and that not just Russia should show moderation (Deutscher Bundestag 2014c). Ahead of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (**28 June to 2 July 2014**), MP Jürgen Klimke (CDU/CSU) – Deputy Head of the *Bundestag* delegation at the annual OSCE session – rejected sanctions against Moscow. He reiterated how Germany would believe in conflict mediation. Also, the OSCE should increase efforts to ease tensions (Deutscher Bundestag 2014d). These comments were issued after the kidnapping of 13 OSCE observers on 25 April 2014 (see chapter 5.1).

From around June, the *Bundestag* seemed to have found a more united approach: On **25 June 2014**, the FFO's Section 05 budget got parliamentary approval with the votes of the governing coalition. So, 3.64 billion euros were available for foreign policy in 2014, around 152.46 million euros more than in 2013 – and, more importantly in the context of this argument,

Foreign Minister Steinmeier got much praise in the parliamentary debate. He had positively mentioned Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko's decision to launch a peace plan against the wish of the population who preferred tough action against the separatists (Deutscher Bundestag 2014e). The coalition partner CDU/CSU liked that "'the most spectacular thing about German foreign policy is its predictability'" (Deutscher Bundestag 2014e, transl.) – thus reaffirming the inertia that characterised German foreign policy for decades.

Thus, the primary change agents "external pressure from third parties" and "parliamentary actions and internal pressures by salient political groups" are applicable for the case of 2014. However, the pressure from the outside might have been more influential. After all, the internal pressure coming from MPs and actors from the federal state level often tended to be cautious. In 2014, nostalgic belief-systems based on *Ostpolitik* and *Wandel durch Handel* still predominated – mostly within the governing parties SPD and CDU/CSU. Wolfgang Hellmich, SPD security policy spokesperson, referred to two SPD Chancellors who had significantly advanced the foreign policy towards Eastern Europe:

> *"At the bottom of my heart as a social democrat, orientation towards the international peace order is elementary for me. It was inconceivable for us that Willy Brandt's and Helmut Schmidt's legacy would be destroyed at the stroke of a pen, thereby destroying a big part of European peace policy."*
> *– Wolfgang Hellmich, SPD (interview 6, transl.)*

For the sake of contextualisation, it is worth mentioning a controversial *Bild* interview with SPD Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (1974-1982) from **16 May 2014**: The 95-year-old argued that "the West's policy is based on a major misconception: that there is one Ukrainian people, one national identity. The truth is that there is Crimea, Eastern Ukraine and Western Ukraine" (Vehlewald 2014, transl.). Also, Germany should "show similar restraint" as China did regarding the crisis (Vehlewald 2014, transl.). Although this interview is an extreme outlier, the trend went towards "an almost identical belief in the SPD and CDU/CSU that Germany should engage with Russia. That you always must try to de-escalate" (interview 13, transl.).
Hence, parliamentary pressure on the government was also not that high because (1) Russia's actions were not perceived as an attack on the West and (2) there was a cross-party Russia-nostalgic lobby in the *Bundestag*, most relevant in the SPD and CDU/CSU (interviews 7, 13).

6.2 2022

External Pressure by Third Parties:

Again, three sub-groups of third actors are distinguished when analysing external pressure put on the foreign policy change process. Those are (1) business, (2) academia and (3) foreign actors like embassies (see Blavoukos and Bourantonis 2014).

First, the pressure from the business sector is analysed which is considered again the most influential sub-group – most notably the two organisations introduced in chapter 6.1. The agency of the *Ost-Ausschuss* was differently used before and after the summer. There was a shift from the initial position in February 2022, still following *Ostpolitik* and *Wandel durch Handel*, to concrete policy recommendations as well as a reprioritisation from Russia to Ukraine: On **1 February 2022**, Oliver Hermes – head of the *Ost-Ausschuss* – criticised how many would hype up the possibility of an invasion. Rather, they should understand the hesitation of the Scholz administration to supply weapons. Businesses should "play a role in de-escalation" and act as "bridge builders". After all, German companies were responsible for 280,000 employees in Russia (Hermes 2022a, transl.). Hermes' approach continued **14 February 2022**, when he expressed his hopes that Scholz's visits to Kyiv and Moscow would offer "disarmament and cooperation" (Hermes 2022b, transl.). Although Russian troops were already stationed behind the Russian-Ukrainian border, the organisation still believed in dialogue and, thereby, approved the previous line of the FFO.

The shift in the *Ost-Ausschuss* occurred over the summer, now focusing on Ukraine instead of Russia: On **20 September 2022**, the organisation published a dossier with proposals for the reconstruction and modernization of the Ukrainian economy. Those had been already used as a basis for discussions with German and Ukrainian government officials, thus displaying the influence of the *Ost-Ausschuss* on the Scholz administration: For instance, Western allies involved in reconstruction should each appoint a high-level coordinator for Ukraine who then build a joint consultative coordination council with the Ukrainian government (Kägebein 2022). Then, on **24 October 2022**, the 5th German-Ukrainian Economic Forum – co-hosted by the *Ost-Ausschuss* – was opened by Scholz and the Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal. The framing had turned towards stressing how businesses were ready to engage in reconstruction sooner than later – and that this support was right because Ukrainians would defend European values (Himighoffen 2022). The organisation had undergone a huge change and adopted what, by October 2022, had become the mainstream position in Germany.

Whereas the *Ost-Ausschuss* would continue its activities during 2022 – beneficial was the fact that it covered 29 countries in total –, the *Deutsch-Russisches Forum* experienced a severe crisis: On **2 March 2022**, Matthias Platzeck (2002-2013 Minister President of the region of Brandenburg, 2005-2006 head of the SPD) who had always spoken out in favour of dialogue with Russia gave up the chairmanship of the organisation that he had preceded 2014-2022 – and now talked about his own misjudgements. This is even more remarkable because the term "Putin-understander" had been basically invented for Platzeck since he used to repeatedly call for dialogue even when others did not (Blankennagel 2022). This organisation struggled more with itself than it could have significantly impacted the government.

Second, academia was another key sector putting pressure on the government. This was most noticeable on **16 November 2022** when more than 70 intellectuals published an open letter to the government demanding stronger support for Ukraine – specifically also in the military sector (Alexijewitsch et al. 2022). It was not only "a moral duty", but at the very core of the German position (Alexijewitsch et al. 2022, transl.). This had been preceded by numerous resolute statements – see for example on **29 January 2022** the country's most famous political scientist Herfried Münkler in *Die Zeit*: Regarding statements by Baerbock about not sending weapons due to historical reasons and by Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht about delivering 5,000 helmets, he argued that those "can hardly be surpassed in terms of embarrassment and, even worse, ignorance" (Münkler 2022, transl.). Also, "sentimental pacificists" in the SPD and Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen would call any type of strategic thinking "warmongering" (Münkler 2022, transl.). On **26 April 2022**, two leading heads from DGAP and SWP suggested in *Der Spiegel* that Germany with its allies should (1) supply the remaining Soviet material like the over 800 T-72 tanks still in NATO member states combined with an intensified training of Ukrainian soldiers and an assessment of the feasibility of temporary cuts in NATO commitment, (2) introduce heavy equipment from Western military such as the armoured howitzer 2000 or the Leopard tanks, and (3) plan the transition to a permanent arms supply of Ukraine by the West (Major and Mölling 2022). This was reiterated on **18 September 2022** in *Die Zeit* by the Berlin office of the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) arguing that sending battle tanks would not be an escalation, but rather an urgent necessity: If Germany took the lead, this would create trust amongst its allies and improve European security (Gressel, Loss and Puglierin 2022). Although a direct influence of academia on the decision-making process is hard to prove, it is certain that academia at least shaped the public discourse by giving informed statements and recommendations.

And finally, *third*, it is worth examining how foreign actors exerted pressure. On **17 March 2022**, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy held a virtual speech in the *Bundestag* calling the narrative "Never again" worthless – the Ukrainian Ambassador Andriy Melnyk called this literally "bullshit" after evidence of Russian war crimes in Bucha had emerged (Tkocz and Stritzel 2023, p. 14). The case of Melnyk is exceptional due to his loud and, according to some, undiplomatic appearance. On **2 April 2022**, he accused President Steinmeier (Head of the Chancellery 1999-2005, Foreign Minister 2005-2009 and 2013-2017) of not being serious about his break with his previous Russia policy. Germany's Russia-ties were mainly Steinmeier's responsibility who "'has been weaving a spider's web of contacts with Russia for decades'" (Ismar and von Salzen 2022, transl.). Scholz's inner circle was part of this – like Jens Plötner, his foreign policy advisor. On **5 April 2022**, Melnyk explained in Deutschlandfunk how he wanted Steinmeier to influence Scholz so that Germany would react fiercely to the Bucha massacre. This meant imposing sanctions and an energy embargo, excluding all Russian banks from SWIFT and sending heavy weapons (Melnyk and Müller 2022).

Also, on **2 June 2022**, Ruslan Stefanchuk – chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament – reaffirmed in the *Bundestag* his country's goal to join the EU and invited the *Bundestag* to recognise Ukraine as an accession candidate. This got cross-party applause except from Die Linke and AfD. The speech was followed by a joint meeting with the Committee on European Union Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Affairs (Deutscher Bundestag 2022e).

Parliamentary actions and internal pressures by salient political groups:

In the beginning, the invasion put the *Bundestag* in a reaction mode that was reinforced by Scholz's *Zeitenwende* speech on **27 February 2022**. This is because Scholz did not even inform his fellow MPs at the SPD parliamentary group meeting right before the special session (interview 12). Later, it should turn out that most likely not more than five people had been forewarned by Scholz – a possible reason for the ongoing dispute in the governing coalition on *Zeitenwende*-related issues (interview 11). During said speech, the Chancellor proactively declared a historic change putting especially the parliamentary groups left of the FDP in a state of shock – because they could only passively react to this.

In the following weeks, this dynamic changed with the *Bundestag* retaking a more active role and starting to exert pressure on the government. Crucial is the plenary session on **16 March 2022**, considered by Tkocz and Stritzel (2023) the most relevant one next to 27 February 2022. More and more MPs particularly from the SPD dropped the narrative "Never again war" (German scepticism towards military means in foreign policy) and went for "Never again

tyranny" (German responsibility to counter acts of tyranny in Europe): In fact, "Never again war" was increasingly abandoned by the centrist parties and continued to be only defended by Die Linke and AfD. By doing so, the centrist MPs reinterpreted national historical memory and shaped the narrative discourse (Tkocz and Stritzel 2023). A reprioritisation of Germany's historical responsibility – a core pillar of German foreign policy – provided the foundation for the *Bundestag* pushing for certain policy measures.

Another important date is **6 April 2022**, when the governing coalition initiated a topical debate on the alleged war crimes in Burcha and called for a comprehensive investigation of those as well as a further tightening of sanctions (Deutscher Bundestag 2022b, transl.). Bucha was additional shock-live event creating a cross-party unity. For instance, MP Johann Wadephul (CDU/CSU) spoke of a violation of basic human rights norms and the Geneva Convention, thus choosing similar words like MP Britta Haßelmann (parliamentary group leader of Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen) who had called for Putin and his followers to be indicted by the International Criminal Court (Deutscher Bundestag 2022b). Besides this consensus, the biggest opposition group CDU/CSU also used history to push Scholz towards sending heavy weaponry to Ukraine (Tkocz and Stritzel 2023).

Then, on **28 April 2022**, another milestone was reached when the *Bundestag* approved sending heavy weapons to Ukraine – by approving voting for a joint motion by the governing coalition and CDU/CSU. This should signal to the Kremlin that Germany was "on the right side of history" (Deutscher Bundestag 2022c, transl.). This reference comes at an interesting time: Before 24 February 2022, politicians referred to history with the goal of stressing continuity and keeping the status quo. After this date, history was used to support change and understand German historical responsibility more towards Ukraine (Tkocz and Stritzel 2023).
Regarding this date, two observations are crucial since they show how continuity and change in German foreign policy were altered in 2022. First, 28 April 2022 was again characterised by a remarkable cross-party unity. Some conservatives were even joking that the war would have made them basically part of the governing coalition (Gathmann et al. 2022). This is exemplified by one of the most influential defence politicians in the *Bundestag* – Henning Otte, Deputy Head of the parliamentary Defence Committee (CDU/CSU):

> *"That is an inner understanding: If someone is unlawfully attacked, they must be allowed to defend themselves. I also say this as a Christian. And that has led to us handing over material, that I have watched in Munster how soldiers were trained who had been previously craftsmen and then led a battle tank."*
> *– Henning Otte, CDU/CSU (interview 11, transl.)*

Second, the party that had went through the biggest change regarding the parliamentary decision on 28 April 2022 was arguably Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen: Born out of Germany's peace and environmental movement in the 1980s, the party has always loudly advocated against (nuclear) weapons. But when part of the 1998-2005 Schröder administration, it made in April 1999 the painful choice to join the military mission in Kosovo – thereby throwing core party convictions overboard (Gathmann et al. 2022). Against this background, a heavy inner-party debate arose in 2021 around two core party figures: Whereas Habeck had called for defensive weaponry for Ukraine already in May 2021, Baerbock tended to be more on the brakes. Journalists familiar with the subject told how she had complained that this would have ruined her campaign for the federal elections in September 2021 (interview 13). Baerbock was still very sceptical about possible arms deliveries and categorically defended her rejection during her inaugural visits to Kyiv and Moscow on **17 and 18 January 2022**. After the invasion she quickly turned – "that is just the way she is. Super realistic and pragmatic, but someone like Habeck saw it beforehand. But then, she was still more attached to the left-wing part of the Greens" (interview 13, transl.). After 24 February 2022, Baerbock massively benefitted from the fact that her party had been in the opposition before and had been rather critical of North Stream – meaning that she could face her interlocutors in Ukraine or the Baltics without worries and was able to convince score points there (interview 9). In spring 2022, the party proactively supported arms deliveries – as explained by MP Philip Krämer (Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen): "We have a Ukraine contact group within our party. There we tried to shift the public opinion so that the public supported heavy weaponry for Ukraine" (interview 7, transl.).

As indicated by MP Philip Krämer's statement, foreign policy formulation after 24 February 2022 was increasingly based on the perception of Germany (Self) vs Russia (Other) with history having had a huge impact on how Self vs Other position each other (see chapter 3). Two further dates are remarkable in this context: On **8 July 2022**, the *Bundestag* approved the Finland's and Sweden's accession to NATO – as it is necessary for every NATO member state to approve new candidates before the formal invitation by the NATO Secretary-General. A joint bill by the governing coalition and CDU/CSU was adopted with the votes of the AfD and against the votes of Die Linke (Deutscher Bundestag 2022f).

On **30 November 2022**, the *Bundestag* passed a motion by the governing coalition and the CDU/CSU calling the Holodomor a genocide. This indicated how German historical responsibility, a core pillar of German foreign policy, was now understood more towards the countries in Eastern Europe besides Russia. That was also stressed by Ulrich Lechte, FDP

foreign policy spokesperson and FDP rapporteur for this project: “We drafted this important motion, which does away with historical revisionism and historical misrepresentation and highlights that it was a genocide against the Ukrainian people at the time” (interview 8, transl.). The term Holodomor refers to the 1932-1933 targeted mass killing by starvation that affected millions of people in Ukraine, then part of the Soviet Union (Deutscher Bundestag 2022k).

However, the *Zeitenwende* also had limitations. Whereas they were less visible in the first half of 2022 characterised by cross-party unity, they put the *Bundestag* back in the traditional cleavage of governing coalition versus opposition: On **1 June 2022**, the *Bundestag* approved Section 14 of the Defence Ministry’s Budget Act 2022 including the supplementary budget – making Germany’s defence spending with 50.4 billion euros rise to a new record high since 1992. This meant that, in 2022, Defence Minister Lambrecht (SPD) had around 3.5 billion euros more at her disposal than her predecessor had in the previous year (Deutscher Bundestag 2022d). However, on **23 November 2022**, the CDU/CSU accused Scholz and Lambrecht of breaking their word. After all, there would not be much left of the self-proclaimed *Zeitenwende* – which was supposed to lead to an increase in defence spending to the NATO target of 2% of GDP. The *Bundestag* had just adopted the budget of the Defence Ministry for 2023 – with an expenditure of 50.12 billion euros compared to 50.4 billion euros in 2022 (Deutscher Bundestag 2022g). This is backed by the literature which claims that the *Zeitenwende* has failed so far because of the still prevalent structural underfunding of the *Bundeswehr* – decisionmakers were still not providing enough sustainable funds for present and future tasks concerning the military (Mölling, Schütz and Hellmonds 2023).

In conclusion, the primary change agents (1) “external pressure from third parties” and (2) “parliamentary actions and internal pressures by salient political groups” also apply to the case of 2022. However, both are much more dominant and influential than in 2014. Whether it was business actors such as the *Ost-Ausschuss der deutschen Wirtschaft* and the *Deutsch-Russisches Forum* or the *Bundestag* challenging the Scholz administration, both attempted to assert influence in their way. As for (2), MP Philip Krämer (Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen) told: “At the beginning, there was indeed quite some chaos in the executive. Regarding Iris-T SLM, a ground-based air defence missile system, we MPs from the Defence Committee contacted the company and asked how quickly they could deliver” (interview 7, transl.). The remaining question is to what extent the federal government listened to that pressure. This will be examined in the next chapter.

7 Governmental Decision-Making Process in the Federal Chancellery and the Federal Foreign Office

The focus in the subsequent analysis lies on the two key decision-making institutions in Berlin when it comes to foreign policy, the Federal Chancellery (2014: Merkel, 2022: Scholz) and the FFO (2014: Steinmeier, 2022: Baerbock).

7.1 2014

For the case of 2014, it is argued that the policy inertia in foreign policy played a crucial part in explaining the cautious change process (see chapter 3). After years, if not decades, of following the same established Russia policy the Chancellery and FFO struggled to quickly overcome this inertia and flexibly react to the new reality of 2014. This is illustrated by **29 January 2014** when Foreign Minister Steinmeier (SPD) advocated in the *Bundestag* for a more active German foreign policy while arguing that military restraint was right – but should not be understood as a culture of staying out of international politics. After all, Germany was one of the core players in Europe (Deutscher Bundestag 2014h). This line of argumentation was further advanced by Steinmeier on **1 February 2014**: At the 50th Munich Security Conference, he made two decisive arguments which would shape the German foreign policy of 2014 and beyond. First, that "we should put our combined weight behind the effort to facilitate a peaceful solution to the crisis in Ukraine. The current stand-off must not be resolved by the use of force" (Steinmeier 2014b). Second, that "despite our many differences, we need to explore with Russia how we could put our relationship onto a more constructive and cooperative footing. (…) We would be making a mistake to conceive of Europe's future without Moscow, or even in opposition to it" (Steinmeier 2014b).

Against this background, the argument by Welch (2005) is reiterated according to which leaders will most likely change their foreign policy when it has failed or when they think it is about to. That implies a somehow learning or realisation process on their side: This happened on **13 March 2014** when Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU/CSU) issued a government statement about the situation in Ukraine – explaining her Russia policy in the context of recent events an indicating a first shift. On the one side, she called Russia's actions "a violation of fundamental principles of international law" (Merkel 2014a), a rhetorical milestone for 2014. On the other side, she argued in the business context how Germany needed to work "with Russia to find ways to resolve outstanding conflicts in countries which are neighbours to us both" (Merkel

2014a). The key was the presentation of a three-point action plan according to which her government would aim to de-escalate the situation – since "military action is not an option for us" (Merkel 2014a): First, an international observer mission together with a contact group should be established to find a diplomatic solution. Second, she referred to 6 March 2014 when EU member states had agreed on an EU Commission support package for Ukraine worth 11 billion euros, including measures by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). Also, it was agreed upon to sign the political section of the EU Association Agreement with Ukraine soon. Third, in case of continuing Russian aggression, the EU would proceed to apply travel bans and asset freezes and, in case of further destabilisation by Russia, implement a package of measures possibly affecting EU economic cooperation with Russia. Negotiations on visa matters and a new agreement on the EU-Russia Relations Framework had already been suspended at the time of Merkel's speech (Merkel 2014a). Her government emphasised dialogue and targeted economic sanctions as a last resort – thus confirming traditional pillars of German foreign policy like the scepticism towards military means or the strong belief in multilateralism. After all, the US had committed in the 1994 *Budapest Memorandum* together with the UK and Russia to respect the independence and sovereignty of Ukraine and to refrain from the threat or use of force against Ukraine. This was crucial in persuading Kyiv to give up the then world's third largest nuclear arsenal. And yet, the US would not intervene militarily in 2014 (Pifer 2019). Jean Froehly (FFO) explained the German position as follows:

> *"Germany concluded that we could not settle this by military means. Instead, we have tried to understand all of this as a political process: Our guiding principle was that we would not give up Ukraine's sovereignty, but that the Donbass must also return to Ukrainian control. That was the red line, so to speak, that we always tried to maintain."*
> *– Jean Froehly, FFO (interview 4, transl.)*

Another core ministry, although less the focus of this thesis, also supported this. On **28 March 2014**, Minister of Economic Affairs Sigmar Gabriel (SPD) published a guest contribution for *Die Welt*: Because Berlin had been "suddenly" drawn from the position of an observer into the conflict, he highlighted the possible price Germany would have to pay in case of imposing sanctions. The approach would be: (1) support the democratic powers in Ukraine economically and politically (but not militarily), (2) invest in Ukraine's sustainable development and (3) be prepared to forego economic advantages in German-Russian relations in case of a further deterioration – with the goal of returning to negotiations with Russia (Gabriel 2014). The fact that Germany would be willing to give up economic advantages in the bilateral relations with Russa highlights the high value of trade in 2014.

Whereas the historically strong Russia ties of SPD and CDU/CSU around *Ostpolitik* and *Wandel durch Handel* have been brought already as a crucial factor for making the change process rather cautious, another aspect was decisive in 2014 – namely how German decisionmakers viewed Ukraine. In said guest contribution, Gabriel introduced an apparent dilemma by stating: "Ultimately, the acid test in Ukraine (…) is between civil freedom and the rule of law on the one hand, and belonging to a linguistic community, religious or ethnic group on the other" (Gabriel 2014, transl.). It appears like Ukraine had to choose between the West with democratic values and the East with cultural commonalities. One could argue there was some level of mistrust and conscious demarcation by Berlin despite the support for Ukraine substantiated by Merkel on 13 March 2014. This is backed by Christoph Schult (*Der Spiegel*):

> *"The Germans were indeed realising what Russia did 2014 in Ukraine. But they thought by no means: 'We are on Ukraine's side in the negotiations, we are fighting for Ukraine and Putin is our common opponent.' Instead, the government distanced itself from Ukraine so that it could mediate in the Minsk negotiations."*
> *– Christoph Schult, Der Spiegel (interview 13, transl.)*

In fact, this went even further behind closed doors: Apparently, German decisionmakers in the Chancellery and the FFO viewed their Ukrainian counterparts rather critically at the time when Berlin attempted to mediate and somehow save the *Minsk Agreements*. This is reported by journalists familiar with the matter who accompanied Foreign Minister Steinmeier on many trips back then (interview 13). Hence, in 2014 the relationship with the Ukrainian government was characterised by cautious mistrust and scepticism, whereas the one with Russia was shaped by a longstanding interconnectedness. This is illustrated by the following two statements:

> *"There was a considerable lack of trust in Ukraine's political class. Regardless of whether it was people who were pro-Western. Corruption was a constant topic in the background discussions. Warnings came from Steinmeier, but also from the Foreign Office and Chancellery in general: 'This is not yet a functioning state in terms of corruption and the rule of law. The oligarch problem…'"*
> *– Christoph Schult, Der Spiegel (interview 13, transl.)*

> *"I remember a background conversation at the 2014 NATO summit in Wales. We sat in a hotel with Merkel, Steinmeier and von der Leyen who was Defence Minister at the time. There, Merkel spoke at great length about her almost nostalgic relationship with the country Russia – not with Putin. She told us how she would speak Russian with Putin. Her Eastern Germany biography was noticeable: that she likes Russian literature, the country is close to her. Steinmeier did not have this biographical closeness, it was more political with him. With Merkel it was personal."*
> *– Christoph Schult, Der Spiegel (interview 13, transl.)*

But with time passing by and continuing Russian aggression in Ukraine, the tone in the government changed as well. At least for the public eye: On **9 April 2014**, Steinmeier accused in the *Bundestag* Russia of endangering world peace. For him, it was crucial to prevent further

escalation which is why dialogue between Russia and Ukraine was important. The international contact group, as introduced by Merkel on 13 March 2014, should meet for an initial preparatory meeting in the next few days – with the EU and US represented alongside Russia and Ukraine (Deutscher Bundestag 2014i).

In terms of concrete policy measures, two additional shock-like events – the kidnapping of 13 OSCE observers and the downing of MH17 – eventually helped overcoming path-dependencies in German foreign policy (see chapter 3): On **5 August 2014**, Minister Gabriel ordered to suspend the business of the leading German arms manufacturer *Rheinmetall* with Russia. This was backed by Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen and the CSU from Bavaria which forms with the CDU the centre-right Christian democratic political alliance in the *Bundestag*. The Greens called for other German arms exports to be scrutinised as well (dpa 2014b).
Merkel's government statement from **16 October 2014** is a crucial document here, since she issued several policy demands (Merkel 2014b): This happened right before multiple international summits – the ASEM summit in Milan (an Asian-European political dialogue forum), as well as the European Council meeting and the Euro summit in Brussels. In the context of over 300 dead since a ceasefire agreement between Russia and Ukraine had been reached on **5 September 2014** – better known as the *Minsk Protocol* –, Merkel announced she would meet Poroshenko and Putin when in Milan for the ASEM summit. Her demands were as follows: a decisive contribution to de-escalation by Russia, meaning a full implementation of the *Minsk Protocol*, with inter alia (1) the withdrawal of Russian weapons, (2) effective border security under the leadership of the OSCE and (3) the organisation of local elections in eastern Ukraine in line with Ukrainian law. Her conclusion was that Germany would continue to engage in dialogue while imposing sanctions: "We continue to seek dialogue with Russia. The one, sanctions, does not exclude the other, dialogue – in order to always assert the strength of the law" (Merkel 2014b, transl.). The emphasis on talking in the context of Minsk I and Minsk II is the reason why today some consider the years from 2014 to 2022 as "the appeasement or containment period" (interview 8, transl.).

Coming from that, it is argued that Steinmeier himself was the decisive actor behind that perceived containment. This is in line with the theoretical claim from chapter 3 that the government institutions constitute the mechanism but also have agency for themselves – which is why a third change agent was constructed in the framework: For instance, on **26 November 2014**, Steinmeier stressed how the *Petersburger Dialog* – a bilateral forum for dialogue with

the goal of enhancing understanding between the civil societies – needed to be maintained since dialogue was crucial in the relationship with Russia (Deutscher Bundestag 2014g). By arguing so, Steinmeier portrayed that forum as essential and effective – which was however contradicted by Matthias Lüttenberg in an interview for this thesis: Before rejoining the FFO in June 2021, he had worked at the Federal Chancellery for seven years as the (Deputy) Head of the Department for Eastern, South-Eastern and Central Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia. Someone very close to key decisionmakers assessed dialogue diplomacy differently:

> *"I have been to the 'Petersburger Dialog' often enough, that I can tell how these formats were nicely intended by Germany – but misused by Russians to chew standardised lines, regardless of whether they came from the government or were somehow free and independent. An open, honest dialogue with a Russia under Putin would not be possible. There were only few talks between Merkel and Putin where you felt that the other side was reasonably honest. That was the problem during the entire period: We did talk, but everyone pursued their own interests and so we achieved little that was really common ground."*
> *– Matthias Lüttenberg, FFO (interview 9, transl.)*

And at the last North Atlantic Council of the year, on **2 December 2014**, Steinmeier apparently suggested a Western-Russian exchange at least at the military expert level – since a similar structure had even existed in times of the Cold War. His conviction was that "Russia would gain nothing from a permanent conflict with the West" (Neukirch and Hoffmann 2014, transl.).

On **20 December 2014**, Steinmeier gave an interview to *Der Spiegel* – his conclusion of 2014 and looking ahead to 2015: His main statement was that "[s]ecurity in Europe is not possible without Russia, security for Russia is not possible without Europe. That is why we need to repair the damaged European security architecture" (Neukirch and Hoffmann 2014, transl.). German Russia policy still heavily believed in dialogue and inclusion and was sceptical of stricter sanctions – making Steinmeier argue: "Anyone who wants to bring Russia to its knees economically is very much mistaken if they believe that this would lead to greater security in Europe (Neukirch and Hoffmann 2014, transl.). The fall of the rouble and the drop in energy prices concerned Steinmeier who argued that this needed to be considered when formulating new sanctions. For the future, he reiterated the importance of "the forums for dialogue that we have, also to hold a controversial debate" (Neukirch and Hoffmann 2014, transl.).
Steinmeier's rather amicable belief in dialogue and cooperation with Russia even in times of serious breaches of international law, significantly shaped the Russia image of the FFO: On **11 September 2014**, Steinmeier had to defend himself in the *Bundestag* against the accusation of pursuing an "appeasement" policy towards Russia – making him argue that no one would have condemned Russia's actions of the past months stronger than Germany (Deutscher Bundestag

2014f). Together with the Federal Chancellery, the FFO still very much acted in the tradition of Hans-Dietrich Genscher (Foreign Minister 1974-1982, FDP), based on the concept of *Wandel durch Handel*. In 2014, there was a strong policy inertia regarding Russia which would continue for some years. And this still in the fall of 2017, when a new government was formed after the federal elections. In this context, Henning Otte (CDU/CSU) explained:

> *"I was betting that Minsk I and II, which effectively meant a freeze in the conflict, would be enough. Since this did not materialise, I demanded the following as a consequence: Strengthening the Bundeswehr, raising the defensive wall on NATO's eastern flank. But the term 'eastern flank' was not allowed into the coalition committee in 2017 and was not included in the coalition agreement because of the SPD. It was too martial."*
> *– Henning Otte, CDU/CSU (interview 11, transl.)*

Change would only start months later, in March 2018 (interview 13): Then, Steinmeier's immediate successor Sigmar Gabriel (SPD) stepped down and Heiko Maas (SPD) became the next Foreign Minister. This change in leadership is best visualised via Maas' first interview as Foreign Minister with *Der Spiegel* on **14 April 2018**. Christoph Schult, one of the two journalists doing the interview back then, remembered:

> *"In this interview, Maas said the sentence 'Unfortunately, Russia is acting increasingly hostile'. This seems totally harmless from today's perspective. However, this sentence caused an absolute uproar in his party. Maas was summoned to the Willy-Brandt-House with his State Minister Niels Annen and had to answer to the SPD executive why he was changing course in this way. This was not reported in the press at the time, but various people who had been there told us afterwards."*
> *– Christoph Schult, Der Spiegel (interview 13, transl.)*

The FFO experienced a change from top down when Gabriel left and Maas took office. Whereas Gabriel had still expressed his happiness about lengthy meetings with Putin, Maas and Baerbock who would take office in December 2021 shared the same sceptical view (interview 13). Thus, a decisive shift happened between 2014 and 2022 pathing the way for another level of foreign policy adaptation and reorientation in 2022. One date in this time frame is **17 November 2021**: Then, Lavrov had letters published from the German and French Foreign Ministers Heiko Maas and Jean-Yves Le Drian – making it clear that Russia no longer wanted dialogue (interview 9, Deutsche Welle 2021). At this point at the latest, Berlin should have realised that its continuous belief in talking was a "fallacy" (interview 9, transl.).

7.2 2022

The change process first benefitted from the fact that government officials reprioritised Ukraine in their list of policy issues that needed to be dealt with. After all, the Russian invasion of Ukraine had the characteristics of an exogenous political shock (see chapter 5.2). This reprioritisation provided the ground for the decision-making:

> *"While Ukraine was previously one of several topics, the support for Ukraine is now a broad priority in several ministries besides us. Take for example the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development or the Defence Ministry. The inter-ministerial contacts and coordination have developed a whole new dynamic. With 24 February, the entire German government ultimately switched to supporting Ukraine, a great many strands are involved: the bilateral, the military, G7, EU, NATO, G20, the global South." – Jean Froehly, FFO (interview 4, transl.)*

Against this background, the day of the *Zeitenwende* speech (**27 February 2022**) is the key date here. Within only twelve days, Scholz "who is also part of the traditional pro-Russian wing of the SPD" and "considers himself to be a gifted negotiator" had fundamentally changed his position (Amann et al. 2022, transl.). On **15 February 2022**, he had gone to Moscow for his inaugural visit and still believed in the possibility of a diplomatic solution. After the joint press conference, Putin invited Scholz for a glass of champagne without translators or advisers. Subsequently, in a talk with ambassadors of the EU member states, Scholz told how during this private talk he had apparently reassured Putin that Ukraine's NATO membership would not be on the agenda, let-alone be worth going to war over. Soon after, the Chancellery realised that Putin had played Scholz – and the latter had allowed himself to be played (Amann et al. 2022). With the invasion, the Scholz administration "fell into a state of shock" (Kamp 2023, p. 74).

The *Zeitenwende* speech on **27 February 2022** initiated the change process – encapsulating the "fundamental caesura" perceived by the federal government (Bunde 2022, p. 516), as well as representing its final acceptance of and arrangement with the post-Cold War order in Europe (Blumenau 2022). Already on **26 February 2022**, the federal government had moved away from rejecting arms deliveries to Ukraine – leading to the announcement that 1000 anti-tank weapons and 500 Stinger surface-to-air missiles were to go to Ukraine. Scholz's main policy announcements were: (1) a massive increase in the defence spending by introducing the *Sondervermögen* – a one-time special fund of 100 billion euros –, (2) an increase in the annual defence spending to more than 2% of gross domestic product, (3) the prioritisation of the construction of the next generation of combat aircraft and tanks together with France, (4) the advancement of the acquisition of the armed Heron drone from Israel (Teevs 2022). From the

FFO it is reported that "it was not a speech that was prescribed by us in the traditional way and then sent as a draft to the Chancellery for fine-tuning. It was a product of Scholz's environment" (interview 9, transl.). The speech was also considered a move that should quiet critics of Scholz who had doubted his leadership (Gathmann et al. 2022).

However, another date had set the tone for 2022 already before the invasion: On **1 January 2022** Germany took over the G7 Presidency which senior FFO officials consider a significant aspect for the change process that was about to happen. After all, it enabled the federal government to be the central actor coordinating support for Ukraine at the international level (interview 4). The Germans were pushed into a position of responsibility; whether they wanted it or not they set the pace (interview 9). In practical terms, this looked as follows:

> *"Before the war, G7 meetings happened at my level once a year, perhaps every two years. That changed abruptly. We created Signal groups and texted always at around lunchtime: The Japanese were tired but not yet in bed and the Americans were already up. This helped us because we were forced to set a new agenda for each week, stimulate discussions equally interesting and exciting for everyone. Picking up the Ukrainians that they could also get involved. They had a lot of ideas that they wanted to present to our group."*
> *– Matthias Lüttenberg, FFO (interview 9, transl.)*

Whereas the G7 meetings were already established and useful for the implementation of the change process, another format emerged that should accompany the change process until the first quarter of 2023: On **18 March 2022**, Foreign Minister Baerbock launched the process of formulating Germany's first-ever National Security Strategy – an idea in the making since the coalition agreement between the SPD, FDP and Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen had been signed in December 2021. In the consultation phase, key allies like the US, the UK, France, or Israel were approached to understand the foreign expectations regarding the Strategy (Kamp 2023). Eventually, the most tangible outcome – the establishment of a National Security Council – would not be included due to questions of power in the government, whereas for instance an integrated concept of security would be. Specialised journalists considered some details, like the demand for the *Bundeswehr* to have a conventional second-strike capability, "somewhat strange" and doubted whether the authors of the Strategy knew what they meant by that. Nevertheless, it was concluded: "This statement alone is an announcement. I wouldn't have imagined that under a previous government" (interview 14, transl.).

Against this background, there is an overall agreement between the literature and the interview research conducted for this thesis that the biggest change in 2022 was the one concerning the

military sector – since it practically broke with the foreign policy paradigm of a non-military foreign policy (see chapter 1): On **23 March 2022**, Defence Minister Lambrecht (SPD) promoted the planned increase in the defence budget to 50.3 billion euros during the first reading of Section 14 of the draft budget of the Defence Ministry. She argued that this meant necessary equipment for the armed forces to fulfil their constitutional mandate and Germany's alliance obligations (Deutscher Bundestag 2022h).

Then, on **7 September 2022**, the parliamentary services reported how for the coming year Lambrecht had the largest defence budget since 1949 at her disposal – namely 50.1 billion euro. Despite a budgetary decrease of 300 million euro compared to 2022, this constituted a new high – after all, the *Sondervermögen* was to be included in the equation as well. According to Lambrecht, time for hesitation was over – which is why her Ministry had identified 65 defence projects, 41 of which could see contracts signed soon: the CH-74 F Chinook heavy transport helicopter or the F-35 stealth multi-role combat aircraft (Deutscher Bundestag 2022j).

To put this into context: In 2014, the defence budget had amounted to only 32.4 billion euros. But the increase in 2022 was still not enough to fulfil the 2% goal of NATO. Between 2014 and 2022 the Finance Ministry lacked political will to grant more funds for the *Bundeswehr* – Scholz was Finance Minister from March 2018 until December 2021 (Amann et al. 2022). The *Sondervermögen* does not significantly improve the *Bundeswehr* making it a "Bundeswehr plus", but targets equipment gaps that should have been closed years ago (interview 14):

> *"The problem is that the assessment of this special fund has changed a lot over time. The first impression on 27 February 2022 was that there would be a special fund with 100 billion for equipping the Bundeswehr and, at the same time, defence spending would be increased to 2%. It was only after the Chancellor's speech that the small details came up: Not 100 billion plus 2%, but 100 billion to get to 2%. Less than a week later, the Bundeswehr had already finalised the package they wanted to buy. There was a simple reason: It was everything they had needed to procure over the years but had never been able to finance."*
> *– Thomas Wiegold, journalist specialised in security policy (interview 14, transl.)*

This shift away from a non-military foreign policy was repeated by Foreign Minister Baerbock still on that same day, **23 March 2022**, in the *Bundestag*. When speaking during the budgetary debate for her Ministry, Baerbock acknowledged the German arms deliveries to Ukraine and stated that this was necessary – but nothing that made the Scholz administration proud (Deutscher Bundestag 2022a). Nevertheless, in the context of German foreign policy paradigms, her statement constituted a major change in direction (see Blumenau 2022).

As for the personal level of the change process, Steinmeier was again a core figure – **4 April 2022** illustrates how an individual decisionmaker had undergone a learning process and had altered his belief-system contrary to 2014 (see chapter 3): Now German President (SPD party membership suspended), he admitted for the first time the failure of the Russia policy previously driven by him (Head of the Chancellery 1999-2005, Foreign Minister 2005-2009 and 2013-2017). Whereas Putin was responsible for the war, Berlin would also need to critically self-reflect. The statement happened due to increasing public criticism and attacks by Ambassador Melnyk (see chapter 6.2) (Zeit Online 2022). It included the confession that Steinmeier's support for North Stream 2 had been wrong, as well as holding "'on to bridges that Russia no longer believed in and that our partners warned us about'" and trying to integrate "'Russia into a common security architecture'" (Zeit Online 2022, transl.). Steinmeier is the highest-ranking example of the widespread aberration of German politics regarding Russia (Jacobsen 2022).

However, Steinmeier's apology was not only applauded – it was criticised how he stated being wrong "'like others'" (Jacobsen 2022, transl.), trying to hide behind others although he had been Foreign Minister and should have known better. Two years later, a *Der Spiegel* editorial argued how 4 April 2022 "was a moment in Frank-Walter Steinmeier's time in office when something big could have begun" – but eventually did not (Knobbe 2024, transl.). Steinmeier stood for a large part of Germany, "reluctant to change and stuck in a past in which Germany seemed economically invulnerable" (Knobbe 2024, transl.).

A different tone came from Scholz on **22 April 2022** when he said in an interview with *Der Spiegel*: "I do accuse you of painting a distorted picture of Social Democratic politics, almost like Adenauer, and of urgently insisting that we finally admit to being something that others claim us to be. The Social Democratic Party is (…) anchored in the trans-Atlantic alliance and the West" (Amann and Knobbe 2022, transl.).

Scholz's belief in *Westbindung* or "never alone", which had been issued in this *Der Spiegel* interview, continued on **19 May 2022** – illustrating how in crucial moments the government used core pillars of German foreign policy to back its argumentation and policy measures (see Blumenau 2022; Tkocz and Stritzel 2023): During his government statement on said day, Scholz assured Ukraine of further military support – and argued, in times of increasing criticism that the Chancellor's leadership was too hesitant, that the announced establishment of the *Sondervermögen* was a sign to Germany's allies that Berlin would be committed to collective defence. This line of argumentation was also meant to convince the CDU/CSU, since the

Scholz administration depended on their votes for the constitutional amendment necessary for the final establishment of the *Sondervermögen*. Furthermore, Scholz included a long-term perspective in his government statement which included the following: (1) the idea of setting up a European solidarity fund for the reconstruction of Ukraine fed by the EU and international partners, and (2) the belief that Ukraine's possible accession to the EU should not be happening via a shortcut (Deutscher Bundestag 2022i).

In conclusion, the governmental decision-making process in 2022 is characterised by a historic change in direction due to the exogenous political shock of the invasion on 24 February 2022. Main events in 2022 were inter alia the increase in the defence budget, the agreement on sending heavy weapons to Ukraine, and public confessions by key political actors of the failure of their previous German Russia policy. Hence, at first sight, the German foreign policy change in 2022 could be assessed in a mainly positive way since massive changes were happening that the government had not come even close to in previous years. However, with the knowledge of 2024, the picture looks differently: Now, a more nuanced view is appropriate. Whereas some core pillars of German foreign policy were indeed adapted to the new reality of 2022, others outlasted 2022 and should come back in 2023/ 2024. Assessing this will be done in the final chapter of this thesis, the conclusion.

8 How Much Has Really Changed? Concluding Remarks about the Extent of Change in 2014 versus 2022

This thesis has performed a comparative case study of the German foreign policy change process in the years 2014 and 2022 due to Russian acts of aggression. It tried finding an answer to the puzzling question why a major foreign policy change in Germany only happened in 2022 after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and not already in 2014 after the Russian annexation of Crimea. Extensive interview research was conducted in Berlin with senior FFO officials, MPs dealing with foreign policy as well as with journalists reporting on this. Those exclusive findings were combined with data from the peer-reviewed literature as well as newspaper articles or government statements.

In 2014, the Russian aggression in Ukraine was not perceived as an attack on the West – a view that was issued by all centrist parties in the *Bundestag*. Rather, Berlin saw it as a deeply worrying, yet regional conflict in Eastern Europe that it had to deal with to avoid further escalation and to preserve important economic ties. In the diplomatic talks during the *Normandy Format*, Germany acted more as a mediator and avoided to choose sides by clearly aligning with Ukraine and calling Putin the aggressor (interviews 13, 14). Also, there were strong personal ties with Russia: Merkel had a personal connection with the country due to her having grown up in Eastern Germany, whereas Steinmeier had more of a political closeness. In January 2016, a photo was taken of Steinmeier and Lavrov hugging at the Munich Security Conference which is symbolic for the close, personal relationships of many decisionmakers with their Russian counterparts (Jacobsen 2022). On the other hand, in 2014 mistrust coming from the German side characterised the relationship with the Ukrainian counterparts (interview 13). Hence, the most used tools were dialogue diplomacy, inter alia via the *Normandy Format* starting in June 2014 and the *Minsk Agreements* in September 2014 and February 2015, coupled with economic measures that saw sanctions as a last resort. The government's guiding principle was to see the Ukraine crisis as a political process during which it would not give up Ukraine's sovereignty (interview 4).

Against this background, the following is concluded about the extent of change in German foreign policy pillars – the outcome of the process traced by this thesis: Following Hermann (1990), the case of 2014 constitutes a "problem/ goal change" – the second-biggest type of change according to his typology (see chapter 3) –, meaning that the change happened by replacing the original policy issue. In that sense, a shock-like event led to a first, very cautious

rethinking of Germany's Russia policy so that parts of it were replaced. This was done by establishing new dialogue channels that were driven by a historically friendly approach towards Russia after the end of the Cold War. In the economic sphere, sanctions were imposed after the downing of flight MH17 – whereas the pipeline project North Stream 2 would be continued until its cancellation in February 2022 (see Wood 2023). In conclusion, *Ostpolitik* and *Wandel durch Handel* were cornerstones of the German approach at the time – as was reaffirmed at least implicitly by various statements and speeches analysed in this thesis. This was coupled with *Westbindung* since Germany looked towards the US' policy reaction but also coordinated with France on top of normal EU-cooperation regarding the *Normandy Format* and the *Minsk Agreements*. Also, the principle of a non-military foreign policy was still very much believed in. However, German historical responsibility was interpreted differently than eight years later: In 2014, it was one of the justifications to maintain good bilateral relations with Russia and did not really consider the rest of Eastern Europe. Since the German foreign policy paradigms did not change significantly, the change process in 2014 is more than a mere adjustment – but less than a complete reorientation on the international stage (Forsberg 2016; Hermann 1990).

In 2022, the exogenous political shock of the Russian invasion of Ukraine was perceived as an attack on the whole of Europe – it was considered more severe and led to a remarkable, cross-party unity in the *Bundestag*. On top of that, the Russian war crimes committed in Mariupol, Bucha and elsewhere helped in uniting the German position – with the narrative line "Never again tyranny" (German responsibility to counter acts of tyranny in Europe) dominating over "Never again war" (German hesitation towards military means in foreign policy) (see Tkocz and Stritzel 2023). A value- and norms-driven approach to formulating foreign policy based on the country's history now played a much bigger role than preserving economic interests. This enabled the increasing military support, from the embarrassing offer of 5,000 helmets in January 2022 to becoming the second-largest donor country with military aid totalling up to up to 10.7 billion US$ as of February 2024 (BBC 2024). The CDU/CSU even attacked the government for not sending enough military equipment.

Against this background, the following is concluded about the extent of change in German foreign policy pillars – the outcome of the process traced here: The case of 2022 constitutes an "international orientation change" in line with Hermann (1990), which is the biggest level of change possible in his typology and implies the redirection of the actor's entire policy. Obviously, the most visible change lies in the principle of a non-military foreign policy that used to be enshrined in the political self-understanding of the government. In that regard, the

paradigms of German foreign policy *Ostpolitik* and *Wandel durch Handel*, that had become so-to-say more problematic due to the open war in Ukraine, were quietly put aside in speeches by MPs as well as cabinet members – see the *Zeitenwende* speech. Instead, the focus was on getting Germany's historical responsibility right, meaning that the interpretation of it shifted and implied a greater recognition of the Ukrainian and Eastern European position in general.

When comparing 2014 with 2022, this thesis states in conclusion that the historic foreign policy change in 2022 would not have been possible without the cautious change in 2014. The latter provided the ground for the change process eight years later. (Most) decisionmakers adapted their belief-systems and convictions, they reprioritised and/ or (partly) neglected the German foreign policy paradigms – and were therefore more receptive to the change in 2022.

However, a possible limiting aspect must be acknowledged: Positions and belief-systems in the *Bundestag* and the federal government have changed since the end of the investigation period 2022, as recent examples indicate: It took months of reluctance and the increasing frustration by domestic pressure groups as well as allied nations, until the federal government approved in January 2023 the delivery of Leopard 2 tanks – because Scholz feared that this approval would further escalate the war and make Germany a direct conflict party (Debusmann, Wright and Radford 2023). In February and March 2024, the contentious possibility of sending long-range Taurus missiles to Ukraine led to heavy disputes between the parliamentary groups in the *Bundestag* – with the result that, in the interviews for this thesis, the MPs from the FDP, Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen and CDU/CSU all stated how those three parties had the biggest agreements with each other in foreign policy. In contrast to this, the Chancellor's party SPD was isolated with their hesitation of, for instance, not agreeing to the delivery of Taurus – and had to face accusations such as: "Scholz is personally taking on a heavy responsibility by excluding Taurus" (interview 11, transl.). This led to the remarkable situation that the two junior partners from the governing coalition had a bigger substantive agreement with the main opposition group than with their coalition partner (interviews 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12).

In the end, the potential for further research on this topic should be stressed: As indicated above, this research field is highly evolving and requires ongoing academic attention. For instance, one could research how Germany's feminist foreign policy shapes the policy response to the Russian war against Ukraine. Another idea would be to consider the approaching federal elections in September 2025 – implying the possibility of then having a Chancellor from the CDU/CSU – and study how that possibly impacts the support for Ukraine.

Appendix: Interview Questionnaire

How did you perceive the famous *Zeitenwende* speech that Chancellor Scholz held in front of the *Bundestag* on 27 February 2022?

Category 1: Zeitenwende in February 2022

1: When and how did you give up the vision of a partnership with Russia?

2: Chancellor Scholz announced in his speech a 100 billion special fund and irretrievably connected it with the term Zeitenwende. Can you explain and assess the significance of this fund for the German foreign and security policy change?

3: How did you try to support Ukraine in your respective position? And where did you fail/ could not achieve more?

Category 2: 2022 vs. 2014

4: Why do you think a major foreign and security policy change in Germany only happened in 2022 after the Russian invasion of Ukraine – and not already in 2014 after the Russian annexation of Crimea?

5: FDP: In 2014 your party was not represented in the Bundestag. Instead, a coalition between the Conservatives and the Social democrats was in power – the domestic political situation was hence different. To what extent would your party have acted differently in response to the Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014, if represented in the Parliament?

CDU/CSU: In 2014 your party was the senior partner in a so-called "big coalition" – the domestic political situation was hence different. How did your party act in response to the Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014? What would you decide differently today?

SPD: In 2014 your party was the junior partner in a so-called "big coalition" – the domestic political situation was hence different. How did your party act in response to the Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014? What would you decide differently today?

Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen: In 2014 your party was in the opposition – the domestic political situation was hence different. How would you have acted in response to the Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014, if part of the government? What would you decide differently today?

Federal Foreign Office: How would describe the institutional learning process in the MFA regarding Russian aggression? How appropriate was the reaction in 2014? What would you decide differently today?

6: How did the relationship between the *Bundestag* – the Federal Chancellery – the Federal Foreign Office look like in 2014 vs. 2022 and how did that impact the respective policy reaction by the German government?

Category 3: Change of German foreign policy pillars

7: To what extent have the traditional pillars of German foreign policy changed, when comparing 2022 with 2014 (1: *Westbindung* and European Integration, 2: Multilateralism; 3: Hesitant Leadership; 4: *Ostpolitik* and *Wandel durch Handel*; Non-military Foreign Policy)?

8: In May 2022, Scholz appeared in front of the Defence Committee for the first time and, in the end, some FDP MPs left early because the Chancellor had apparently evaded questions. In

March 2024, the disputes should continue – about Taurus, leaked information from confidential meetings of the Defence Committee and personal fighting between FDP and SPD MPs. What does the fact that the coalition is as divided coalition is as divided as it was in 2022 for the actual implementation of the Zeitenwende?

9: Is there anything else you would like to share or highlight about your perspective that we have not covered today?

Bibliography

Alexijewitsch, S. et al. (2022) “Aufruf von Intellektuellen: ‚Helfen wir der Ukraine, diesen Kriegswinter zu überstehen‘”, *Der Spiegel*. Available at: https://t1p.de/brubp (Accessed: 15 April 2024).

Amann, M. et al. (2022) “The Calamitous Errors of Germany’s Russia Policy”, *Der Spiegel*. Available at: https://t1p.de/bflne (Accessed: 3 November 2023).

Amann, M., Schult, C. and Weiland, S. (2022) “‘There Are Moments When I Am Also Unsure‘”, *Der Spiegel*. Available at: https://t1p.de/esjx2 (Accessed: 3 November 2023).

Amann, M. and Knobbe, M. (2022) “‘There Cannot Be a Nuclear War’”, *Der Spiegel*. Available at: https://t1p.de/0vjbl (Accessed: 13 December 2023).

Balser, M. and Bauchmüller, M. (2014) “Abhängig vom russischen Gas”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Available at: https://t1p.de/v3ymq (Accessed: 21 April 2024).

Bauchmüller, M. et al. (2023) “Zeit des Erwachens: Eine Rekonstruktion der Wochen vor Kriegsbeginn”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Available at: https://t1p.de/pyyx5 (Accessed: 19 April 2024).

BBC (2024) “Ukraine weapons: What arms are being supplied and why are there shortages?”, *BBC*. Available at: https://t1p.de/1mp23 (Accessed: 10 May 2024).

Bidder, B. (2014) “Verhandlungen mit Putin: ‚Obama und Merkel müssen nach Moskau‘”, *Der Spiegel*. Available at: https://t1p.de/pnaju (Accessed: 15 April 2024).

Blankennagel, J. (2022) “Matthias Platzeck gibt Vorsitz im Deutsch-Russischen Forum auf”, *Berliner Zeitung*. Available at: https://t1p.de/muec3 (Accessed: 19 May 2024).

Blavoukos, S. and Bourantonis, D. (2014) “Identifying parameters of foreign policy change: An eclectic approach”, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 49(4), pp. 483-500.

Blumenau, B. (2022) “Breaking with convention? Zeitenwende and the traditional pillars of German foreign policy”, *International Affairs*, 98(6), pp. 1895-1913.

Bosse, G. (2022) “Values, rights, and changing interests: The EU’s response to the war against Ukraine and the responsibility to protect Europeans”, *Contemporary Security Policy*, 43(3), pp. 531-546.

Bunde, T. (2022) “Lessons (to be) learned? Germany’s Zeitenwende and European security after the Russian invasion of Ukraine”, *Contemporary Security Policy*, 43(3), pp. 516-530.

Chivvis, C. and Rid, T. (2009) “The roots of Germany’s Russia policy”, *Survival*, 51(2), pp. 105-122.

Collier, D. (2011) “Understanding Process Tracing”, *Political Science & Politics*, 44(4), pp. 823-830.

Daehnhardt, P. and Handl, V. (2018) “Germany’s Eastern Challenge and the Russia–Ukraine Crisis: A New Ostpolitik in the Making?”, *German Politics*, 27(4), pp. 445-459.

Daehnhardt, P. (2018) “German foreign policy, the Ukraine crisis and the Euro-Atlantic order: Assessing the dynamics of change“, *German Politics*, 27(4), pp. 516-538.

Debusmann, B., Wright, G. and Radford, A. (2023) “Germany confirms it will provide Ukraine with Leopard 2 tanks”, *BBC*. Available at: https://t1p.de/whpof (Accessed: 10 May 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2014a) “Ende der Gewalt in der Ukraine gefordert”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/2uvlv (Accessed: 24 April 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2014b) “Gernot Erler befürchtet Teilung der Ukraine”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/olcei (Accessed: 24 April 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2014c) “Schwabe: Russland nicht ausschließen”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/aetyq (Accessed: 24 April 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2014d) “Klimke lehnt Sanktionen gegen Moskau ab”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/y5kb1 (Accessed: 24 April 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2014e) “Viel Zustimmung für Steinmeiers Außenpolitik”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/0r0sm (Accessed: 24 April 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2014f) “Steinmeier weist Vorwurf des Appeasements zurück”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/frcgm (Accessed: 24 April 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2014g) “Steinmeier hält am Petersburger Dialog fest”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/w3itq (Accessed: 24 April 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2014h) “Steinmeier will aktive deutsche Außenpolitik”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/bfkdb (Accessed: 24 April 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2014i) “Steinmeier: Spaltung Europas verhindern“, *Deutscher Bundestag*. https://t1p.de/cxv4g (Accessed: 1 May 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2022a) “Baerbock: Eine Milliarde zur Unterstützung der Ukraine”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/he55j (Accessed: 25 April 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2022b) “Fraktion fordern Aufklärung der Kriegsverbrechen in der Ukraine”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/n7pj5 (Accessed: 25 April 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2022c) “Bundestag stimmt für Lieferung schwerer Waffen an die Ukraine”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/z6pg (Accessed: 25 April 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2022d) “Verteidigungsetat wächst auf mehr als 50 Milliarden Euro”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/q4nvw (Accessed: 25 April 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2022e) “Ukrainischer Parlaments-präsident Stefantschuk wirbt für EU-Beitritt seines Landes”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/42128 (Accessed: 25 April 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2022f) “Bundestag befürwortet Nato-Beitritt von Finnland und Schweden”, Deutscher Bundestag. Available at: https://t1p.de/il3dh (Accessed: 25 April 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2022g) “Verteidigungsetat von 50 Milliarden Euro sorgt für Diskussionen”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/3zsnz (Accessed: 25 April 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2022h) “Fast alle Fraktionen be-kennen sich zur Er-höhung des Wehretats”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/zs74s (Accessed: 4 May 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2022i) “Bundeskanzler Olaf Scholz sichert Ukraine weitere Unterstützung zu”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/ontwa (Accessed: 4 May 2022).

Deutscher Bundestag (2022j) “Rekordhoch trotz leichter Kürzungen im Verteidigungsetat”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/52b95 (Accessed: 4 May 2024).

Deutscher Bundestag (2022k) “Bundestag ordnet Holodomor als Völkermord ein”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/asm9e (Accessed: 15 May 2024).

Deutsch-Russisches Forum (2019) “Ehrung für Dr. Andreas Meyer-Landrut”, *Deutsch-Russisches Forum*. Available at: https://t1p.de/hyqn5 (Accessed: 18 May 2024).

Deutsch-Russisches Forum (2024) “Häufig gestellte Fragen”, *Deutsch-Russisches Forum*. Available at: https://t1p.de/2w07n (Accessed: 18 May 2024).

Deutsche Welle (2021) “Diplomatisches Tauziehen im Ukraine-Konflikt”, *Deutsche Welle*. Available at: https://t1p.de/qc72h (Accessed: 3 May 2024).

DGAP (2022) “Karl Kaiser”, *DGAP*. Available at: https://t1p.de/hqh2y (Accessed: 18 May 2024).

Donik, O. and Lindner, R. (2024) “Die Krim: Wechselvolle Geschichte und aktuelle Situation”, *Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg*. Available at: https://t1p.de/40cpe (Accessed: 18 April 2024).

Dorn, F., Potrafke, N. and Schlepper, M. (2022) “Zeitenwende in der Verteidungspolitik? 100 Mrd. Euro Sondervermögen für die Bundeswehr – (k)ein großer Wurf”, *ifo Schnelldienst,* 75(6), pp. 37-45.

dpa (2014a) “Wort des Jahres: Lichtgrenze schlägt schwarze Null”, *Der Spiegel.* Available at: https://t1p.de/e9r0w (Accessed: 13 December 2023).

dpa (2014b) “Grüne fordern Prüfung aller Rüstungsexporte”, *Der Spiegel*. Available at: https://t1p.de/uelbo (Accessed: 22 April 2024).

dpa (2022) “’Zeitenwende’ ist das Wort des Jahres 2022”, *Der Spiegel*. Available at: https://t1p.de/u2i35 (Accessed: 3 November 2023).

Eberle, J. (2023) “Understanding German Foreign Policy in the (Post-) Merkel Era—Review Essay“, *International Studies Review*, 25(2), viad007, https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viad007.

Fix, L. (2018) “The Different ‘Shades’ of German Power: Germany and EU Foreign Policy during the Ukraine Conflict”, *German Politics*, 27(4), pp. 498-515.

Fix, L. and Ganter, J. (2022) “Haben die Deutschen die ‘Zeitenwende’ verstanden?”, *Der Spiegel*. Available at: https://t1p.de/tluq0 (Accessed: 3 November 2023).

Forsberg, T. (2016) “From Ostpolitik to ‘frostpolitik’? Merkel, Putin and German foreign policy towards Russia”, *International Affairs*, 92(1), pp. 21-42.

Fröhlich, M. (2023) „Wenn möglich bitte wenden“? Die deutsche Außenpolitik und die Navigation der Zeitenwende“, *Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft*, 33(1), pp. 81-92.

Gabriel, S. (2014) “Die Werte des Westens”, *Die Welt*. Available at: https://t1p.de/84s7q (Accessed: 15 April 2024).

Ganter, J. (2023) “External Shocks or Domestic Pressures: What led to Germany’s Zeitenwende?”, *Journal of International Affairs*, 75(2), pp. 69-78.

Gathmann, F. and Reinbold, F. (2014) “‚Sie bieten sich Merkel an‘ – ‚Quatsch!‘ ”, *Der Spiegel*. Available at: https://t1p.de/dnmn6 (Accessed: 22 April 2024).

Gathmann, F. et al. (2022) “Inside Germany’s Foreign and Security Policy Revolution”, *Der Spiegel.* Available at: https://t1p.de/j0647 (Accessed: 3 November 2023).

Gauck, J. (2014) “Speech to open 50th Munich Security Conference”, *Der Bundespräsident*. Available at: https://t1p.de/qe30w (Accessed: 18 April 2024).

Goertz, G. and Diehl, P. (1995) “The initiation and termination of enduring rivalries: The impact of political shocks”, *American Journal of Political Science*, 39(1), pp. 30-52.

Goldmann, K. (1988) *Change and Stability in Foreign Policy: The Problems and Possibilities of Détente*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gordell, K. (2023) “The State of the Field on Political Shocks: A Review of (Mostly) Quantitative Literature”, in Thompson, W. and Volgy, T. *Shocks and Political Change: A Comparative Perspective on Foreign Policy Analysis*. Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, pp. 11-38.

Gordell, K. and Volgy, T. (2022) “Political shocks in foreign policy and international politics: An alternative approach”, *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, 28(2), pp. 109-126.

Gressel, G., Loss, R. and Puglierin, J. (2022) “Der Leopard 2 wäre jetzt genau richtig”, *Die Zeit*. Available at: https://t1p.de/xob17 (Accessed: 15 April 2024).

Gustavsson, J. (1999) “How should we study foreign policy change?”, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 34(1), pp. 73-95.

Habeck, R. (2014) “Fossil ist autoritär, regenerativ ist demokratisch”, *Die Zeit*. Available at: https://t1p.de/zbijt (Accessed: 15 April 2024).

Haesebrouck, T. and Joly, J. (2021) “Foreign policy change: From policy adjustments to fundamental reorientations”, *Political Studies Review*, 19(3), pp. 482-491.

Halperin, S. and Heath, O. (2017) *Political Research Methods and Practical Skills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Handl, V., Nigrin, T. and Mejstřík, M. (2023) “Turnabout or continuity? The German Zeitenwende and the reaction of the V4 countries to it”, *Journal of European Integration*, 45(3), pp. 503-519.

Hellmann, G. (2009) “Fatal attraction? German foreign policy and IR/foreign policy theory”, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 12, pp. 257-292.

Hermann, C. (1990) “When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy”, *International Studies Quarterly*, 34(1), pp. 3-21.

Hermes, O. (2022a) “Helsinki 2.0 instead of war cries”, *Ost-Ausschuss der deutschen Wirtschaft*. Available at: https://t1p.de/ucf8e (Accessed: 23 April 2024).

Hermes, O. (2022b) “Eskalationsdynamik durchbrechen”, *Ost-Ausschuss der deutschen Wirtschaft*. Available at: https://t1p.de/p8gbg (Accessed: 23 April 2024).

Himighoffen, C. (2022) “Klare Botschaft für den Wiederaufbau”, *Ost-Ausschuss der deutschen Wirtschaft*. Available at: https://t1p.de/pnxgd (Accessed: 23 April 2024).

Ismar, G. and von Salzen, C. (2022) “Ukraine-Botschafter rechnet mit Steinmeier ab – und fordert mehr schwere Waffen”, *Der Tagesspiegel*. Available at: https://t1p.de/wcpdx (Accessed: 15 April 2024).

Jacobsen, L. (2022) “Gerade er hätte es besser wissen müssen”, *Zeit Online*. Available at: https://t1p.de/hlx47 (Accessed: 4 May 2024).

Kägebein, S. (2022) “Dossier Rebuild Ukraine”, *Ost-Ausschuss der deutschen Wirtschaft*. Available at: https://t1p.de/kau75 (Accessed: 23 April 2024).

Kamp, K.-H. (2023) “The Zeitenwende at Work: Germany’s National Security Strategy”, *Survival*, 65(3), pp. 73-80.

Kinsbruner, E. (2014) “7. Deutsch-Russische Rohstoff-Konferenz”, *Ost-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft*. Available at: https://t1p.de/isj9d (Accessed: 20 April 2024).

Klimkin, P. (2014) “Das Schwarze Quadrat des modernen Europas”, *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*. Available at: https://t1p.de/6bdlh (Accessed: 20 April 2024).

Klimkin, P. and Engels, S. (2014) “Ordnung in der Ostukraine wiederherstellen”, *Deutschlandfunk*. Available at: https://t1p.de/vlrtf (Accessed: 20 April 2024).

Klug, T. (2022) “Faktencheck: Deutsche Waffen in Krisengebieten”, *Deutsche Welle*. Available at: https://t1p.de/70o8t (Accessed: 9 April 2024).

Knobbe, M. (2024) “Ein Präsident, so veränderungsscheu wie sein Land”, *Der Spiegel*. Available at: https://t1p.de/te602 (Accessed: 4 May 2024).

Koeth, W. (2016) “Leadership Revised: How Did the Ukraine Crisis and the Annexation of Crimea Affirm Germany’s Leading Role in EU Foreign Policy?“, *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review*, 14(1), pp. 101-116.

Komorowski, B. (2014) “Rede von Polens Staatspräsident Bronisław Komorowski bei der Gedenkfeier ‚75 Jahre Beginn Zweiter Weltkrieg‘”, *Deutscher Bundestag*. Available at: https://t1p.de/wb9gr (Accessed: 23 April 2024).

Lau, J. (2021) “Wandel durch Handel”, *Internationale Politik*. Available at: https://t1p.de/ov6tq (Accessed: 13 May 2024).

Leithner, A. and Libby, K. (2017) “Path Dependency in Foreign Policy”, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics.* Available at: https://t1p.de/ttaf6 (Accessed: 11 April 2024).

Lorke, M. and Alexandrin, T. (2014) “Der Traum von der Freiheit”, *Bundesakademie für Sicherheitspolitik*. Available at: https://t1p.de/xihfh (Accessed: 20 April 2024).

Major, C. and Mölling, C. (2022) “Wie der Westen die Ukraine jetzt aufrüsten sollte”, *Der Spiegel*. Available at: https://t1p.de/k20jl (Accessed: 15 April 2024).

Melnyk, A. and Müller, D. (2022) “Andrij Melnyk: ‚Was wir heute brauchen, sind schwere Waffen‘”, *Deutschlandfunk*. Available at: https://t1p.de/f1ecn (Accessed: 15 April 2023).

Merkel, A. (2014a) “Policy statement by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel on the situation in Ukraine”, *The Federal Government*. Available at: https://t1p.de/4y2wv (Accessed: 23 April 2024).

Merkel, A. (2014b) “Regierungserklärung von Bundeskanzlerin Dr. Angela Merkel”, *Die Bundesregierung*. Available at: https://t1p.de/jnizf (Accessed: 1 May 2024).

Miller, S. (2014) “Deutschlands Russlandpolitik in der Krise”, *Deutschlandfunk*. Available at: https://t1p.de/5s5rz (Accessed: 21 April 2024).

Mölling, C., Schütz, T. and Hellmonds, S. (2023). *German Defence Spending: A Repeat of the Past Instead of a New Era (DGAP Policy Brief, 19)*. Berlin: Forschungsinstitut der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V..

Münkler, H. (2022) “Deutsche Sonderwege”, *Die Zeit*. Available at: https://t1p.de/wnuwi (Accessed: 15 April 2024).

Neukirch, R. and Hoffmann, C. (2014) “‘Russland nicht in die Knie zwingen’”, *Der Spiegel*. Available at: https://t1p.de/qqc8b (Accessed: 1 May 2024).

Oppermann, K. (2019) “Between a Rock and a Hard Place? Navigating Domestic and International Expectations on German Foreign Policy”, *German Politics*, 28(3), pp. 482-498.

Pifer, S. (2019) “Why care about Ukraine and the Budapest Memorandum”, *Brookings*. Available at: https://t1p.de/wik (Accessed: 22 May 2024).

Rasler, K. (2000) “Shocks, expectancy revision, and the de-escalation of protracted conflicts: The Israeli-Palestinian case”, *Journal of Peace Research*, 37(6), pp. 699-720.

Siddi, M. (2016) “German Foreign Policy towards Russia in the Aftermath of the Ukraine Crisis: A New Ostpolitik?”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 68(4), pp. 665-677.

Siddi, M. (2018) “An evolving Other: German national identity and constructions of Russia”, *Politics*, 38(1), pp. 35-50.

Siddi, M. (2020) “A Contested Hegemon? Germany’s Leadership in EU Relations with Russia”, *German Politics*, 29(1), pp. 97-114.

Steinmeier, F.-W. (2014a) “Rede von Außenminister Steinmeier anlässlich der Mitgliederversammlung des Deutsch-Russischen Forums e.V. am 19.03.2014 in Berlin”, *Auswärtiges Amt*. Available at: https://t1p.de/x0cri (Accessed: 20 April 2024).

Steinmeier, F.-W. (2014b) “Speech by Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier at the 50th Munich Security Conference”, *Federal Foreign Office*. Available at: https://t1p.de/4rl30 (Accessed: 23 April 2014).

Stent, A. (2022) “Germany and Russia: Farewell to Ostpolitik?”, *Survival*, 64(5), pp. 27-38.

Strycharz, D. (2022) “Dominant Narratives, External Shocks, and the Russian Annexation of Crimea”, *Problems of Post-Communism*, 69(2), pp. 133-144.

Teevs, C. (2022) “Ein Kanzler im Krieg”, *Der Spiegel*. Available at: https://t1p.de/glz4g (Accessed: 3 November 2023).

Timmins, G. (2011) “German-Russian Bilateral Relations and EU Policy on Russia: Between Normalisation and the ‘Multilateral Reflex’”, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 19(2), pp. 189-199.

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2023) “Ostpolitik: West German foreign policy”, *Britannica*. Available at: https://t1p.de/l20xy (Accessed: 13 May 2024).

Vehlewald, H.-J. (2014) “Altkanzler Helmut Schmidt (95, SPD) über Europa und die Ukraine-Krise: ‚Ich traue Putin nicht zu, dass er Krieg will‘”, *Bild*. Available at: https://t1p.de/k96fw (Accessed: 25 April 2024).

Volgy, T. and Gordell, K. (2023) “A framework for analyzing political shocks and their effects“, in Thompson, W. and Volgy, T. *Shocks and Political Change: A Comparative Perspective on Foreign Policy Analysis*. Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, pp. 63-83.

von Bullion, C. (2021) “Habeck offen für Waffenlieferungen an die Ukraine”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Available at: https://t1p.de/htp7w (Accessed: 5 April 2024).

von Salzen, C. (2014) “Deutschland und Russland: Vernetzt mit dem Kreml”, *Der Tagesspiegel*. Available at: https://t1p.de/c3jd1 (Accessed: 20 April 2024).

Welch, D. (2005) *Painful Choices: A Theory of Foreign Policy Change*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Wood, S. (2023) “Germany and Nord Stream 2: evolution and end of an incongruous policy”, *International Politics*, pp. 1-24.

Wright, N. (2018) “No Longer the Elephant Outside the Room: Why the Ukraine Crisis Reflects a Deeper Shift Towards German Leadership of European Foreign Policy”, *German Politics*, 27(4), pp. 479-497.

Yoder, J. (2015) “From amity to enmity: German-Russian relations in the post Cold War period“, *German Politics and Society*, 33(3), pp. 49-69.

Zeit Online (2022) “Frank-Walter Steinmeier räumt Fehler in seiner Russland-Politik ein”, *Zeit Online*. Available at: https://t1p.de/ka29k (Accessed: 4 May 2024).