

German Foreign Policy Rules for Action during the 2011 Libya Crisis

Hermann Kurthen

Sociology, Grand Valley State University

Abstract: This article presents the conceptualization of fundamental foreign policy beliefs of 62 German decision-makers and experts from the executive branch, parliament, think tanks, media, and academia concerning the March 2011 UN Security Council resolution on Libya. The actors' perceptions were abductively inferred from qualitative interviews using the reconstructivist theoretical framework. Four types of respondents were identified: Realists, Normalizers, Traditionalists, and Pacifists. While they shared the general imperatives of military restraint, alliance solidarity, multilateralism, and upholding values, their specific partisan-ideological interpretation of the application of those rules for action in the case of Libya differed. Both Normalizers and Traditionalists perceived Germany's UN vote abstention and non-participation in the NATO-led intervention as a break with German foreign policy and a costly mistake, whereas the Realists and Pacifists were in support of the German center-right coalition government's policy of military restraint, although for very different reasons.

Keywords: actor typology, German foreign policy, Libya conflict, qualitative analysis, rules for action, UN Resolution 1973

Introduction

On 17 March 2011, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1973 authorizing the establishment of a no-fly zone and the use of force to protect the Libyan civilian population. Inside and outside of Germany, the Security Council vote gained particular attention because the Federal Republic—along with Brazil, China, India, and Russia—abstained from the vote and from military participation while its Western NATO allies supported it.¹ This decision came as a shock to politicians, experts, scholars, and journalists who had expected that Germany would easily fall in line with its allies' UN Security Council Libya vote and intervention policy.²

During the Cold War, the Federal Republic of Germany developed and cultivated a set of unwritten pro-Western rules that guided its foreign policy. These included using military restraint, partnering closely with its EU



and NATO allies, strictly abiding to multilateralism, and upholding a values agenda.³ Then, during the decades after German unification, the country in fits and starts adapted its imperatives to the new realities of the post-Cold War order, a process that in the literature has been discussed under the label of neo-realist “normalization.”⁴ One of the most important decisions was the Federal Constitutional Court’s ruling in July 1994, the so-called Out-of-Area decision, which constitutionally allowed, for the first time since World War II, a foreign deployment of German armed forces, but only with the consent of parliament.⁵

The dissonance between what was expected of Germany and its actual Libya policy of abstention unleashed heated debates and critical commentaries about the country’s security and foreign policy, both at home and abroad. Most foreign policy observers and experts considered Germany’s stance a mistake and a violation of fundamental German foreign policy principles, and they predicted grave consequences. Consequently, a voluminous body of literature tried to describe and explain the UN vote decision-making,⁶ the short- and long-term causes and outcomes of the German abstention,⁷ and the public and elite opinion in Germany at the time.⁸

This article addresses some questions that remain little explored in the literature, such as the following: Why did the 2011 Libya policy lead to such a passionate debate in Germany? How did different groups of German foreign policy decision-makers and experts⁹ make sense of and interpret German foreign policy imperatives in the context of the Libyan conflict?¹⁰ Was Germany’s behavior an expression of a policy without vision, strategy, or principles?¹¹ Did German skepticism of military intervention disprove the assumption of “normalization”?¹² Was the Libya abstention a break with the post-war Bonn Republic’s foreign policy continuity, indicating the rekindling of a new nationalism or a return to a unique German historical path (*Sonderweg*) of united Germany’s Berlin Republic?¹³ And, importantly, what can we learn in hindsight from the Libya case about German foreign policy going forward?

To answer these questions, this study analyzed in-depth interviews with 62 German foreign policy actors in Berlin in the spring of 2011. The analysis is rooted in the reconstructivist methodology, which allows us to understand how these actors, in their own words, conceptualized German foreign policy principles in the context of the Libya conflict. The qualitative findings presented here not only corroborate but also complement existing research on the Libya abstention and the trajectory of German foreign policy, providing new and deeper insights into how different types of German actors apply fundamental foreign policy imperatives in specific situations.

Theoretical Framework

This study builds on the theoretical tradition of political science elite opinion research,¹⁴ concepts of political and strategic culture,¹⁵ and the reconstructivist theoretical framework of Ulrich Roos.¹⁶ Roos pays particular attention to the interaction between political structures and human agency, combining epistemological and methodological premises from hermeneutics,¹⁷ grounded theory,¹⁸ and pragmatism's assumption that "belief is a rule for action."¹⁹

Roos's interpretation of the pragmatist premises posits that rules for action are shared sets of beliefs of actors about decision-making possibilities and priorities in a foreign policy "structure of corporate practice."²⁰ Roos distinguishes *arena-transcending* rules for action that represent "the fundamental script of the role and identity of ... foreign policy"²¹ across all arenas from *arena-specific* rules for action "that deal with specific issues or problems."²²

Reconstructivism assumes that beliefs about present and future political action that coalesce in arena-transcending rules for action are formed over years, if not decades. They are internalized through social and cultural learning processes and embedded in collective memories, traditions, expectations of others, and in shared norms and values. In addition, they are influenced by ever-changing arena-specific experiences of historical events and continuous lessons learned from political decisions and their outcomes. In sum, arena-transcending rules for action are the result of "a complex procedural, living web of doubt and belief, of crisis and routine, of change and continuity."²³

Although arena-transcending rules for action are not uniform, unambiguous, or finite and can vary across a spectrum of actors, they are relatively stable within a given group. Among a circumscribed audience in a given time and place, rules for action are expressed in the form of shared normative orientations and instrumental rationales, as guidance for resolving issues and making decisions and as concepts of ethical and moral legitimacy.²⁴

Domestic and transnational actors, such as politicians, state agencies, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, interest groups, and public and social media, share particular understandings of existing arena-transcending rules for action and are involved (often unwittingly) in their reinterpretation and legitimization. Rules for action can be empirically revealed through detailed abductive analyses of interviews, speeches, or other kinds of texts.²⁵

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. In the next section, the sample and interview data are described, and then the qualitative findings are presented in three parts. The first part is a description of the four fundamental arena-transcending German foreign policy rules for action that

were distilled from the interviews. The second part identifies four types of actors derived from the interviewed decision-makers' and experts' interpretation of arena-transcending rules for action. The third part discusses how the interviewees interpreted arena-transcending rules for action in the context of the arena-specific German Libya policy. Was the policy a break or continuity of dominant rules for action at the time of the interviews? Was it a mistaken application of rules for action? What was its expected outcome? Finally, the conclusion examines how the findings of this study can help us to better understand why Germany's Libya policy created such a blowback, and—more importantly—what we can learn about possible future trajectories of German foreign policy.

Data

The selection of the sample for the 62 semi-structured interviews was conducted with support from the German think tank *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)* during a U.S. Fulbright-funded research visit of the author in Berlin in 2011. Because the overall population of foreign policy actors in Germany could not be clearly determined to achieve sample representativity, a purposive maximum variation sampling was used. As a result, respondents' occupational functions, party affiliation, age, and gender were taken into account to ensure sample diversity.²⁶

Altogether 164 foreign policy decision-makers and experts from the German government, parliament, think tanks, academia, and media were contacted. Eventually, 72 persons were interviewed, 33 individuals refused to participate for a variety of reasons, and 49 did not respond to written requests. For this article, 10 of the 72 interviewees—non-German nationals and those who did not comment on Libya—were omitted.

Since the diversity of opinions encountered in the interviews corresponded with the breadth of the public debate about Libya in the German media and academic publications of the time, there is confidence to assume that the saturation criteria used in qualitative sampling were satisfied.

Seven respondents (11 percent) were members of the German executive branch from the Chancellor's Office, the German Foreign Office, and the Federal Ministry of Defense. Twenty (32 percent) were elected parliamentarians (MdB), most of them members of the Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs. Thirteen interviewees (21 percent) were older and retired diplomats and ex-politicians, and 22 (36 percent) were independent foreign policy experts from think tanks, academia, media, and research staffers from the parliament.

Eighty-seven percent of the total sample were males. The average age was 50 but ranged from 30 to 89 years. Forty-seven percent of the persons interviewed held a doctoral degree, mostly think tank experts and academics, while the remainder had completed other university degrees. Forty percent of the actors (N=25) had no or an unknown party affiliation. Among the 37 party-affiliated interviewees, 10 were members of the conservative Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), and six were members of the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP). The other participants belonged to the opposition parties at the time: 11 were Social Democrats (SPD), six were Greens (Die Grünen), and four were members of the Left Party (Die Linke).

The interviews covered questions that were related not only to Germany's Libya abstention but also to fundamental foreign policy beliefs. Flexible coding²⁷ was used for evaluating the transcriptions of the tape-recorded interviews starting with the creation of summary memos and followed by indexing the answers of how respondents described their foreign policy beliefs, lessons learned, challenges ahead, and future priorities. Then "summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute[s]"²⁸ of responses were thematically coded into categories such as multilateralism, alliances, values, and so forth²⁹ using MAXQDA qualitative software.³⁰ Those codes were then further sub-categorized and reordered. The iterative process of (re)coding, comparing, ordering, linking, and classifying was strengthened by a triangulation of the qualitative findings with a quantitative evaluation of socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents to test the credibility, applicability, and consistency of the sample, coding, and evaluation.

Arena-Transcending Rules for Action

The qualitative analysis identified four overarching arena-transcending German foreign policy rules for action shared by all respondents: military restraint, alliance solidarity, multilateralism, and upholding values. These fundamental beliefs are broadly in line with what research,³¹ official documents,³² and textbooks³³ describe as shared foundations and imperatives of the post-World War II and post-unification foreign policy of the Federal Republic of Germany:

1. Maintaining a culture of military restraint in the context of being a civil power (*Zivilmacht*) that endorses the use of military force only as a last resort. This is expressed in the slogan "Politics before force."³⁴

2. Maintaining close ties with alliance partners and endorsing a policy of solidarity—the cooperative integration of German foreign policy within the European Union and a close transatlantic partnership, particularly with the U.S., through NATO. This is expressed in the post–World War II lesson of “Never alone.”³⁵
3. Upholding multilateralism by anchoring German foreign policy decisions in regulatory frameworks, such as treaties, international law, and institutions like the UN, CSCE, OECD, the International Criminal Court, G7, G20, and other groupings. This conveys the message of “Never be an outlaw again.”³⁶
4. Conducting foreign policy in the spirit of protecting universal and “Western” values, such as democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, for example, through the UN doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). This imperative is enshrined in the notion of “Never again Auschwitz.”³⁷

Partisan and ideological divisions were revealed, however, in the interpretation and application of these four fundamental sets of beliefs. These differences became evident when interviewees explained when and where military force should be used, and how policy decisions should accommodate alliance solidarity, multilateral obligations, and upholding values.

In the next section, the different actor types are described.

Actor Typology

As mentioned earlier, the actor typology was abductively derived from observable regularities in the interviewees’ particular interpretations of the four previously described arena-transcending sets of foreign policy rules for action (see table 1). Not surprisingly, the following actor typology resembles conceptualizations that have been previously used in the German political science literature, most prominently Hellmann’s schools of thought (*Denkschulen*),³⁸ Maull’s actor-centered role theory of civilian power (*Zivilmacht*),³⁹ and Stahl’s and Baumann’s identity discourse analysis.⁴⁰ After analyzing the sample of 62 respondents, four actor types were identified and labeled as follows:

1. *Realists* (N=16, 26 percent) interpreted arena-transcending rules for action on a case-by-case basis, pragmatically and flexibly, in relation to situational domestic and foreign policy constraints, instead of tying themselves to partisan, doctrinaire ideological agendas or giving

Table 1: Interpretation of Arena-Transcending and Arena-Specific German Foreign Policy Rules for Action by Actor Type

ACTOR TYPES (Total N=62)				
	Realists (N=16)	Normalizers (N=21)	Traditionalists (N=21)	Pacifists (N=4)
RULES FOR ACTION	Arena-transcending interpretation of German foreign policy rules			
Military restraint, <i>Politics before force</i>	All four rules should be interpreted pragmatically and flexibly	<i>Politics before force</i> should be interpreted more pragmatically and flexibly	All rules are of equal importance	<i>Politics before force</i> has priority
EU and NATO alliance solidarity, <i>Never alone</i>				All other rules are of equal importance but secondary to <i>Politics before force</i>
Acting within UN multilateralism and international law, <i>Never be an outlaw again</i>		All other rules are of equal importance		
Upholding values such as human rights, <i>Never again Auschwitz</i>				
ISSUES	Libya arena-specific interpretation of German foreign policy rules			
Was the German Libya policy a <i>break</i> or <i>continuity</i> of arena-transcending rules for action?	Policy was a continuity of a pragmatic and flexible interpretation of <i>Politics before force</i> , <i>Never alone</i> , <i>Never be an outlaw again</i> , and <i>Never again Auschwitz</i>	Policy was a break with <i>Never alone</i> , <i>Never be an outlaw again</i> , and <i>Never again Auschwitz</i> . <i>Politics before force</i> should have been applied more pragmatically and flexibly	Policy was a continuity of <i>Politics before force</i> but also at the same time a break with <i>Never alone</i> , <i>Never be an outlaw again</i> , and <i>Never again Auschwitz</i>	Policy was a continuity by giving <i>Politics before force</i> priority over other rules
Was the German Libya policy a <i>correct</i> or <i>mistaken</i> application of rules for action?	Policy was correct, using structural and a mix of structural and actor-centric arguments	Policy was mistaken, using a mix of actor-centric and structural arguments	Policy was mistaken, using a mix of actor-centric and structural arguments	Policy was correct, using mostly structural arguments
What was the <i>effect</i> of the German Libya policy?	Limited damage	Significant damage	Significant damage	Negligible damage

- priority to normative interpretations of arena-transcending rules for action, which is why the term “Realists” was used. Realists were relatively young, with an average age of 52, were more likely to hold doctoral degrees and be conservative, and typically were members of the executive branch, that is, employees in the Chancellor’s Office, the Foreign Office, and the Ministry of Defense.
2. *Normalizers* (N=21, 34 percent) emphasized the primacy of Germany’s normative commitment to the EU and NATO alliance, multilateralism, and a universal values agenda, such as human rights protection through R2P, but at the same time preferred a more pragmatic and flexible interpretation of Germany’s culture of military restraint. In the literature, this group’s policy agenda has been described as a drive toward “normalization,”⁴¹ a term used here for actors holding such attitudes. The average age of Normalizers was 60 years; they were more likely to be conservative and were typically members of the parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee, retired decision-makers, and experts from think tanks, foundations, associations, media, and academia.
 3. *Traditionalists* (N=21, 34 percent) favored a continuation of the Bonn Republic tradition of a principled normative upholding of all four rules for action equally, that is, “Politics before force,” “Never alone,” “Never be an outlaw again,” and “Never again Auschwitz.”⁴² Traditionalists were more likely to be older, with an average age 64, and to be retired former decision-makers and parliament members of the oppositional SPD and Green Party, although they also included several members of the governing CDU/CSU/FDP coalition and some experts.
 4. *Pacifists* (N=4, 6 percent) underscored the primacy of a principled moral stance on military non-intervention, even if this implied a subordination of the other three rules for action, such as standing outside the consensus with major alliance partners, not supporting the UN resolution, and making exceptions to the R2P doctrine by rejecting it as an illegitimate attempt at regime change. Pacifists argued that civilian casualties resulting from a UN-approved foreign military intervention by Germany’s allies and NATO would most likely exceed the human rights violations committed by Muammar Gaddafi. This small group was composed exclusively of MdBs from the Left Party, with an average age of 51.

In the following section, the arena-specific interpretations of rules for action concerning the Libya UN vote and military intervention are outlined in more detail and for each of the four actor types just identified.

Arena-Specific Issues Regarding Germany's Libya Policy

The arena-specific assessment of Germany's Libya policy concerns the actors' interpretation of whether and to what degree the German government's Libya policy was in sync with Germany's four foreign policy rules for action. The analysis revealed three Libya arena-specific issues to which the four actor types reacted differently: (1) did Germany's abstention from the UN vote and from military intervention in Libya demonstrate *continuity* or a *break* with Germany's arena-transcending foreign policy rules for action; (2) was Germany's Libya policy a *correct* or a *mistaken* application of rules for action and its causes; and (3) did this policy do *damage* to the future application of German foreign policy and, if so, how much?

Was the Libya Policy a Continuity or a Break with German Foreign Policy Rules?

Only 15 percent (N=9) of the 62 respondents rated the decision to abstain from UN Resolution 1973 as a continuity with the four German arena-transcending foreign policy rules for action, among them seven Realists employed in the executive branch and two Pacifists from the Left Party. This finding is important because policy "continuity," interpreted as an expression of stability, reliability, responsibility, and trustworthiness, is highly valued in the German political culture.

Fifty-five percent (N=28) of interviewees regarded the German government's decision as a break with German foreign and strategic culture. Thirteen were Normalizers and 15 were Traditionalists, many of them MdBs of the oppositional SPD and the Green Party (N=9) and retired former politicians and diplomats (N=9). Normalizers and Traditionalists, however, disagreed about how to enact the military restraint rule. Normalizers thought that "Politics before force" should have been used more flexibly to allow Germany's participation in the NATO mission. But Traditionalists agreed with a strict enforcement of German military non-participation, although they would have supported voting with the Western allies and the Arab League to demonstrate Germany's solidarity. Particularly members of the conservative and liberal ruling parties were split on this issue.

Finally, 50 percent (N=25) of respondents—nine Realists, eight Normalizers, six Traditionalists, and two Pacifists—disagreed with a binary description of Germany's Libya policy as either continuity or break. A majority of this group was not affiliated with political parties and belonged to think tanks, foundations, the media, and academia.

The following provides a more detailed presentation of the reasonings behind actor opinions.

Continuity with rules for action. Those Realists who considered the German Libya abstention as a continuity often interpreted it as an expression of Germany's post-World War II stance of non-intervention by military force. For example, a member of the Foreign Office (#39/Realist) explained Germany's UN vote as a "historically founded pacifist reflex, which in Germany has priority" over the traditional transatlantic and European ties. In addition, a general in the Ministry of Defense (#63/Realist) pointed out that it was legitimate for Germany, as for any other country, to decide if its participation in a military mission is in the national interest. In his view, Libya was a "humanitarian tragedy" for which a military intervention was "no clear remedy."

Left Party supporters of Germany's Libya abstention emphatically stressed the moral lessons of Germany's militaristic historical legacy and the Holocaust, which in their view prohibited the military participation of Germany in international conflicts as a matter of principle, confirming the party's emphasis on the primacy of a "policy of peace and civil conflict resolution" (#74/Pacifist). A Left Party MdB in the Committee on Foreign Affairs (#1/Pacifist) agreed with FDP Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle that prior to UN Resolution 1973—which provided the legal basis for military intervention—all possible peaceful alternatives had not been sufficiently explored, nor had the possible negative consequences of military intervention been adequately considered by pro-interventionists.

Break with rules for action. Critics of Germany's Libya abstention interpreted this policy as a break with its "responsibility" toward its allies and, at the same time, tended to downplay or interpret the meaning of a "Politics before force" rule flexibly as being in sync with a Libya intervention policy. This way, they emphasized the normative commitment to the NATO alliance and the imperative of multilateralism while relativizing the German tradition of military restraint. For example, a former Green Party politician (#16/Normalizer) argued that it was time for a "normalization" of German restraint because it is an illusion to see Germany as a neutral "big Switzerland." A retired German UN diplomat with experience as a former state secretary at the Foreign Office (#58/Normalizer) similarly criticized Germany's Libya decision as an interruption of the German trend of taking on more responsibilities—militarily and otherwise—in the NATO alliance and in UN-sanctioned multilateral missions. Reservations toward a German military involvement in Libya, arguments about a lack of military preparation of the *Bundeswehr*, and critiques of the broad UN mandate were dismissed as cheap excuses.

An ex-diplomat (#58/Normalizer) criticized the Libya decision as a "break with the straight line ... of German foreign policy so far ..., because

we [Germans] have accepted to take on more [out-of-area, i.e., outside of NATO member state territory] responsibility. We have agreed to battle groups. We are involved in Africa, Congo, and Sudan ... where we provided military aircraft ... to fly the African peacekeeping troops from Tanzania to Darfur, and so on.” In this view, the abstention and anti-intervention argument of a lack of a Libya exit strategy are invalid, because, according to this interviewee, “you never know beforehand in a military action what happens anyway. There are a lot of examples that were legitimized by the Security Council. Think about Somalia ... where the mission totally failed ... But that is not foreseeable.” Another retired diplomat (#13/Normalizer) portrayed the German abstention as a break with Germany’s most important allies—namely, France and the U.S.—and at the same time as a violation of “our human responsibility for the protection of the civilian population” in Libya.

Traditionalists also criticized Germany’s abstention from the UN vote as a break because it denied Germany’s allies diplomatic cover. Yet at the same time, Traditionalists rejected a German military participation in Libya, as mentioned. Many justified this balancing act by arguing that Germany should express political solidarity with the actions of its NATO allies while maintaining its military restraint posture. For example, a think tank member (#44/Traditionalist) emphatically approved UN Resolution 1973 while simultaneously supporting Germany’s military abstention. Instead of publicly snubbing its allies at the UN, she argued, Germany should have reacted to the criticism about its non-participation in Libya by pointing out Germany’s solid military engagement in Afghanistan and Kosovo.

Neither a break nor a continuity with rules for action. Respondents who disagreed with a binary depiction of the German Libya policy as a break or a continuity often described the specific circumstances that led to the UN vote as an “accident” or referred to the complexity and situational context of decision-making processes. For example, an FDP MdB (#14/Realist) interpreted Germany’s vote as a singular exception and an expression of a lack of a common European foreign and security policy that was not an indicator for a long-term and deliberate reorientation of German foreign policy. A Foreign Office member (#2/Realist) referred to similar situations where individual NATO members rejected participation in alliance missions. Therefore, in his view, the German abstention was not at all surprising for its allies and was willingly accepted. For a staff member of the parliament (#17/Realist), the Libya decision had elements of continuity when compared to the country’s abstention from participation in the 2003 Iraq War. On the other hand, this interviewee claimed the German policy was a break with multilateralism because

it ignored a positive majority vote of the UN. A member of a think tank (#55/Realist) portrayed Germany's abstention vote as an untypical breach of NATO's alliance consensus, that is, the principle of "Never alone." Yet in his view the decision against military intervention in Libya stood for continuity with "Politics before force," not least because every military engagement abroad is subject to parliamentary approval and because the "whole mission had an uncertain outcome. There were good reasons for and against it. And it is also clear that the barriers in [German] political culture using the military are higher than in other countries."

Was the Libya Policy a Correct Decision or a Mistake in Applying German Rules for Action?

As demonstrated in the previous analysis, arena-specific interpretations help us to understand how actors interpret and apply arena-transcending rules for action. This also applies to the question of whether the German government's Libya position was considered wrong or not, and the perceived causes of this policy.

Similarly to the break/continuity question, only a minority of 10 actors (16 percent) perceived the policy as correct. Six of these were Realists, typically younger respondents. The remaining four were Pacifists of the Left Party, but they shared this opinion with the Realists for quite different reasons. The former held a pragmatic and flexible interpretation of German national interests, while the latter responded from a moral and value-infused pacifist viewpoint.

Fifty-two (84 percent) of the 62 respondents rejected Germany's Libya policy as not in alignment with its arena-transcending foreign policy rules for action. Of those 52 interviewees, 35 (57 percent)—mostly Traditionalists (N=19) and Normalizers (N=16)—rated the German abstention in the UN Security Council as a political mistake. They included 11 retired former decision-makers and 10 SPD and Green Party MdBs. The remaining 17 (27 percent)—among them eight Realists, four Normalizers, and two Traditionalists—assessed Germany's Libya policy ambivalently.

With regard to the causes of Germany's Libya policy, we can distinguish three explanations: "structural," that is, institutional, political, legal, and economic constraint-based (45 percent, N=28); "personal," or actor-centric (24 percent, N=15); and "mixed" personal and structural arguments (31 percent, N=19).

Structural reasonings referred, for example, to the role of the forthcoming state elections in Germany in the spring and summer of 2011, to the anti-war sentiment of the German public, or to the Fukushima nuclear accident. Other decision-making constraints included the unclear situation on the ground

in Libya and quickly shifting policy positions by major decision-makers in the UN Security Council, which left insufficient time for preparation and discussion. Many Realists involved in policy-making in the administration, in think tanks, and in academia, as well as Pacifists, tended to support structural interpretations.

Personal rationalizations focused on the actions of particular politicians and their personalities, ambitions, level of experience, knowledge, principles, tactical or strategic skills, and so forth. The main target of criticism was Foreign Minister Westerwelle. He was accused of weak leadership, diplomatic errors, and of being “inexperienced,” “populist,” “unintelligent,” “irresponsible,” “not up to the task,” “resistant to advice,” “amateurish,” and a “Schröder copy.”⁴³ Also criticized were foreign actors like French President Nicolas Sarkozy, British Prime Minister David Cameron, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.⁴⁴ Personal and mixed interpretations were more likely to be backed by Normalizers and Traditionalists, among them many MdBs and retired German diplomats, former politicians, and ministers.

The following provides a more detailed presentation of the reasonings behind actor opinions.

Libya abstention was a correct decision. As mentioned, only a minority of respondents were in favor of Germany’s Libya abstention policy. Among the 10 supporters, structural (N=5) and mixed (N=4) interpretations dominated compared to only one personal interpretation. Typical arguments referred to the dubious democratic legitimacy of the rebels, the lack of an exit strategy, and the uncertain outcome of the Libya operation, that is, the incalculable consequences and risks of taking sides in a presumably long-running civil war. An official from the Chancellor’s Office (#32/Realist) welcomed Germany’s policy as the best option in a very complicated decision-making process. A retired diplomat (#9/Realist) justified the German UN vote as being consistent with other German policy positions in the Middle East. It would be “absurd [to intervene] because we [the West] do nothing against [Bashar al-] Assad, nothing against [Hosni] Mubarak, let alone against [Zine el-Abidine] Ben Ali . . . , and in particular nothing against Bahrain.”

A CDU MdB (#24/Realist) rejected a policy of “moral interventionism,” not least because it is impossible to intervene everywhere in the world where dictatorships threaten human rights, civil liberties, and the rule of law. According to this member of parliament, Germany should provide humanitarian aid to victims of violence whenever possible, but should avoid “at all costs” becoming involved in military ground attacks in Libya, since the

consequences and risks of this mission were not foreseeable: “Yes, I still think [UN-mandated military] interventions are right, but you have to consider it carefully; you cannot do that too often.” In contrast to this pragmatic interpretation of “Politics before force,” an MdB of the Left Party (#43/Pacifist) argued that Germany’s abstention was a morally good and politically correct decision because it adhered to this actor’s principled pacifist interpretation of this rule for action.

Libya abstention was a wrong decision. Of the 35 critics who considered the German Libya decision as a mistake, 66 percent (N=23) used mixed interpretations, compared to eight respondents who referred to structural interpretations and four to personal interpretations. Actor-centric responses often used drastic judgmental terms such as “inconsistent,” “smart-alecky,” or even “foolish” (#57/Normalizer and #69/Normalizer) to characterize Germany’s Libya policy decisions. Some critics were scornful about the “hypocrisy” to support the Libyan “freedom movement” by words only. A former CDU politician (#57/Normalizer) labeled this attitude as an “ethics of washing one’s hands of the matter.”

A central argument of the abstention critics was that Germany went against its allies and risked losing international trust. Seven respondents interpreted the German abstention as a violation of the R2P principle against the threats of a brutal government. Other interviewees, like a think tank member (#50/Normalizer), described the decision as “technically” unprofessional or as a “work accident” by Foreign Minister Westerwelle, who ignored the advice of experienced German diplomats and insufficiently discussed the matter with NATO allies. Some respondents, including a political scientist (#49/Traditionalist), also suspected that Westerwelle opportunistically followed opinion polls in the pursuit of new voters.

Still others, like a retired diplomat (#40/Traditionalist), denounced Germany’s policy as an unnecessary “exceptional path” (*Sonderweg*) that should be rejected for historical and political reasons. Another retired diplomat (#13/Normalizer) believed Westerwelle misunderstood military restraint as “an exaggerated principle” at the cost of the responsibility to protect civilian populations. A political scientist (#61/Normalizer) pointed out that all criteria in favor of an international intervention had been present in the case of Libya—namely, a UN mandate, a local call for help, and the involvement of regional actors from Arabia and Africa—which is why approval of the resolution would have been the correct decision. Another criticism was that Germany’s abstention would prevent it from having any influence on future interpretations and enactments of the UN mandate.

Ambivalent positions. Finally, there were those 27 percent (N=17) of interviewees who were either indecisive or more nuanced, considering the Libya decision to be neither right nor wrong or both right and wrong. The majority used structural (N=10) and mixed (N=5) interpretations compared to personal ones (N=2). An official in the Foreign Office (#2/Realist), for example, expressed doubts about categorizing political decisions in an “either-or” fashion since such decisions are “damn hard. [Libya is] a classic decision where we know we’ll get our hands dirty when we become the air force of the rebels. We’ll also get our hands dirty if we do nothing ... There is no clear right or wrong, and regardless what you do, it is always partly wrong, simply because we are put in this situation.”

What Was the Effect of the Libya Policy for the Future Application of German Rules for Action?

Of the 29 individuals who commented on the consequences of Germany’s UN vote for the future application of German arena-transcending rules for action, 12 (41 percent) believed that the Libya decision seriously damaged Germany’s economic and financial interests, limited its future freedom to act in foreign policy, and led to a loss of reputation (4 Realists, 3 Normalizers, 5 Traditionalists). Four persons (14 percent) predicted a loss of prestige (1 Realist, 1 Normalizer, 2 Traditionalists). Forty-five percent (N=13) of 29 respondents expected no or negligible repercussions (7 Realists, 4 Normalizers, 1 Traditionalist, and 1 Pacifist). Normalizers and Traditionalists, among them many retired actors and members of the opposition (SPD/Green Party), were more likely to be pessimistic about policy outcomes. The negative effects of the Libya policy were downplayed by Realists working in the executive branches of Chancellor Merkel’s government and by the more aloof experts in think tanks and academia. Members of the Left Party believed that the damage was hyped to delegitimize a pacifist stance.

In the following, typical narratives are presented.

Strong negative effects. An MdB of the SPD (#36/Traditionalist) claimed that the media commentaries in Germany and the U.S. were “hurtful” and encouraged “increased strong mistrust of German reliability—the worst thing in foreign policy that can happen.” In addition, he added that the German abstention removed the country’s ability to exert influence on decisions made by its NATO allies in the region and Libya and increased international pressure on Germany to support the intervention financially, as during the 1990–1991 Gulf War. In other words, Germany would become a paymaster without having political or economic influence on the situation on the ground. A retired

diplomat (#9/Realist) worried that Germany would be blamed as a spoiler, “although everyone understands that the Libya adventure is a mistake with an uncertain outcome ... Germany’s stance will be used as a means ... to put some pressure on [Chancellor] Merkel ... leading to difficult negotiations [with its allies] in the future.” The respondent then continued with his pessimistic forecast that Germany would have to pay more for the Libya mission, would be required to increase its NATO involvement, and would have to make concessions on currency issues.

Seven respondents, mostly Normalizers and Traditionalists, mentioned the withdrawal of German Navy ships from NATO’s ongoing Operation Active Endeavour anti-terrorism operations in the Eastern Mediterranean as a consequence of Germany’s Libya abstention policy. Some believed, however, that the Merkel government’s deployment of *Luftwaffe* AWACS aircraft as part of Operation Afghan Assist would be an adequate compensation to avoid further recriminations from NATO allies

Four interviewees also asserted that Germany’s abstention would hurt its chances of getting a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Among them, a CDU-affiliated journalist (#68/Normalizer) feared that the abstention might result in Germany’s exclusion from joint armaments projects with France and Britain and the weakening of European foreign and security policy cooperation. A Foreign Office member (#39/Realist) complained that the UN abstention had achieved nothing positive. It forced Westerwelle to pursue damage control and—in addition—harmed Germany’s credibility as a defender of human rights and as a supporter of the Arab Spring. The country would not even gain respect among the BRIC powers (Brazil, Russia, India, China, who also abstained from the UN vote), because in “acting alone” Germany would not be taken serious by anyone.

Little or no effects. Thirteen respondents, among them seven Realists, argued that the abstention was consistent with Germany’s foreign policy and thus would have little lasting consequence. A think tank member (#55/Realist) believed that everybody understands that decisions “about war and peace” are always difficult. A Left Party MdB (#43/Pacifist) commented that governments know that Berlin would prioritize national interests, as would any other government, when making foreign policy decisions. An FDP MdB conceded that Germany’s allies might be confused, surprised, or even angry about Germany’s decision, but they would not doubt Germany’s reliability as an ally or its commitment to NATO (#14/Realist). A Chancellor’s Office employee (#32/Realist) stressed that the German UN vote abstention as such was no violation of alliance solidarity, especially since Germany neither prevented

nor criticized the UN resolution and the NATO mission. An ex-diplomat (#58/Normalizer) emphasized that the vote abstention should not be overstated, even though Berlin may have squandered some “political capital,” since ultimately “German foreign policy toward Libya and the Arab states ... will continue to be the same as our previous foreign policy ... Even though our armed forces will not be involved, once the military conflict is over, we’re going to provide reconstruction aid” and demonstrate Germany’s commitment to peace and security. A few respondents, like a think tank member (#55/Realist), speculated that the German media, that is, certain journalists and domestic critics, had exaggerated the effects of the Libya abstention, which was made “under enormous time pressure,” and then created a false debate about “negative consequences.”

U.S. views were deemed as particularly relevant when assessing the potential damage of Germany’s Libya policy. But an MdB of the CDU (#18/Realist) believed that the Libya abstention was understood in the U.S. as “typically German,” and that the Obama administration did not expect Germany to participate militarily. A think tank member (#8/Traditionalist) asserted that in the U.S. the Europeans in general are not taken seriously in military terms. Therefore, he opined, Germany’s decision was irrelevant from an American point of view. Furthermore, an FDP MdB (#65/Normalizer) claimed that before and during the UN vote, signals had been sent to Germany, in conversations with its U.S. and European allies behind closed doors, that the country would not be criticized when abstaining from the vote.

Conclusion

Why did the 2011 Libya policy lead to such a passionate debate in Germany? The qualitative analysis of interviews confirms that the Libya crisis drew attention to inherent contradictions between Germany’s four arena-transcending foreign policy rules for action: “Politics before force,” “Never alone,” “Never be an outlaw again,” and “Never again Auschwitz.” These four rules for action are understood and enacted differently by different German foreign policy actors. Their application in the specific political arena of the 2011 Libya conflict led to contentious interpretations about how to balance these imperatives and resulted in unexpected alignments between Realists and Pacifists as well as Normalizers and Traditionalists, albeit for different reasons.

At the heart of disagreements among the respondents was always the question of military restraint. Skepticism of military solutions and the pursuit of

raw power politics have deep roots in Germany's post-World War II legacy of coming to terms with its pre-war history and the need to construct a new national identity.⁴⁵ Fed by past experiences, collective memories, and moral obligations, the reticence to use military force crosses partisan and ideological lines in the German public and in the foreign policy community, too.

In the case of Libya, the non-intervention stance of the center-right governing coalition followed the "Politics before force" imperative but violated the other three rules for action. This specific situation led to unexpected—and probably unintended—alignments and fissures within and between political parties and actors, such as the siding of Pacifists with Realists, even though wide gaps separate them ideologically. Realists view military restraint as a flexible imperative, whereas left-wing Pacifists infuse the credo of "Politics before force" with strong normatively informed and historically oriented considerations. In fact, the temporary truce did not last long since the pragmatic and opportunistic approach of Realists eventually was incompatible with the normative position of Pacifists.

Similarly, Normalizers (i.e., many members of the governing CDU/CSU and FDP coalition) and Traditionalists (i.e., many members of the oppositional SPD and the Green Party) were united in their criticism of the Realist Libya policy of Chancellor Merkel and Foreign Minister Westerwelle, but for different reasons. As the interviews revealed, Normalizers thought that "Politics before force" should have been used more flexibly to allow Germany's participation in the NATO mission. While Traditionalists agreed with the strict enforcement of German military non-participation, they also would have endorsed a German UN vote in support of its Western allies and the Arab League to demonstrate solidarity.

Traditionalists—but not only them—struggled to balance the rule of military restraint with the imperative of alliance solidarity, particularly as Germany's main NATO partners follow a less inhibited strategic culture in their use of military force. This is an observation shared by interviewees and other researchers.⁴⁶ For example, a think tank member (#55/Realist) described this friction as "the big problem of German foreign policy ... That's why some people [speak] of a multilateralism trap in [NATO] foreign deployments," which Germans are induced to join despite their military reticence. The same can be said about multilateral UN R2P missions. A conservative CDU member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (#33/Traditionalist) warned that humanitarian interventionism as in Libya is a "do-gooder humanistic ideal that cannot be achieved in practice, because otherwise we [Germany] would have to permanently deploy military forces and overstretch our power, like the Americans in their area of interest." Pacifists, in comparison, can more easily manage

inherent tensions between rules for action because of their prioritization of a pacifist interpretation of “Politics before force.” Realists, by definition, also have more flexibility in their interpretation and application of rules for action as long as they can pragmatically demonstrate that their “balancing” is in the national interest and aligns with Germany’s post-war foreign policy traditions.

As well as helping to explain and provide nuance to our understanding of the German actors’ positions, this analysis also refutes previous explanations of Germany’s Libya policy. For example, the findings demonstrate that the German Libya policy was not an expression of a post–Cold War political culture that dissolved into a mishmash of positions on important issues without vision, strategy, or principles, as proposed by Stahl and Zimmer.⁴⁷ From the interviews, it was made clear that the memories of the two devastating World Wars and the four rules for action that were formed after World War II still influence German foreign policy culture.

Nor were German foreign policy rules for action after unification undergoing a fundamental reinterpretation that would lead to a break caused by the Libya conflict, as was feared at the time. The interviews thus refute concerns often expressed both in and outside of Germany about the country’s alliance reliability or the danger of a new exceptional German historical path (*Sonderweg*).⁴⁸ Among the actors interviewed in 2011, not a single respondent supported a withdrawal from the EU, NATO, and international treaties; promoted an East-West equidistance of Germany; or endorsed a disregard of human rights protection policies. Yet they all confirmed the importance of “values” as guideposts of foreign policy.

In addition, interviewees hardly ever mentioned “cost/benefit calculations” due to economic constraints, as claimed by Miskimmon, “geo-economic power” considerations, as maintained by Kundnani, or hegemonic ambitions as asserted by Bulmer and Paterson.⁴⁹ Of course, this does not imply that German economic and commercial interests or other imperatives may not have mattered at all in this or in other situations.⁵⁰ But the evidence indicates that such matters were not first and foremost in the mind of the respondents.

The interviews also revealed stark differences in the level of information and understanding of foreign policy decision-making processes, depending on an actor’s proximity to or distance from the executive branch. At the time of the survey, the exact events that led to UN Resolution 1973 were known only to a small circle of directly involved actors. Many respondents, even those in parliament, obtained their knowledge from public media, party contacts, networks, and other sources, giving them only a reduced or one-sided picture of what had actually happened. The German executive branch was partially to blame for misinterpretations and misunderstandings because it

did not promptly and transparently communicate its decision-making and reasoning to the public, the media, legislators, and experts. Only in retrospect have some actors become aware of the complex normative and interest-based reasoning and constraints of German decision-making processes⁵¹ or the short- and long-term effects of the German abstention.⁵²

The interviews suggest that a generational change is taking place within the German foreign policy elite. The ongoing departure of those socialized during the post-war Bonn Republic, many of whom were Traditionalists, is making room for younger Realists and Normalizers who very likely will justify foreign policy decisions more pragmatically, flexibly, and situationally. Due to new policy challenges of a changing world, the next generation of German decision-makers and experts will be forced to make adjustments to the existing rules for action. The trend toward more complex global problems and polycentric constellations will possibly lead them to interpret policy imperatives more flexibly, as proposed by advocates of the concepts of “strategic narratives”⁵³ or “normalization.”⁵⁴ On the other hand, it is unlikely that the salience of the four arena-transcending rules for action analyzed in this study will no longer guide German foreign policy or influence public perception. This will allow us to make relatively reliable predictions about the future trajectory of German foreign policy and potential conflicts with friends and foes.⁵⁵ For example, events in Libya, Syria, Iraq, and other countries of the Gulf region since 2011 have reinforced German public and elite skepticism of the efficacy of foreign military intervention in civil war situations. But these renewed doubts have not resulted in greater public or elite support for a more neutral and pacifist German security and alliance policy, as proposed by the Left Party.⁵⁶ In fact, the foreign policy position of the Pacifists is still considered outside the consensus of the mainstream parties.

This study shows that the interpretation and application of “Politics before force” is becoming more varied, even though it continues to play a central role in German political culture, as developments after 2011 have demonstrated.⁵⁷ This goes hand in hand with a more openly expressed emphasis by Realists and Normalizers on promoting German national interests, something that Germany’s most important allies—the United States, Great Britain, and France—have never called into question about their own decisions, as a respondent commented.

Similarly, the entry of the right-wing populist and Euroskeptic Alternative for Germany (AfD) party⁵⁸ into the Bundestag parliament in 2017 with 12.6 percent of the vote has not changed the continuing strong belief in the importance of European unity and solidarity, the relevance of the NATO alliance, multilateralism, and respect for human rights and the defense of other

universal rights among a great majority of influential German foreign policy actors and the public.⁵⁹ Even if important German international partners are moving away from commitments to multilateralism, international law, the NATO alliance, and a values agenda, as did the U.S. under President Trump, it is unlikely that mainstream German decision-makers and experts will follow suit soon. Germany cannot easily give up its *Zivilmacht* culture and return to the power politics of a past it has deeply renounced as being counterproductive to its national interests and post-war identity.

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HERMANN KURTHEN is a Professor of Sociology at Grand Valley State University in Michigan. He previously taught at Stony Brook University in New York, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Freie Universität Berlin. His research interests include transatlantic relations, comparative migration, ethnocentrism, and hybrid online teaching. He was an Associate Editor and Editorial Review Board Member of *International Sociology* and also co-edited *Immigration, Citizenship, and the Welfare State: Germany and the United States* (1998), *Antisemitism and Xenophobia in Germany after Unification* (1997), and *Safeguarding German-American Relations in the New Century: Understanding and Accepting Mutual Differences* (2006). See <http://www.gvsu.edu/sociology/professor-hermann-kurthen-134.htm> and https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hermann_Kurthen.

Notes

1. Examples of the still expanding literature about the Libya intervention from the perspective of the U.S., UK, France, and other nations include Jean-Christophe Notin, *La vérité sur notre Guerre en Libye* (Paris, 2012); Adrian Johnson and Saqeb Mueen, eds., *Short War, Long Shadow: The Political and Military Legacies of the 2011 Libya Campaign* (London, 2012); Kjell Engelbrekt, Marcus Mohlin, and Charlotte Wagnsson, *The NATO Intervention in Libya: Lessons Learned from the Campaign* (London, 2014); Jacob Mundy, *Libya* (Cambridge, 2018); Dag Henriksen and Ann Karin Larssen, eds., *Political Rationale and International Consequences of the War in Libya* (Oxford, 2016); Ivo H. Daalder and James G. Stavridis, "NATO's Victory in Libya: The Right Way to Run an Intervention," *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 2 (2012): 2–7; Alan J. Kuperman, "A Model Humanitarian Intervention? Reassessing NATO's Libya Campaign," *International Security* 38, no. 1 (2013): 105–136.
2. As one of many such examples, see Severin Weiland and Roland Nelles, "Germany Has Marginalised Itself over Libya," *Guardian* (18 March 2011), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentsfree/2011/mar/18/libya-germany-un-security-council>.
3. Helga Haftendorn, *Coming of Age: German Foreign Policy since 1945* (Lanham, 2006).
4. Hans Kundnani, "The Concept of 'Normality' in German Foreign Policy since Unification," *German Politics and Society* 30, no. 2 (2012): 38–58, here 54. See also Eberhard Sandschneider, "Deutsche Außenpolitik: Eine Gestaltungsmacht in der Kontinuitätsfalle," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 62, no. 10 (2012): 3–9; Ulrich Roos and Charlotte Rungius, "Neue Macht, neue Mächte—gute Gründe? Rekonstruktion einer außenpolitischen Diskursoffensive in Deutschland," *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* 9 (2016): 39–78.
5. Kerry Longhurst, *Germany and the Use of Force: The Evolution of German Security Policy 1990–2003* (Manchester, 2004).
6. See Rebecca Adler-Nissen and Vincent Pouliot, "Power in Practice: Negotiating the International Intervention in Libya," *European Journal of International Relations* 20, no. 4 (2014): 889–911.
7. The discussion ranged from calling Germany's Libya policy disastrous, isolationist, naive, and a breach to exactly the opposite characterizations. Examples representing such positions include Janet Kursawe, "Pflicht zum Krieg? Der Libyenkonflikt als Testfall für die internationale Interventionspolitik," *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* 4, no. 4 (2011): 573–583; Harald Müller, "Ein Desaster: Deutschland und der Fall Libyen. Wie sich Deutschland moralisch und außenpolitisch in die Isolation manövrierte," *HSPK-Standpunkte* 2 (2011): 1–12; Franz-Josef Meiers, "'Made in Berlin'—Wohin steuert die deutsche Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik?," *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* 4, no. 4 (2011): 669–692; Robert Schütte, "'Just War or Just War?' Die Lehren der Libyenintervention und ihre Konsequenzen für die Schutzverantwortung," *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* 4 no. 4 (2011): 715–733; Lothar Rühl, "Deutschland und der Libyenkrieg," *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* 4, no. 4 (2011): 561–571; Sarah Brockmeier, "Germany and the Intervention in Libya," *Survival* 55, no. 6 (2013): 63–90; Alister Miskimmon, "German Foreign Policy and the Libya Crisis," *German Politics* 21, no. 4 (2012): 392–410. A summary of the diverse voices about Germany's Libya decision can be found in Kai Oppermann and Alexander Spencer, "The Social Construction of Mistakes: Germany's Abstention on UN Security Council Resolution 1973 on Libya," in *Political Mistakes and Policy*

- Failures in International Relations*, ed. Andreas Kruck, Kai Oppermann, and Alexander Spencer (Basingstoke, 2018), 55–77.
8. Matthias Mader and Harald Schoen, “Alles eine Frage des Blickwinkels?,” *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 20, no. 1 (2013): 5–34. See also various 2011 public opinion surveys available at <http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/181571,180635,168986,181182,182343,182541,182566,182564>.
 9. In this study, decision-makers and experts are defined as members of the executive branch, the legislature, think tanks, academics, lobby groups, and journalists, but also experienced and esteemed political figures whose judgment is respected. It is further assumed that members of this group share a set of ingrained beliefs about the role, function, mission, and obligations of their country in international affairs. The literature has also established that elite discourse, media, and public opinion are closely interrelated, that elite opinions historically take precedence over public opinion, and that they have a dominant influence through the media, policy advising, legislation, and executive action. See Matthew A. Baum and Philip B. K. Potter, “The Relationships between Mass Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (2008): 39–65.
 10. Hanns W. Maull, “Deutsche Außenpolitik: Orientierungslos,” *Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* 21, no. 1 (2011): 93–117, here 100, 111.
 11. Bernhard Stahl, “Taumeln im Mehr der Möglichkeiten,” *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* 5, no. 4 (2012): 575–603.
 12. Sebastian Harnisch, “Deutschlands Rolle in der Libyen Intervention: Führung, Gefolgschaft und das angebliche Versagen der Regierung Merkel,” in *Standortbestimmung Deutschlands. Innere Verfasstheit und internationale Verantwortung*, ed. Marianne Kneuer (Baden-Baden, 2015), 85–122.
 13. Mischa Hansel and Kai Oppermann, “Counterfactual Reasoning in Foreign Policy Analysis: The Case of German Nonparticipation in the Libya Intervention of 2011,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 12, no. 2 (2016): 109–127, here 110.
 14. Karl W. Deutsch, Lewis J. Edinger, Roy C. Macridis, and Richard L. Merritt, *France, Germany and the Western Alliance: A Study of Elite Attitudes on European Integration and World Politics* (New York, 1967); Ronald D. Asmus, *Das Meinungsbild der Elite in Deutschland zur Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* (Berlin, 1996); DGAP-Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, “Trends der deutschen Außenpolitik: Erste außenpolitische Elitestudie, Berlin 2009,” <https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/13074>.
 15. Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York, 1996); Thomas U. Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan* (Baltimore, 1998).
 16. Ulrich Roos, *Deutsche Außenpolitik: Eine Rekonstruktion der grundlegenden Handlungsregeln* (Wiesbaden, 2010); Ulrich Franke and Ulrich Roos, “Einleitung: Zu den Begriffen ‘Weltpolitik’ und ‘Rekonstruktion,’” in *Rekonstruktive Methoden der Welt politikforschung*, ed. Ulrich Franke and Ulrich Roos (Baden-Baden, 2013), 7–29; Ulrich Roos, *Deutsche Außenpolitik: Arenen, Diskurse und grundlegende Handlungsregeln* (Wiesbaden, 2017).
 17. Ulrich Oevermann, “Die Methode der Fallrekonstruktion in der Grundlagenforschung sowie der klinischen und pädagogischen Praxis,” in *Die Fallrekonstruktion: Sinnverstehen in der sozialwissenschaftlichen Forschung*, ed. Klaus Kraimer (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), 58–156.

18. Anselm L. Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* (Cambridge, 1987); Barney G. Glaser, *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis* (Mill Valley, 1992).
19. Charles Sanders Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," in *The Essential Peirce*, Vol. 1: *Selected Philosophical Writings (1867–1893)*, ed. Nathan Houser and Christian J. W. Kloesel (Bloomington: [1878] 1992), 124–141, here 130. See also Ulrich Roos, "Beliefs and Loyalties in World Politics: A Pragmatist Framework for Analysis," in *Theorizing Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*, ed. Gunther Hellmann and Knud Erik Jørgensen (London, 2015), 176–198.
20. Roos, "Beliefs and Loyalties in World Politics," 180.
21. Ulrich Roos, "Deutsche Außenpolitik nach der Vereinigung: Zwischen ernüchtertem Idealismus und realpolitischem Weltordnungsstreben," *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 19, no. 2 (2012): 7–40, here 30 (my translation).
22. *Ibid.*, 8 (my translation).
23. Roos and Rungius, "Neue Macht, neue Mächte—gute Gründe?," 42 (my translation).
24. Baumann's discourse analysis of the changing interpretation of German multilateralism after unification is an example of shifts in the meaning of rules for action. See Rainer Baumann, "The Transformation of German Multilateralism: Changes in the Foreign Policy Discourse since Unification," *German Politics and Society* 20, no. 4 (2002): 1–26.
25. Hermann Kurthen and Helmar Schöne, "Außenpolitische Handlungsregeln in Deutschland: Ergebnisse aus Experteninterviews während der Libyenkrise 2011," *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* 11, no. 1 (2018): 39–64; Hermann Kurthen, "Present at the Destruction? Grand Strategy Imperatives of US Foreign Policy Experts during the Trump Presidency," *European Journal of International Security* 6, no. 1 (2021), 1–24.
26. The purpose was to sample a broad spectrum of individuals in order to capture a wide variety of perceptions existing in the field. See Margarete Sandelowski, "Sample Size in Qualitative Research," *Research in Nursing & Health* 18, no. 2 (1995): 179–183.
27. Nicole M. Deterding and Mary C. Waters, "Flexible Coding of In-Depth Interviews: A Twenty-First-Century Approach," *Sociological Methods & Research* (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124118799377>.
28. Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (London, 2009), here 7.
29. See similar recommendations by Jochen Gläser and Grit Laudel, *Experteninterviews und qualitative Inhaltsanalyse als Instrumente rekonstruierender Untersuchungen* (Wiesbaden, 2004).
30. MAXQDA is a software program designed for computer-assisted qualitative and mixed methods data, text, and multi-media analysis in academic, scientific, and business settings. See <https://www.maxqda.com>.
31. Stahl, for example, asserts that Germany's foreign policy is guided by a preference for non-military instruments, continuity, multilateralism, and a focus on the EU. See Britta Joerßen and Bernhard Stahl, "Identität, außenpolitisches Verhalten und die GESVP—ein Fazit," in *Europäische Außenpolitik und nationale Identität*, ed. Britta Joerßen and Bernhard Stahl (Münster, 2003), 382–404, here 387.
32. Auswärtiges Amt, "Grundprinzipien deutscher Außenpolitik," (9 October 2019), <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/themen/grundprinzipien-deutscher-aussenpolitik/216474>.

33. Siegmund Schmidt, Gunther Hellmann, and Reinhard Wolf, eds., *Handbuch zur deutschen Außenpolitik* (Wiesbaden, 2007); Wilfried von Bredow, *Die Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Eine Einführung*, 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden, 2008); Thomas Jäger, Alexander Höse, and Kai Oppermann, *Deutsche Außenpolitik: Sicherheit, Wohlfahrt, Institutionen und Normen*, 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden, 2010); Gunther Hellmann, Wolfgang Wagner, and Rainer Baumann, *Deutsche Außenpolitik*, 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden, 2014).
34. Beverly Crawford, "The Normative Power of a Normal State: Power and Revolutionary Vision in Germany's Post-Wall Foreign Policy," *German Politics and Society* 28, no. 2 (2010): 165–184; Gunther Hellmann, "Normatively Disarmed, but Self-Confident: German Foreign Policy 20 Years after Re-unification," *Internationale Politik* 12, no. 3 (2011): 45–51; Sophia Becker, *Germany and War: Understanding Strategic Culture under the Merkel Government* (Paris, 2013). Some observers have interpreted the culture of military restraint more polemically as structural pacifism, for example, Joseph Verbovsky, "Culture of Restraint or Structural Pacifism: German Security Policy and NATO," Atlantic Community (16 July 2018), <https://atlantic-community.org/culture-of-restraint-or-structural-pacifism-germanys-security-policy-and-nato>. Others have discounted the Pacifist elements in Germany's culture of restraint, for example, Brian C. Rathbun, "The Myth of German Pacifism," *German Politics and Society* 24, no. 2 (2006): 68–81.
35. Josef Janning, "Europäische Union und deutsche Europapolitik," in Schmidt et al. 2007, *Handbuch zur deutschen Außenpolitik*, 747–762; Johannes Varwick, "Nordatlantische Allianz," in *ibid.*, 763–778.
36. Roos, "Deutsche Außenpolitik nach der Vereinigung"; Hanns W. Maull, "Multilateralism: Variants, Potential, Constraints and Conditions for Success," *SWP Comment* 9 (2020): 1–8.
37. Christopher Daase, "Die Legalisierung der Legitimität—zur Kritik der Schutzverantwortung als *emerging norm*," *Die Friedens-Warte* 88, no. 1–2 (2013): 41–62.
38. Gunther Hellmann, "Goodbye Bismarck? The Foreign Policy of Contemporary Germany," *Mershon International Studies Review* 40, no. 1 (1996): 1–39. Hellmann distinguishes five schools of thought that align on a right-left axis: normalizing nationalists, Euroskeptics, pragmatic multiculturalists, integrationists, and internationalists.
39. Hanns W. Maull, "Germany and Japan: The New Civilian Powers," *Foreign Affairs* 69, no. 5 (1990): 91–106, here 92; Sebastian Harnisch and Hanns W. Maull, eds., *Germany as a Civilian Power? The Foreign Policy of the Berlin Republic* (Manchester, 2001), here 128.
40. Stahl, "Auswertung: Identitäten und Diskurse im analytischen Vergleich"; Baumann, "The Transformation of German Multilateralism."
41. One of the first authors to comment on this trend was Gunther Hellmann, "Jenseits von 'Normalisierung' und 'Militarisierung': Zur Standortdebatte über die neue deutsche Außenpolitik," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B1–2 (1997): 24–33.
42. Traditionalists often framed Realists and Normalizers as opportunistically attaching too much attention to power and interests while lacking moral fiber and being deaf toward upholding established norms and values, such as the protection of human rights. Realists and Normalizers, on the other hand, defined themselves as guided by an ethics of pragmatic policy-making, which situationally and flexibly tries to reconcile values with the practical, interest-oriented demands of *Realpolitik*. They tended to dismiss their critics as moralists and do-gooders

- (*Gutmenschen*) hiding behind a value rhetoric instead of confessing that they also followed certain interests. The majority of respondents (79 percent), however, did consider values and interests as being two sides of the same coin, although several actors claimed that the executive branch's foreign policy was driven too much by power interests and too little by values. In the German discourse, this tension is often expressed in Weberian terms of the ethics of responsibility (*Verantwortungsethik*) versus the ethics of conviction (*Gesinnungsethik*). See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 3rd ed., trans. Stephen Kalberg (Los Angeles, [1905] 2002).
43. Social Democrat Gerhard Schröder was Germany's chancellor from 1998 to 2005. He was heavily criticized by conservatives for his abstention from the 2003 Iraq War. Westerwelle was compared to Schröder for his similar stance on Libya in 2011.
 44. Such actor-centered interpretations included narratives that emphasized unpredictable moves by individuals and the influence of groups of actors. For example, a general in the Ministry of Defense (#72/Normalizer) stated that U.S. security policy-makers and generals in the Pentagon shared the intervention skepticism of their German colleagues. Ultimately, a small circle of advisers in the White House decided to support the Libya resolution, allegedly ignoring the advice of military professionals. According to a retired diplomat (#9/Realist), President Barack Obama originally was against intervention, but Westerwelle then failed to realize "that the wind was turning in America and that Mrs. Clinton was suddenly in favor of intervention and able to persuade Obama."
 45. Eric Langenbacher, "Does Collective Memory Still Influence German Foreign Policy?," *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 20, no. 2 (2014): 55–71. Sebastian Harnisch, "Erinnerungskultur und Außenpolitik: Wie deutsche Geschichte(n) die internationale Politik prägen" (14–18 November, International Symposium Renmin University Beijing, 2019), https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/md/politik/harnisch/person/publikationen/harnisch_renmin_2019_erinnerungskultur.pdf.
 46. Maull, "Deutsche Außenpolitik: Orientierungslos," 100, 111. More recently, see Jamie Gaskarth and Kai Oppermann, "Clashing Traditions: German Foreign Policy in a New Era," *International Studies Perspectives* (4 October 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/ekz017>. Using Berenskötter and Stritzel's historical review of German post-war power discourse, Realists could be considered supporters of Germany as a collaborative "shaping power," Normalizers as adherents of the concept of a confident "responsible power," Traditionalists as believers in constrained "civilian power," and Pacifists being in favor of Germany as a "force for peace." Felix Berenskötter and Holger Stritzel, "Welche Macht darf es denn Sein? Tracing 'Power' in German Foreign Policy Discourse," *German Politics* (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644008.2019.1631808>.
 47. Stahl, "Taumeln im Mehr der Möglichkeiten"; Matthias Zimmer, "Die Staatsräson der Bundesrepublik Deutschland vor und nach 1989," *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* 2, no. 1 (2009): 66–83.
 48. Hansel and Oppermann, "Counterfactual Reasoning in Foreign Policy Analysis."
 49. Miskimmon, "German Foreign Policy and the Libya Crisis;" Hans Kundnani, "Germany as a Geo-economic Power," *Washington Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2011): 31–45, here 32; Simon Bulmer and William E. Paterson, *Germany and the European Union: Europe's Reluctant Hegemon?* (London, 2018).

50. Interestingly, migration control was not mentioned in the interviews as being important in the context of the Libya intervention, even though Gaddafi had presciently warned that toppling his regime would open Libya's borders to massive transmigration from Africa to Europe.
51. Adler-Nissen and Pouliot, "Power in Practice."
52. See the literature examples listed in note 7.
53. Alister Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle, eds., *Forging the World: Strategic Narratives and International Relations* (Ann Arbor, 2017).
54. See Kundnani, "The Concept of 'Normality' in German Foreign Policy since Unification"; Sandschneider, "Deutsche Außenpolitik: Eine Gestaltungsmacht in der Kontinuitätsfalle"; Roos and Rungius, "Neue Macht, neue Mächte—gute Gründe?"
55. Hans Rattinger, Harald Schoen, Fabian Endres, Sebastian Jungkunz, Matthias Mader, and Jana Pötzschke, *Old Friends in Troubled Waters: Policy Principles, Elites, and U.S.-German Relations at the Citizen Level after the Cold War* (Baden-Baden, 2016).
56. Pacifists were not only skeptical of the goals of NATO and military UN missions but also critical of broad R2P interpretations as an authorization for regime change, even though they accepted the imperatives of multilateralism, international law, and human rights protection.
57. Harnisch, "Deutschlands Rolle in der Libyen Intervention."
58. The AfD program unabashedly promotes a "sovereign" German exit from the Euro and the EU, a withdrawal of NATO forces from German territory, and better cooperation with Russia. At the same time, it still adheres to the principles of good relations with its European neighbors and NATO partners, supports the UN system of multilateralism, and observes a posture of military restraint, albeit in combination with higher defense spending. References to the fourth imperative (the upholding of values and universal rights) are, however, scant. This posture is in line with other neo-nationalist forces in the West that question the foundations of the post-war U.S.-led international order paradigm. See Marcel Lewandowsky, "Die Verteidigung der Nation: Außen- und europapolitische Positionen der AfD im Spiegel des Rechtspopulismus," in *Die Alternative für Deutschland: Programmatik, Entwicklung und politische Verortung*, ed. Alexander Häusler (Wiesbaden, 2016), 39–51.
59. A. Burcu Bayram, "Cues for Integration: Foreign Policy Beliefs and German Parliamentarians' Support for European Integration," *German Politics and Society* 35, no. 1 (2017): 19–41.