

Ulrik Joachim Stange

## Return of Realpolitik in Germany

- An analysis of German security- and foreign policy. From "*Wandel durch Handel*" to "*Zeitenwende*"

*The secret of politics? Make a good Treaty with Russia – Otto von Bismarck*

Bachelor's thesis in Europastudier med statsvitenskap

Supervisor: Viktoriya Fedorchak

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Norwegian University of Science and Technology  
Faculty of Humanities  
Department of Historical and Classical Studies



Kunnskap for en bedre verden



# Abstract

Following the Russian annexation of the Crimea in 2014 and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, we see a shift in German security- and foreign policy. By using structural realism and three levels of analysis, this thesis seeks to explain the German shift, and the challenges that German decision makers are facing. The thesis has an introductory chapter that gives an overview of the current situation and the relevance of this thesis, as well as a presentation of the research question. The second chapter covers the existing literature on German security and defence policy and is limited by obvious missing in contemporary sources. The third chapter covers the theoretical and conceptual framework of realism and Realpolitik. The fourth chapter covers the methodological approach, and the limitations of this case study. The analysis is based on existing data on German defence, gas imports from Russia, as well as contemporary statements by German decision makers. The findings conclude that Germany, despite its history and challenges in the Armed forces, has shifted in policies following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The German armed forces will increase its capabilities, and the imports of Russian energy will decrease. The contemporary situation is changing by each day, but the pattern in contemporary German politics is still clear that there is a shift that can be explained through realism and the term Realpolitik.

# Sammendrag

Etter den russiske annekteringen av Krim i 2014 og invasjonen av Ukraina i 2022, ser vi et skifte i tysk sikkerhets- og utenrikspolitikk. Ved å bruke strukturell realisme og Kenneth Waltz' tre analysenivåer søker denne oppgaven å forklare det tyske skiftet, og utfordringene som tyske beslutningstakere står overfor. Oppgaven har et innledende kapittel som gir en oversikt over dagens situasjon og denne oppgavens relevans, samt en fremstilling av oppgavens problemstilling. Det andre kapittelet dekker den eksisterende litteraturen om tysk forsvars- og sikkerhetspolitikk og er begrenset i mangelen på aktuelle kilder. Det tredje kapittelet dekker realismens og realpolitikens teoretiske og konseptuelle rammeverk. Det fjerde kapittelet dekker metoden, og begrensningene ved denne casestudien. Analysen er basert på eksisterende data på det tyske forsvaret, gassimport fra Russland, samt aktuelle uttalelser fra tyske beslutningstakere. Funnene konkluderer med at Tyskland, til tross for sin historie og utfordringer i de væpnede styrkene, har endret politikk etter den russiske invasjonen av Ukraina i 2022. Den tyske hæren vil bli styrket, og importen av russisk energi vil bli redusert. Samtidens utenrikspolitiske situasjon endrer seg for hver dag, men oppgaven argumenterer for at det er et mønster i den aktuelle tysk politikken som kan forklares gjennom realisme og begrepet Realpolitikk







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# List of Abbreviations

AA	Anti-Air
APC	Armoured Personnel Carrier
BGR	Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources
BMWK	Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
EEA	European Economic Area
EEC	European Economic Community
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EU	European Union
IFV	Infantry Fighting Vehicle
LNG	Liquid Natural Gas
MBT	Main Battle Tank
MLRS	Multiple Launch Rocket System
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SPAAG	Self-propelled anti-air gun

# 1 Introduction

Germany is the largest economy in Europe and one of the most populated countries in the European Union. Germany has a long history of waging and participating in warfare in Europe. Since Frederick the Great to the Second World War, Germany has faced other nations, especially the Russian.

After WW2, West-Germany joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the western block with France, and later the United Kingdom in the European Economic Community (EEC), European Community (EC) and later the European Union (EU).

As this Bachelor is written, there is waging war in Europe. The Russian Federation under leadership of President Vladimir Putin launched an invasion of the Ukraine on Feb. 24<sup>th</sup> under the description of an act of "de-nazifying". Clausewitz puts the definition for war that "war is the use of violence to bring the adversary to do what we want" (Clausewitz, 2020, p. 50), which suits the real situation of Russia's aggression. The scenario of the violation of a European country's borders with rolling tanks seemed unlikely until this day. The current world order with soft power- and diplomacy domination seems to have played out its role. 75 years with interstate peace in Europe is over.

As the studies in the field of political science linked to international relations most likely in the coming years will bring analyses to the topic on how the war between Russia and the Ukraine started, I find it a highly relevant topic to participate in. This thesis, however, does not attend to explain the invasion. This thesis is narrowed down on the basis on Germany's role in this. More specifically, Germany's security and foreign policy regarding Russia's attack on Ukraine.

For that I will look at the case of Germany from the German point of view. Which means that this thesis will have sources focused on German politics and policies. Due to the nature of the relevant sources, the methodical approach will be qualitative. And thus, produce rather limited generalizable results. This will be covered in the relevant chapter. For theoretical approach and analytic basis, I will use Kenneth Waltz's "The man, the state and war". This thesis is therefore an analysis in the tradition of political realism. This will also be covered in relevant chapter.

The thesis will function as a study on multi layered security. For that, in the structure of the three images of Kenneth Waltz, I will cover these themes: the party-political situation, and government of Germany, the Bundeswehr as the core of national defence and the German economy and energy mix as part of the foreign- and security political

assessments and interests. As this is a paper on the ongoing conflict, the data and analysis are based on events and available data until the 9<sup>th</sup> of May.

As the situation is quite complex, I have chosen the following research question: *How has Germany reacted, and has it shifted in security and foreign policy in the case of the Russian invasion of Ukraine?*

## 2 Literature review

German defence policy has been a topic for discussion, regarding the Crimean annexation in 2014. This thesis is based on current events, and therefore, few academic works on the current topic have been written regarding the changing context. Although we can find sources on the discussion on Germany's role in European defence. The sources cover German security policy from the 90s until mostly 2018 and are especially covering Germany's participation in the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), and how German security changed in context of 2014.

Toumas Iso-Markku and Giesela Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet's argues that Germany has emerged as one of the most influential member states of the EU considering the Eurozone crisis with taking active leadership in the EU, at least in financial politics. (Iso-Markku & Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet, 2020, p. 59). They argue that Germany's hegemony in the Euro crisis and its aftermath, has put Germany and its politicians in a position where they have gained more power, but also in expectation of taking more responsibility in security questions. Iso-Markku and Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet argues that Germany has been too reluctant and spilling its expected role in the CSDP (Iso-Markku & Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet, 2020). (Friis & Juncos, 2019)

Furthermore, they argue that there are power differences and leadership in this Anti-hierarchical environment, but to utilize this, they argue that the EU with its structural assembly, there is a lack of hierarchical structure and that the EU, and its member states only can act in cooperation in so called co-leadership (*Mitführung*). (Iso-Markku & Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet, 2020, p. 62). The result is the Europeanisation of leadership. A good example is the Franco-German relationship and "shared leadership" (Iso-Markku & Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet, 2020, p. 63). The argument is therefore that German power is based on the level of co-leadership.

The establishment of the CSDP was a Franco-UK project that was later backed by the SPD-led Schröder-government, where the Greens had the foreign minister with Joschka Fischer (Koutrakos, 2013, p. 18). The position of the German government was to have a dual approach that should complement the CSDP with civilian components (Iso-Markku & Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet, 2020, p. 65) (Friis & Juncos, 2019, pp. 289-291). In the period of the SPD-led government, Germany supported the establishment of EU-battlegroups, and did, and still does participate with considerable material and thus supporting the claim of Germany being a co-leader in the first phase (Iso-Markku & Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet, 2020, p. 65)

A critical period was between 2008 and 2014. The period where the Obama administration put a halt on European defence integration. Especially with the French-UK cooperation without the EU, considering that France rejoined NATO's military command in 2009 (Iso-Markku & Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet, 2020, p. 66). In this period, Germany did not participate in military operation in Libya and abstained from the UN Security Council resolution. This left Germany on a different position than its closest partners, and rather on the side of Russia, China and Brazil. This led to Germany being outside of NATO-discussions, and a halt in ambitions for the CSDP. Karl-Heinz Kamp argues also that the

German position in 2011 put Germany in a position outside NATO-circles, even in discussions with France (Kamp, 2018, p. 65).

The turning point was with the re-election of Merkel as chancellor in 2013 and the Munich Security Conference in 2014. Kamp, Iso-Markku and Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet argues that with the speeches of then President Joachim Gauck, then Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and then Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen, German approach changed to become more involved (Kamp, 2018, p. 66) (Iso-Markku & Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet, 2020, p. 67). Although this is also discussed by Claudia Major and Christian Mölling in 2014, which argued that Germany was too passive in security and defence questions and that three speeches is not enough to convince partners on German change. They argue that if Germany would hesitate, it would make allies question Germany's stand in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine (Major & Mölling, 2014, p. 4).

Germany has since 2014 provided lethal weapons to the Peshmerga in Iraq and in this way broke the tradition of not supplying an ongoing conflict. And responded to Russia's aggression with EU sanctions, deployed more troops to eastern Europe with mechanized capabilities (Kamp, 2018, p. 66). Although, Germany has still not until this day, used 2% of GDP, and has actively defunded the Bundeswehr, putting it in a position with low readiness, and a shortage of spare parts (Neitzel, 2020, p. 565) (Kamp, 2018, p. 66).

An important argument in the literature, is that Germany as in other European contexts, is seeking compromises with France. Germany and France have already a common military unit and following the Brexit, the UK is outside the European institutions capable to form greater multilateral security structures. Germany alone, as the strongest economy in the EU, has based its power on soft, not hard power. For the German government, German defence spending and commitment to use military power is extremely limited due to the public sphere (Major & Mölling, 2014, p. 6). Former President, Horst Köhler, had to resign due to a speech where he stated that Germany had national interests (Kamp, 2018, p. 67).

In addition, I have looked at Sönke Neitzels book, *Deutsche Krieger*. This book is written in German, and therefore, translations will follow at each quote. This due to recognize the original citation. Sönke Neitzel is a recognized historian in Germany specializing in military history. Neitzel published the book *Deutsche Krieger* in 2020 and has seen high recognition in the Bundeswehr itself. *Deutsche Krieger* covers the history of the German armed forces, from the German Empire until this day, including the NVA, the Armed forces of East-Germany. Sönke Neitzel points out the challenges and sincere problems in the German armed forces.

He argues that Germany since 2001 has discarded domestic and alliance defence in favor for out of area operations (Neitzel, 2020, p. 563). He argues that the Bundeswehr in 2014 was just a shadow of its former self and was not at all structured for classic defense. (Neitzel, 2020, p. 568)

For example, we see evidence that the Air force is having a lower readiness-level than expected, with too few Eurofighters operational, and with too little weaponry such as guided Air-to-Air missiles ready, in 2016, the Bundeswehr only had on average 132 Leopard 2 Main Battle Tanks, 222 IFVs, 41 Pz2000s, 11 Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS), 9 NH90 Transport Helicopters, 9 Attack Helicopters, 41 Eurofighters and 28 Tornado fighter-bombers (Neitzel, 2020, p. 569). According to Neitzel, this means not

only has the Bundeswehr limited materiel, but that under half of it is operational. In 2018, every German submarine was in docs for repairs (Neitzel, 2020, p. 568)

Summarized, the existing literature on German security policy discusses German investments after the cold war and that Germany under Schröder, supported the French-UK started CSDP-project. The literature also covers Germany's reluctance towards the military operation in Libya and how it needed to restart its relationships in NATO and on the bilateral level with France. Shifts in the economic sphere after the Eurozone crisis put more expectancies on Germany to take leadership in security questions. The literature covers that there has been a change in both rhetoric and action since 2014, with more German involvement in collective defence, such as in Lithuania, support of sanctions against Russia and more anti-Russian statements.

On the other hand, the literature also points out the limitations. The lack of operational tanks, submarines and the lack of maintenance and spare parts. In addition, the literature points out the challenges with the public sphere and the historic relation Germany has to its military, although it points out changes over time here as well.

My thesis will therefore be an addition to the current literature due to my contemporary analysis. This thesis seeks to confirm the challenges pointed out, and at the same time argue for that there is a real change in Berlin, facing today's situation.

### 3 Theoretical framework

As this thesis is written in a contemporary setting, it will have less updated academic literature than if it was a more historic thesis. For that reason, this thesis will be more reliant on theory. As there is a broad collection of theories on international relations, we need to choose, corresponding to the case. It is not easy to say if one is right and one is wrong per se. They must be put in the right setting. The use of a theory and case is not necessary to prove a theory, but to use a theory to explain and help analyse a case. The difference is in the perception on literature. One will find that no theory can explain everything, but every theory can explain something. As this thesis is based on theory in a realist tradition, it will not have the same explanatory means as other. This thesis will therefore have its limitations in the framework of structural realism in its explanatory means on the current conflict.

Realpolitik as a term has its origin in the politics and diplomacy of the first chancellor of the German Empire, Otto von Bismarck and is described as the art of the possible (Emery, 1915, p. 455). Realpolitik is the opposite of moral politics, where your moral stand guides your politics. Realpolitik can be described as making decisions and forming politics with a pragmatic view with the means available and necessary and in the state's interest (Carvalho & Leira, 2020, s. 60). With other words. You decide based on what is necessary, not what you want (Emery, 1915, p. 468).

Summarised, where Realism describes politics, Realpolitik describes policies. There is therefore a link between Realism and Realpolitik, but not the same thing. The term Realpolitik will therefore be operationalised in this thesis as a way to describe certain German policies, but not to explain them. Throughout the thesis, I will argue on how the current change in German politics can be described as realpolitik

As mentioned in the introduction, I am using Kenneth Waltz's "Man, the state and war" as theoretical framework for the analysis. In Waltz's book from 1959 he is presenting the three levels, or images, of international politics. Instead of relying on only human nature, as for example Morgenthau and classic realism, he has, in addition, made the state, and the state system a part of the analysis (Carvalho & Leira, 2020, ss. 64-65).

Waltz is through that known for being one of the first scholars of neo-/structural realism. For simplification I will only use the term structural realism. Waltz, as a structural realist, is also defined as a defensive structural realist. Defensive realism is categorized as a part of structural realism. On the other hand, offensive realism is linked to classic realism.

The difference concerning defensive and offensive realism is based on the different perspective on the state's power perception. Defensive realism will categorize a state's objective as survival and security, while offensive realism will focus more on the state's maximising of power, hence the term offensive and defensive. Defensive realism argues that the drive and hunt for hegemony and maximised power, will always be endeavoured counterbalanced by other states (Carvalho & Leira, 2020, s. 65). As a key concept in defensive realism, we have the *security dilemma*. The security dilemma is the assumption that every expansion of a state's military to secure greater security will result in other states also increasing their military spending which will result in less security in the long run (Carvalho & Leira, 2020, s. 62).



This does not however, by any means define defensive realism as more modest in terms of the use of force. As military force and political power are not necessarily linked. It is only a way on characterize the nature of realist thought.

In the following part, I will cover the main concept of Kenneth Waltz' three levels.

### 3.1 The Man

The First Image. Politics and policies are formulated and executed by politicians. Therefore, the nature of man, and their own interests and relations, important in the study of international relations according to Waltz (Waltz, 1959, pp. 16-17).

Connection between the state and man are suited well to explain old personal Kingdoms, and oligarchies and dictatorships such as Russia where there are obvious personal interests in staying in power.

However, in a democracy, where leadership is switched over time at the peoples will, we will see that the politicians' personal interests are more disconnected. Which makes it more important to separate the state and the man in an analysis (Waltz, 1959, pp. 40-41). In this thesis, the first image will cover the decision makers in the German government

### 3.2 The State

The Second image is the state. On this level we look at how the state's condition, geopolitical position and composition plays a role in international relations. Where human nature is an important factor, concrete politics do also play an important role according to Kenneth Waltz. "The attempt to explain everything by psychology meant, in the end, that psychology succeeded in explaining nothing" (Waltz, 1959, p. 81). If one could explain everything by human nature, then nothing could be explained.

The state is in this thesis the Bundeswehr, the armed forces of Germany and the government spendings. Although Germany is a federal republic, it still has many interests and preferences that needs to be weighted and prioritized. Taxes and state income define the federal budget. Furthermore, inflation and economic conjunctures may restrain public spending in conflict with the wishes of the politicians. In a democratic country, without a direct border to an adversary, such as todays Germany. Using plenitude of money on military, especially with Germany's history, is difficult to defend (ironically) for the public. To put it carefully, Germany now is not the same as when "Die wacht am Rhein" was sung as German soldiers marched to war (Rommel, 1937, p. 12).

### 3.3 The War

The third Image referred to as the war. The war is the anarchial state system (Waltz, 1959, p. 159). As long there is no international system of law which can be prosecuted by a world government (Waltz, 1959, p. 182). There is anarchy. Sovereign states with national interests outweighing international law, cannot coexist with a non-anarchial system. That does not mean that there is no international order, but the international law and order is only legitimate, as long states are defending the current order. In the hierarchy of states, the stronger sets the game rules for the rest. If the systems law shall maintain, every aggressor and "game changer" needs to be sanctioned and be responded to with enough negative consequences. If not, we will have the aggressor gaining

legitimacy, or at least, confidence (Waltz, 1959, p. 160). This image is used to describe the relation between Germany and Russia.

## 4 Methodological framework

This thesis has the objective to complement the existing literature of German security and to give explanatory arguments on why, and how Germany has shifted its security policy given the current ongoing invasion of Ukraine through the perspective of structural realism. As I am doing an analysis based on Kenneth Waltz' three images, I can give a in depth insight in the current situation in Germany, and how and why the German government is reacting on the current situation.

This thesis is defined as a case study, which is a qualitative study in nature. A case study permits the examination of a compound problem. As Jonathon W. Moses and Torbjørn L. Knutsen illustrate, there are a lot of different types of case studies in the naturalist tradition (Moses & Knutsen, 2019). The advantages of using a case study design are the in depth knowledge and explanatory value this will provide. The disadvantages and challenges of using a case study design is first of all, that the qualitative nature will give this thesis limited generalization beyond the case (Burnham, Lutz, Grant, & Layton-Henry, 2008). The other challenge is potential personal bias in selection of sources, findings, and conclusion. This is difficult to counter due to the nature of this thesis. There will be a selection of sources, and therefore a possibility of bias. The counter is use of theory.

Due to that I am using Kenneth Waltz' three levels of analysis, there will be different sources for the levels. For the first level, I have based my analysis on statements by the relevant politicians in official statements, interviews and by action. These sources are mostly from German mainstream media due to the fact that most interviews are done in the two main tv-news channels, ARD and ZDF. to support this, I have also looked at official statements on the official government page, as well as more news articles.

for the second level, I have chosen to look at official German data on military. The data on German military numbers are public and will therefore be limited to explain beyond this. Military intelligence and specific parts of doctrine and strategy is classified and can therefore not be analysed.

For numbers on German military, I have looked at overall spending, in percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), percentage of government budget and in absolute numbers. By looking at the different perspectives of military spending, one can get a better understanding of the situation, as well analyse the differences on for example NATO targets and national spending.

The source I have been using for total spending is numbers from SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute). The numbers from SIPRI are in US Dollars (SIPRI, 2022). To make the numbers more comparable in a German setting, I have adjusted every annual spending with the annual exchange rate from Dollars to Euros and then adjusted the Euro rate to the inflation rate in the Eurozone to the value of 2022. With an adjustment for inflation, there will be a more accurate number to compare the numbers, and to give an accurate trend. This is Figure 1 in the analysis. The numbers are rounded, and therefore not completely accurate. The Excel paper as an appendix. In addition, I have looked at the numbers of the German military in materiel and personnel to see how much of the overall spending is compared to concrete output in military

capabilities. For these numbers, I have looked at official government documents from the German Defence Ministry and the Bundsewehr.

In the third level, I have looked at German gas dependency to illustrate the relationship between Germany and Russia, and how a change in gas policy is a clear indicator for a shift in German foreign policy and Germanys change of thought.

The Numbers for the German economy are retrieved from the German Finance Ministry and the Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action. On numbers on German imports of gas, gas usage and gas dependency, I have retrieved numbers from the Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK), Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR).

## 5 The Analysis

As I have stated before, I will use the three levels of Waltz as the framework of the analysis. The first part covers the decision makers and how the German government has reacted. The second part covers the state of the Bundeswehr and its challenges that needs to be addressed, and the third part covers the

### 5.1 Scholz, SPD's heritage and the (olive) Green party.

In this part I will look on German politicians and how their discourse the last weeks can confirm a more realist approach by the German government, and how Realpolitik can be a good way to describe these changes.

Germany's positions on the Russian invasion and German defence are highly linked to the responsible ministers and politicians. German politics has a long tradition with *Putin/Russlandverstehers* which is a negative term used for politicians that "understand" Russia and acknowledges their interests and accepts to an extent, Russian aggression. An example of this is *Altkanzler Schröder*, who is a personal friend of Putin, which is still a member of the SPD. In addition, as a part of the SPD's heritage, Willy Brandt, with his *Ostpolitik*, started the nearing to the then Soviet Union. There has traditionally been a understanding that Germany owes Russia, and Ukraine and everlasting apology after ww2.

Germany was governed the last decade by Angela Merkel and the Christian conservatives, with mostly the social democrats as coalition partners. During Merkel's rule, there was a political unanimity of reducing the expenses for the German armed forces. The CDU/CSU has traditionally been more open for a larger military budget, but the post-cold war period saw a decrease in political will for huge military expenses, which of course, lead to politicians focus on other areas.

With a history of a military nation, which pointed out by the existing literature, Germany has become a lot more pacifist. Which also includes politicians, especially the greens and the far left and parts of the social democrats. In the last weeks, chancellor Scholz have been in a heavy wind in German media for being too passive and reluctant with considering heavier weapons to Ukraine. Scholz was not willing to use the term heavy weapons (*Schwere Waffen*), The speaker from the Free Democrats on security policy, Strack-Zimmermann, indirectly called for Scholz to resign from his post (Strack-Zimmermann, 2022). These are harsh words from a coalition partner. In addition, the hesitant support of the SWIFT ban, Scholz got in a bad light, reminding of German position in Libya in 2011. After these discussions, the German government has per this day opened to deliver heavy equipment, this is covered in the 2nd part of the analysis.

Despite this, there are still evidence of what I argue, a great shift in the German government view on politics. which supports that there is a return of Realpolitik. First evidence is the speech in the German Parliament, the *Bundestag* of Cancellor Scholz, where he presented the situation, and the intolerance of an invasion of the Ukraine, with the consequences that Germany will rearm the Bundeswehr with a special fund of 100 billion Euros, and that the defence budget will increase to over 2% each year (Scholz, 2022). Interesting with this speech and statements, was that this was not discussed or

clarified with the Greens, only with the Liberals and the Conservatives. Scholz this way did two things. He showed leadership and action that was more important than the coalition alliance, and secondly, with this manoeuvring, he defended the green leadership from criticism.

On his speech May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, and an interview he did with the ZDF on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022, after again some weeks with criticism of weak communication, Scholz' speech for the labour movement, he not only showed more enthusiasm than he normally is associated with, but he also put statements that describes the political shift.

(...) We will support them so they can defend themselves – by supplying weapons just as many other countries in Europe are doing." Federal Chancellor Scholz sent an unambiguous message to Vladimir Putin: "I am calling on the Russian president to let the weapons fall silent! Withdraw your troops! Respect Ukraine's sovereignty and independence. Let there be no doubt about this: we will not permit violence to be used to move borders and conquer territory. (...) I respect pacifism, but it must seem cynical to the citizens of Ukraine to be told to fight back against Putin's aggression without weapons (...) (Scholz, 2022)

In addition, in the appearance in the ZDF-interview series *Was nun?* (What now?) he described "German, and his own politics as a result of swift decisions in great coordination with allies, with for example planning sanctions with the USA before the war started" (Scholz, Was Nun, Herr Scholz?, 2022). He furthermore stated his responsibility to defend Germany and allies, as that was his sworn oath, and would do everything to deter a nuclear war with Russia. A such statement, which would be unlikely half a year ago, illustrates the shift in politics in Germany. Scholz, in that Interview, also stated that he would not visit Kyiv before the entanglement between Steinmeier and Zelensky was solved. Steinmeier, which was unwanted in Kyiv due to his relations to Russia, seems to have been cleared after a phone call between him and both him and Scholz, now are invited to meet Zelensky on 9<sup>th</sup> of May (Deutsche Welle, 2022).

Despite that the Greens were not included in the consulting before Scholz' speech in the Parliament, Annalena Baerbock, foreign minister of Germany, openly defended the deliveries of heavy weapons as well as all sanctions against Russia (European Commission, 2022). As well did Anton Hofreiter, leader of the Europe committee in the Parliament (Ausschuss für die Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union) and Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck has argued for a fast reduction of imports of energy from Russia, as long this is possible. I will cover this in the third part of the analysis. The point is that the Greens, that were founded by members of the peace movement of the 70s, are supporting both an increase in military spending as well as in weapon deliveries. The *Zeitenwende* this is illustrating, is evidence for what can be described as best as Realpolitik.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, Scholz hold an official speech where he again, assured German shift in policy, and the support of Ukraine, but he also but four main characteristics for German action:

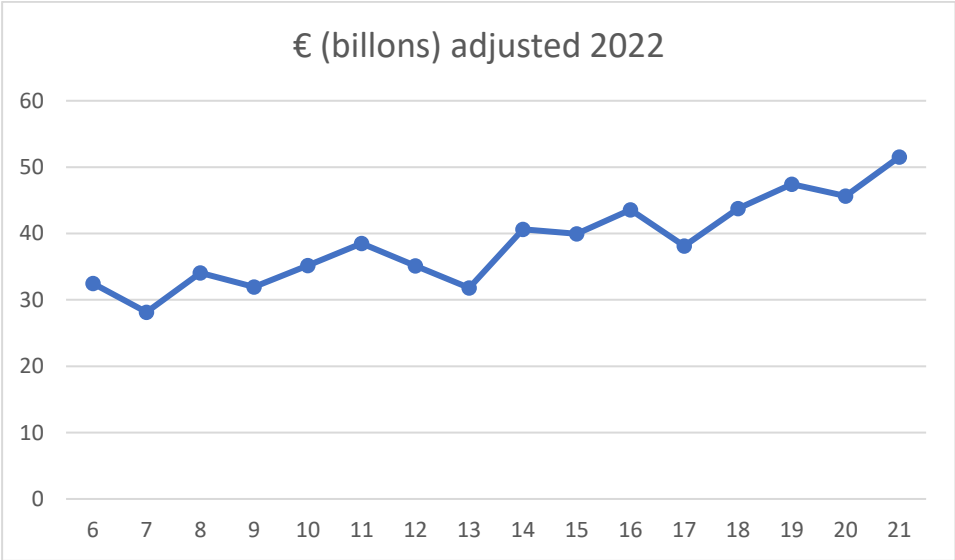
Firstly: no German go-it alone efforts! Whatever we do, we coordinate closely with our Alliance partners – in Europe and across the Atlantic. Secondly: in everything we do we ensure that we maintain our capacity to defend ourselves! And we have decided to significantly improve the resources of the Bundeswehr so that it will remain in a position to defend us in future. Thirdly: we will not do anything that could inflict more damage on ourselves and our partners than on Russia. And fourthly: we will not take any decision that makes NATO a party to the war. We stand by these principles. (Scholz, 2022)

Returning to realism, this statement supports both the security dilemma, as Scholz is not willing to increase the conflict or risk more than necessary, as well as this is also

supported by the defensive nature. There is an ambition to maximise Germany’s own security. What can be drawn out from this is that the decision makers in Germany, either with connections to Russian oligarchs, the industry or due to their own naivety or political background and ideology they have demonstrated that they are willing to change their policies, and to accept what needs to be done.

### 5.2 The inadequate Bundeswehr and its challenges

The second level of my analysis is the domestic level. Where I covered the politicians in the first part, I will now look at what challenges the German armed forces have, and how this might will change. For that reason, the Bundeswehr is the subject for analysis. As the literature in the Review chapter already has stated, some of the issues with the German armed forces has been the definite underfinancing and promises by politicians not being followed.



**Figure 1 German military spending in billion €. From 2006 to 2022, adjusted for inflation**

In Figure 1, which goes from 2006 until 2021, we see the total spending in Euros as if it was adjusted for the current value. As we see, the lowest point is right under 30 billion Euros, and the highest part is last year’s spending with some over 50 billion Euros. In perspective. Scholz promised a onetime special fund of 100 billion Euros. This would increase the annual budget by 300%. Which is a substantial increase.

Per now, before the promised increase, military spending amount to 10% of the overall Federal Budget (Bundesministerium der Finanzen, 2022) (Manthey, bmv.g.de, 2021). If we go in detail, we see that 1/3 of the military spending goes for personnel and 15% for new materiel and equipment. This is also under NATO goals, which point out a minimum percentage of 20 for new equipment (NATO, 2021).

If we look on % of GDP, we see that Germany is scoring much lower. This is the main critique point for German spending in the media, do to the fact that the NATO-goal is 2%. Germany is no were near the target with only 1,4% in 2021. The average since 2012 has been 1,2% (SIPRI, 2006-2020). One can argue for or against what the common % goal should be, or if defence should be measured different. But for Germany, as a strong economic power, and with a signed commitment to the spending, the German

armed forces score really low on this and challenge the allied' perception of actual German willingness to increase spending.

Therefore, it is a substantial change that Scholz promises an increase to an over annual spending of 2%. An increase with 3 times the current budget with the special fund, there is serious changes. This supports the realist perspective as it is explained with the need for a severe need for hard power capabilities.

Clearly the analysis on the spending shows, that the German will to invest in the defence has been there, but still too low as there has been too little spending of GDP. But the macro numbers in Euros do not give us an insight in the factual armed forces. Euros may buy tanks, but they also can pay consultants. Therefore, I find it necessary to explore the Bundeswehr in personnel numbers.

The Bundeswehr has per today a total number of 183 730 active soldiers, were 64 184 serves in the Army, that consists of 3 divisions, were 2 consists of the armoured, mechanised, and motorised capabilities (the 1. and 10. Panzerdivision) and 1 with airborne capabilities (Rapid Forces Division). These make up the bulk of the German land defence (Bundeswehr, 2022). With three divisions, It is still a shadow of its former self, as the halt in conscription reduced the personnel with over 50 000 soldiers in 2011 (Statistica, 2019) (Bundeswehr, 2022). With less personnel, there is also an equivalent reduction in tanks, anti-air capabilities and so on (Neitzel, 2020, p. 568).

The main problem with the German armed forces, is not necessary the equipment itself. The Leopard 2A7V is still one of the most modern Main battle tank (MBT), the same with the Puma Infantry fighting vehicle (IFV) and the Pz2000. The transport plane A400M and the Eurofighter are modern aircraft, but there is not enough to satisfy NATO demands, and to deter a potential adversary, which the invasion of the Ukraine shows. The eldering Marder IFV, and the Tornado fighter-bomber, still makes up a huge portion of the capabilities (Bundeswehr, 2022).

A huge challenge in the German security policy, as Neitzel argues, lies in the bureaucracy around the actual armed forces. With reports of pilots needing to wait several months to get a new flight suit, or the massive expenditures for consultants under Ursula von der Leyen's position as defence minister. The defence ministry used more on external consultants than the rest of the ministries together. The main problem seems not to be that the money is missing, but that it does not translate in soldiers, tanks, and planes, but bureaucrats in suit and tie.

As I cannot examine the actual numbers in the future, I can only give the changes promised. The German government has stated that it will buy F35 to replace the eldering Tornado, to spend in purchases of new-, and upgrade and repair existing materiel in the Army, Navy and Air Force (Scholz, 2022). In addition, Germany is now recalling German forces oversea to arguably strengthen the defence at home.

Furthermore, there is also communication from the Bundeswehr itself that the main focus once again is national and collective defence, and not just a "side quest" (Bundeswehr, 2022). With this statement, there is strong evidence that supports the realist perspective.

In addition to stack up the domestic defence, Germany has also given materiel directly and indirectly to Ukraine. This was before the invasion limited to 5000 helmets. Over time Germany changed its stand and started giving heavier weapons like MANPADS and



anti-tank weapons like Stinger rockets and Panzerfaust 3. Likely, the German government did not reckon with the Ukrainian fierce resistance, and therefore was reluctant to give more materiel to avoid being drawn into the conflict. This is off the table now. German defence starts in the Ukraine. Now, even heavy equipment such as the cold war era self-propelled anti air gun (SPAAG) *Gepard* in the quantity of 50, and 7 pieces of the self-propelled howitzer *Panzerhaubitze 2000* which is one of the most modern artillery systems in the world is delivered. In addition to delivery, both for the *Gepard* and the *Pz2000*, there is arranged for training of Ukrainian troops (Maurer, 2022).

Summarized, we can see that on the domestic level, Germany has a past with low spending and low personnel that need to be dealt with. Without conscription, and the low numbers of ammunition, spare parts and the massive bureaucracy in the ministry, there is many changes that needs to be done to effectively transition the now return of *realpolitik* in actual policy change, which is what *realpolitik* is all about. For now, German promises, and actual deliveries to the Ukraine, are the only, yet strong evidence on German change.

### 5.3 The elephant in the room: Russian gas. Why it matters in security questions

In this chapter I will cover the empirical evidence and statistics on German and European gas import and how that is not only a question on Nord Stream 1 and 2, but a far more substantial challenge in Germany's case on leverage in its position upon Russia.

Gas and energy are highly relevant in security studies. Energy is essential for society and the economy. That makes it both a high priority for the state, as well as a target for a potential adversary. Energy is the one input factor in any supply chain. For production, transport, and usage, you need energy (Fermann, 2009, pp. 10-11).

#### 5.3.1 *Wandel durch Handel*, the failed peace theory

The very thing the EU, and the Franco-German friendship is based on, is the mechanism introduced with the European Coal and Steel community (ECSC). To share war-essential resources in a common market would preserve peace do to the fact that no nation would be able to stockpile the resources necessary to attack each other within the market. Furthermore, a war for resources would be obsolete considering the fact that resources now would be cheaper to buy than to fight for. In this fashion, the European peace project, and thus European security, is in addition to NATO, based on a common market.

However, the main challenge with energy is that there are substantially more net consumers than producers (Fermann, 2009, pp. 19-22). This means that most EU-states, including Germany, are heavily relying on energy imports. Inside the EU and the EEA this seems not to be a big problem do to two factors. The first is peace, second is the ever-growing increase of interstate power transmission. With the European Green deal on its way, there is no evidence that interstate power transmission will stagnate. In fact, due to the phasing out of coal and nuclear power to some degree, greater power exchange will be necessary for the EU.

The reason this is mentioned is based on two observations: Europe's and the market's nature on viewing energy as a "normal" good following supply and demand, and the neglecting of energy's strategic role that should be in a state's top priorities. The German phrase "*Wandel durch Handel*" (transition through trade) was Germany's take on the development of Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union. The EU-Russian gas cooperation

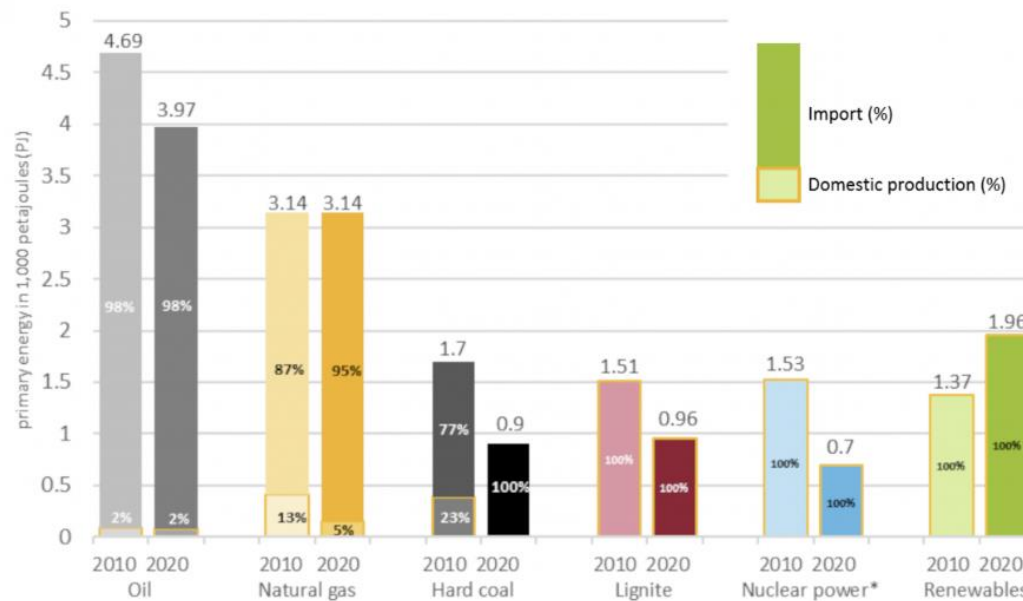
started as soon the Soviet Union collapsed. Already in 1991 with the Energy Charter, and in 1994 with the Energy Charter Treaty, cooperation between the EU and Russia started (Romanova, 2009, p. 120). The main objective was to create an arena where energy supply stability for the then still European Communities (EC). We need to remember that in this time, supply of oil and gas from the Gulf was questionable. As the ECSC and Euratom integrated western Europe, the Energy Charter was, according to, at that time, European Commission president Jacques Delors, a way to integrate the former eastern bloc in Europe (Romanova, 2009, p. 120).

Russia never ratified this treaty, although it signed it. Due to it "did not fulfil Russia's national interests" (Romanova, 2009, p. 121). It is obvious that the EU and Russia would see energy cooperation with two perspectives. The EU on one side wanted to liberalize and harmonize the energy market with two objectives. 1: secure cheap and sufficient gas. 2: Integrate and develop the former Eastern bloc. Russia on the other side did not ratify the Energy Charter because of its distributor- and consumer-friendly nature. Russia viewed, and still views, Energy with a strategic eye for domestic development (Romanova, 2009, pp. 131-135).

There was a real belief that through trade, like in the ECSC, that interdependency in a common market could transition Russia to a democracy, or at least, make Russia not a security issue. This obviously did not work, seeing the current situation. The EU with Germany and German companies in front, has secured access to cheap gas for its industry.

### 5.3.2 German gas consumption. Atomkraft? Nein, Danke!

To illustrate the severe situation, I have looked at the statistics on German import and consumption. As part of Merkel's *Energiewende* (Energy transition), Germany was set to cut down on nuclear energy and coal. Today, Germany's consumption of gas is covered mainly by imports. As shown in the figure under, only 5% of the gas consumption is covered by domestic production and according to the BGR) German reserves will deplete soon if no measures are met (BGR, 2022). This means that soon, Germany will be 100% dependent on gas imports. German gas imports are exclusively by pipelines, as no terminal for LNG is build. Germany has until now relied heavy on import from primarily from Russia (55%), but also from Norway (30% and the Netherlands (13%) (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie, 2019, pp. 10-11). The figure under illustrates the energy situation in Germany in 2020 according to the BGR (BGR, 2022).

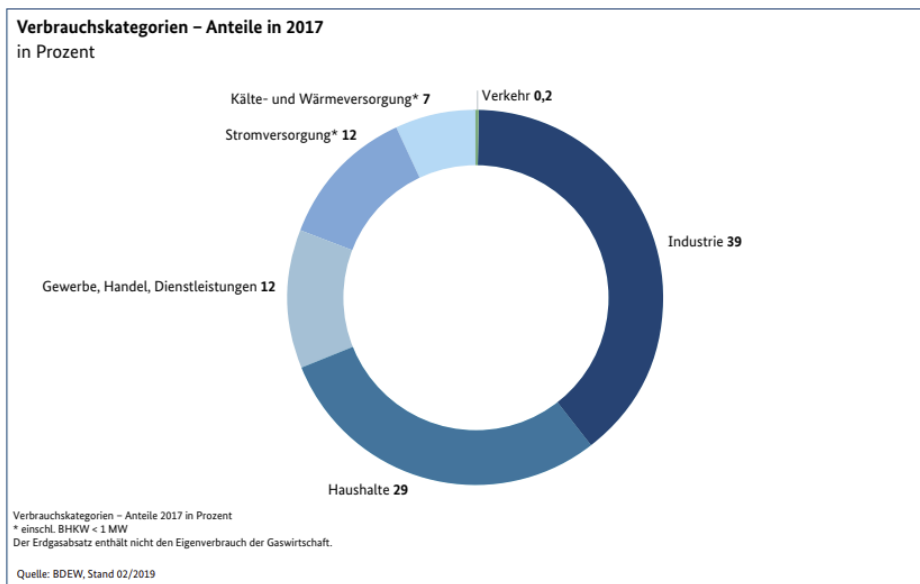


\*While the uranium is imported, nuclear energy is considered domestic, as significant additional production steps in Germany/Europe are necessary to turn it into fuel rods.

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**Figure 2 German energy consumption**

A main argument against Germany's energy politics has been that the terminating of nuclear power plants have made Germany depended on Russian gas. This is not that easy. In the figure beneath, which showcases German gas consumption in sectors, we see that, in 2017, the German industry was the largest sector, with almost 40% of total consumption. Electricity production only stands for 12 %. Nuclear energy, or other power sources, cannot at this stage, replace (Russian) gas (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie, 2019, p. 9). Both German and Russian politicians know this.



**Figure 3. German gas consumption in sectors**

German politicians have already addressed the issue of dependency and has been in the public discourse since Russian annexation of the Crimea. Nord Stream 2 was supposed to supply Germany with natural gas from Russia through the Baltic Sea. In the past

months, Nord Stream 2 has become a symbol for Germany's dependency to Russia. An important argument needs to be made here. Nord Stream 2 was never in operation and will most likely not be in near future, meaning the gas from that pipeline is only hypothetical. Germany has not had blackouts or similar. Therefore, using Nord Stream 2 in an argument of security, is rather problematic. Nord Stream 2 could have been an issue of security in the future. As for now, Nord Stream 2 serves as a symbol of German economic interests, Putinversteher and naivety regarding post-soviet European politics.

### 5.3.3 The green transition. Realism meets green politics

To become a more powerful counterpart, and may bring Russia to negotiate, the EU is to embargo Russian Oil this year, and is following up on finding replacements for gas. As von der Leyen puts Russian stop in gas delivery as blackmail, there is at least an indicator that gas still is a powerful tool to stall Europe.

Robert Habeck, as vice chancellor, has already initiated the building of a LNG-terminal, overruling the famous German bureaucracy. In addition to this, the German imports of Russian energy have drastically decreased as a measure to both decrease Russian income and decreasing German dependency. Germany has reduced Russian imports, in numbers of overall consume, coal from 50% to 8%, oil from 35% to 12% and gas from 55% to 35% (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Klimaschutz, 2022, pp. 3-5). Furthermore, the government seek to by 2024, to decrease Russian gas dependency to 10% (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Klimaschutz, 2022, p. 6) This does not stand in continuance to the former German stand on energy imports from Russia. From building Nord Stream 2, there is a radical shift towards decreasing imports. With the G7, Germany also has ambitions to phase out Russian oil in the nearest future (euronews.com, 2022). As Germany seek more security, and closeness to its allies, especially France, the UK and USA, while on the other side Russia seek closer bonds to China, we will probably see a greater increase in "old school" realism in foreign policy.

This chapter has put German energy policy in context of security. I have pointed out the relevance, due to Russian gas being both important for Russian income, and for German industry. Germany has turned around from wanting to increase, to now decrease imports from Russia. The old narrative of transition trough trade has died, as both the current situation and the German reaction has illustrated.

## 6 Summary and Conclusion

Through my analysis of German policy and politicians I have found evidence that can be supported by realism. Through the 3 chapters of my analysis, I have given evidence for the shift in German politics. With a tripartite of the analysis, I have covered both decision makers in the government, the military, and the gas imports from Russia and how it matters in security questions. Through Kenneth Waltz's three levels we can see that the German security question is complex, as Germany has an extraordinary relationship to its own armed forces, and Russia.

Germany's new government, and its acceptance of elites losing money, shows that there is a will at the highest political level, to defend national interests due to the circumstances. Although Germany in the past years, with the Big Coalition under the leadership of Angela Merkel, and SPD's hesitation due to the former chancellor Schröder's connection to Putin, has been very reluctant in the question of Russian gas. With now the government stating that it will deliver heavy weapons to the Ukraine, and not just helmets, a large commitment is also arranged for.

The second part of my analysis illustrated the challenges the German armed forces face. Although there has been a commitment to more spending already since 2014, the numbers talked for themselves. Germany as supposedly increased its focus on the Bundeswehr, already starting before the Russian invasion. Germany has also, through the higher focus on "old school" hardware than other nations such as the Netherlands, still been committed to keep a basis of defence in Europe, although limited. The main problem, as this thesis finds, is that the German Armed Forces, for its budget, seems to be overfinanced for what it produces of security. In addition, Germany has not spent what it should according to NATO-targets, nor in overall spending or in sectoral spending. The promised special fund of 100 billion Euros, and the plan on spending more than 2% per year on the military, as well as plans on buying F35s, is in a realist perspective, at least a statement that there is change. Only time will tell how the German armed forces will look in the future. With a potential future spending of 20% of the federal budget, shows that Germany as a state is starting to take its supported role and is willing to compensate defence with reduction in other areas.

EU-Russian, and especially German-Russian cooperation and trade with gas has, if not directly, smoke-screened Russia's development. If anything, the EU with Germany in front, have tolerated Russia's aggression, and partially the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, believing in transitions through trade. As Germany already has decreased its imports, and with G7, stated that it will phase out Russian oil in 2022, Germany has assured its commitment to a new policy towards Russia. Gas from Russia can never be more valuable than the EU's single market and the security from NATO. Pressure from neighbouring countries and Germany's geopolitical and economic position in Europe has pushed Germany to take leadership as European security is reliant on solidarity.

In this thesis I therefore conclude that, with returning to the research question - that Germany has reacted heavily on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and it has, with the current evidence, revised its security and foreign policy that can be explained with defensive realism. Despite German gas-imports and rapprochement to Russia, in tandem

with neglecting of security investments and its historic relationship to the military, the current situation has shifted Germany's point of focus in its security policy proven by statements by German decision makers and action. Realpolitik, where what needs to be done, and not what is desired, seems to have returned to Germany. Only time will tell how this is playing out, but Germany's stand is proven.

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## Appendix 1:

		Euroes		Euroes, adjusted 2022	
6	35,9	0,68	24,412	1,33	32,46796
7	40,1	0,54	21,654	1,3	28,1502
8	45,1	0,6	27,06	1,26	34,0956
9	44,5	0,57	25,365	1,26	31,9599
10	43	0,66	28,38	1,24	35,1912
11	45,2	0,71	32,092	1,2	38,5104
12	43,8	0,68	29,784	1,18	35,14512
13	44,2	0,62	27,404	1,16	31,78864
14	44,7	0,79	35,313	1,15	40,60995
15	38,2	0,91	34,762	1,15	39,9763
16	39,9	0,95	37,905	1,15	43,59075
17	42,2	0,8	33,76	1,13	38,1488
18	46,4	0,85	39,44	1,11	43,7784
19	49	0,88	43,12	1,1	47,432
20	53,2	0,78	41,496	1,1	45,6456
21	56	0,86	48,16	1,07	51,5312

