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**Between *Westbindung* and *Ostpolitik*: Reconceptualising German-Russian
Relations 2014-2017**

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Abstract

German-Russian relations have remained strong since the Cold War, despite continuing in traditions of multilateralism and integrated into the Western order. Despite recent tensions and deterioration since the Ukraine Crisis, German-Russian relations are a subject of intense debate between the political parties CDU/CSU and SPD that governed Germany in a coalition from 2014-2017. This thesis utilises a social constructivist method to focus on social factors and party-political legacies relevant in the evolving relationship. It then analyses the evolving discourse of the parties about Russia in the years 2014-2017, focusing on the different ways the discourse uses and connects with the factors and legacies. Although a parallel movement is discerned between the foreign policy positions of the CDU/CSU and SPD, the parties' positions do not converge but remain in conflict about the future of European security, cooperation with Russia and the desired foreign policy role of Germany. Throughout, the analysis suggests that contemporary theories about German-Russian relations and about Germany's foreign policy role should look at the internal debates and factors to get a more complete picture of German foreign policy.

Key words: German-Russian relations, German foreign policy, Discourse Analysis, Role Theory, SPD, CDU/CSU, National Role Conceptions, social constructivism

List of Abbreviations

- AA = Association Agreement
- AfD = Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany party)
- CDU = Christlich Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union party)
- CEE = Central and Eastern Europe(an)
- CSU = Christlich-Soziale Union (Christian Social Union party)
- CFSP = Common Foreign and Security Policy
- DA = Discourse Analysis
- EaP = Eastern Partnership
- ENP = European Neighbourhood Policy
- ESDP = European Security and Defence Policy
- EU = European Union
- IR = International Relations
- MP = Member of Parliament (Bundestag)
- NATO = North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
- NRC = National Role Conception
- Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA)
- SPD = Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party)

Introduction

In the years since Russia invaded the Crimea in 2014, European relations have transformed. While the US, under new President Donald Trump since 2016, appears to be disengaging from world affairs, the role of the EU as an international and foreign policy actor is more important. This is pertinent considering that many of today's crises are happening in its neighbourhood, not least the Ukraine Crisis. As its largest and most powerful country, Germany plays an important role in European foreign policy, particularly towards Russia. Yet, Germany and Russia have a lot in common derived from historical experiences and strong cultural and social bonds. German-Russian relations since the Cold War have continued to be close and laden with 'extensive economic, social, and cultural connections' (Timmins, 2011, p.189). German foreign policy therefore underlies an interesting tension and is unusual: a country firmly integrated into a Western multilateral order with the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), but with extensive ties to a historic opponent of this order. Despite deterioration of the German-Russian relationship, particularly since the start of the Ukraine Crisis, there is much internal disagreement within Germany about how to deal with the previously close partner, not least in between the two parties governing Germany during and in the aftermath of the Ukraine Crisis.

The last century has left marks. Two World Wars on opposite sides, the Cold War in which the Soviet Union controlled the Socialist satellite state of the German Democratic Republic, and a post-Cold War period of 'peace'. This last period has been marked by strong bilateral economic and societal relations despite many international tensions, making German-Russian relations stand out from Germany's orientation towards a European multilateral order. A lot separates the two countries, such as their distinct political alliances, as demonstrated by German membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and leadership role within the European Union (EU).

Context and Relevance

The German-Russian relationship has been stagnating since 2007, taking a sharp negative turn after the on-break of the Ukraine Crisis. Relations became more critical since Putin's Munich Security Conference Speech of 2007, where he criticised the unipolar world. While the speech did not halt the close German-Russian ties, as mutual interests and dialogue were stressed throughout and strong relations continued, it was the beginning of a gradual deterioration. When Medvedev became President in 2008, a Modernisation Partnership was announced, with which Germany attempted to modernise the Russian economy while mutually benefitting. Germany acted leniently in an international context after the Russo-German war, reacting cautiously and not putting all blame on Russia (Bowker, 2011, p.198). However, relations deteriorated continually with personal disputes between Vladimir Putin, the President of the Russian Federation from 2012, and the German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Crises included Pussy Riot's trial (Forsberg, 2016, p.26) as well as the onset of the Syrian Civil War, in which Russia backs Assad, but Germany assists its allies, who reject Assad.

The culmination of these interstate crises was the Russian annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula Crimea 2014. After the pro-European Euromaidan protests and the ousting of Russia-friendly President of the Ukraine, Victor Yanukovych, Russia annexed Crimea and sent troops into Eastern Ukraine (Donetsk and Luhansk regions). Russia's annexation of the Crimea was in violation of the principles of sovereignty, the Helsinki Final Act and the Budapest Memorandum, which broke international law and was strongly condemned by the German government. Germany has since taken the lead in Europe, finding a unified response to this act and the ongoing Russian aggression. As part of the Normandy Format with France, Ukraine and Russia Germany started a mediation process that led to the Minsk I and Minsk II Agreements in 2014 and 2015 respectively. Because of the strong ties previously held between Russia and Germany, the foreign policy evolution between the years 2013-2017 is interesting and worthy of further study for understanding change in German foreign policy and its possible

future trajectories vis-à-vis its allies and Russia. This is heightened by German-Russian relations being one of intense debate within Germany and its politics, with some arguing that Germany should continue to pragmatically cooperate with and include Russia in European security arrangements. Others take the stance that Russia is a threat to Western norms and multilateral order and should be opposed. As this debate is reflected in its politics, seeing the German government as one overlooks the stances and debates between the different parties making it up, as well as their ideological orientation and relations with Russia. While Merkel's party, the Christlich Demokratische Union and its sister party, the Bavarian Christlich-Soziale Union (together CDU/CSU), have been critical of Russia's behaviour for a long time, its coalition party, the SPD, has long pursued friendlier policies towards Russia, suggesting governmental tensions.

Scholars like Denison or Oppermann view Germany's leadership of Europe in foreign policy as evidence for a trend of increasing economic and military assertiveness of Germany since reunification and the end of the Cold War. Another branch of literature argues against this and argues that not *Realpolitik* or economics is the explaining factor in this change. Instead, foreign policy learning that Germany has acquired in a European context are seen to have driven the foreign policy response. This thesis challenges both views and introduces social constructivism as a more suitable framework to analyse the evolution of German-Russian relations during this time. The two first groups of literature ignore the strong influence of domestic factors, in terms of public opinion and deeply-rooted connections entrenched in history, cultural and social factors. These, however, are crucial in understanding German-Russian relations, and fall into two groups. For one, social and cultural factors that affect the civil society ties between the two countries and also the discourse and policy of the German government in its formulation of foreign policy. Secondly, party-political legacies and traditions themselves are significant in German-Russian relations. Central is the legacy of *Westbindung*, i.e. the historical choice for integration into Western institutions by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer for the CDU, as well as

Ostpolitik, the first SPD Chancellor Willy Brandt's opening of relations towards the East, the foundation for the good relations with Russia today. These factors must be taken into account when studying the change in foreign policy towards Russia, in order to unpack the societal foundation, ideologies, and motives of this change. This thesis aims to provide an original contribution to the understanding of German foreign policy. It does this by combining a party-political comparison between the CDU/CSU and SPD with role theory, and by introducing discourse as the studied variable. The two main parties still have a different stance on Russia. What is noticeable is that Russia, for them, represents different things and this undoubtedly affects the discourse and ideology of certain parties when they talk about Russia, and German foreign policy generally. This is noticeable in party discourse, at party conferences and in parliament. Thus, the problem this thesis wants to tackle is how to understand these different views and their change on Russia from a social constructivist perspective.

Research Objectives and Design

Following from this, the main research question this thesis aims to answer is:

How did party-political discourse in the SPD and CDU/CSU surrounding German-Russian relations change from 2013-2017?

Further to this main research question, a number of further and related research objectives are tackled in this thesis whose research:

- *To provide an explanation of the factors affecting party discourse in Germany*
- *To interpret the discourse regarding Russia in terms of National Role Conceptions*
- *To understand how historic foreign policy legacies are used to construct world views and change over time*

The parties studied are SPD and CDU, partly because these formed the government from 2013-2017 and so were responsible for the foreign policy of Germany, but also because they have

astoundingly different foreign policy traditions vis-à-vis Russia and the Western order. In order to answer the research questions, the thesis draws upon Bundestag speeches, foreign policy speeches and party documents from the period 2013-2017, in which the Ukraine Crisis occurred, to be able to examine the forerun and the response to it and up to the following general election in 2017. The documents and speeches studied undergo a discourse analysis (DA), in which speeches about Russia and Germany's foreign policy by relevant foreign policy actors are analysed in terms of their reference to social and historical factors, their usage of party legacies, and foreign policy statements about Russia, Germany and the latter's role in Europe and the world. In order to link the discourse to contemporary domestic developments, domestic opinion polls and events are brought into the discussion. Therefore, the approach will link the text studied to the context in the spirit of van Dijk's functional analysis (van Dijk, 1985), in which the context is interpreted as having important social and historical dimensions.

The thesis finds that the discourse between the CDU/CSU and SPD on Russia generally moved in a parallel direction, but did not converge in the years 2013-2017. In general, the trend to similar, normative positions on foreign policy which were critical of Russia and reaffirmed Germany's roles as a European leader and mediator between East and West. Interacting with domestic and social factors, two images of Russia were constructed. The SPD's position on Russia became more critical of Russia as a foreign policy partner, but continued to stress the importance of cooperation and dialogue with Russia and its importance for European security. Opposing this, the CDU/CSU's image of Russia developed of an external actor that is undermining institutions and norms that underlie Europe and the Western order. The CDU/CSU rejected cooperation with the Russian regime and highlighted closer ties on a cultural, civil society level. This suggests that the CDU/CSU, in line with its historical legacies, sees Germany as a European and Western power, whereas the SPD continues to view Germany as a mediator between East and West. Social and domestic factors interact with these two views to develop a compromise, which includes both sanctions and a clear commitment to Europe, but with the

possibility for an improvement in relations through keeping open channels of cooperation and dialogue.

The thesis will proceed as follows: Following this introduction, an overview over the literature is given that compares realist and normative approaches to German foreign policy and German-Russian relations and frames the debate within these approaches as one of continuity versus discontinuity. Subsequently, the social constructivist and role theoretical approach to this thesis is explained. This is followed by the appropriate methodological framework to implement the theory. An overview of the results of the investigation comes next, which is divided into three phases of analysis. Next, the findings will be interpreted in light of the social constructivist and role theoretical theories. A short conclusion sums up the findings of the analysis, evaluates the thesis, and provides suggestions for further research in this field.

Competing Ideas about German Foreign Policy

Post-Cold War German foreign policy in general and especially German-Russian relations attracts the attention of many scholars that have sought to understand the process of foreign policy normalisation and change in Germany. Through the application of distinct theoretical frameworks and the focus on different levels of analysis and actors a wide range of literature has appeared aiming to understand the motivations, processes, and goals of these evolving relations. Strong relations with Russia since the end of the Cold War that are grounded in historical and social factors often stemming from before the Cold War suggest that revealing the internal debates surrounding this topic are a good method of explaining Germany's unusual foreign policy. One way to summarise the debate about German foreign policy is to differentiate between those authors that contend that it represents a continuity in terms of norms and institutions, and those that contend that Germany has taken up new, more assertive foreign policy roles at different times during the post-Cold War period. The way that scholars conceptualise this change or continuity, however, varies according to their theoretical approach and assumptions.

The literature about post-Cold War German foreign policy and German-Russian relations falls into two categories: a body of realist literature that focuses on economics and geopolitics and one that applies a norm-based, constructivist approach. The former analyses focus on the importance of Germany's economy and strategic strength for foreign relations and ties between Germany and Russia. Within this literature, there is a debate about the nature and timing of continuity or discontinuity within German foreign policy. The second body emphasises the effect of values and cultural and historical factors on Germany's foreign relations. Again, scholars disagree about their continuity. Despite these debates, scholars have not focused their attention enough on the important role and interaction of parties within the foreign policymaking process. Another understudied area in Germany lies in taking social and historical factors into account when explaining foreign policy. However, these are essential factors to

include in a complete analysis. Parties have different foreign policy approaches, as well as different relations with and ideas about Russia. Secondly, domestic factors including social, economic, and cultural ties with Russia have been understudied as an influence within German-Russian relations. The foreign policy role of Germany is therefore often taken for granted as a geopolitical phenomenon, rather than being deconstructed and its sources analysed.

Realist and Economic Theories

Realist and geo-economic theorists analyse German foreign policy through the lens of its strategic and economic power, and suggest that German foreign policy has become more powerful since the end of the Cold War. The notion that since the Cold War Germany has normalised is central (see Rittberger, 2001; Harnisch & Maull, 2001). By normalisation of Germany, scholars describe ‘the gradual attenuation of the particular restrictions that have influenced and constrained Germany’s international actions since, and because of, World War II’ (Gordon, 1994, p.225). For scholars that attribute to the normalisation of German foreign policy an increase in military and economic power and choice after the Cold War, this period from 1991 has provided Germany with new opportunities to fill a previously existing power vacuum (Phillips, 2000, p.21). However, most scholars contend that despite this Germany has replaced structural restrictions on its foreign policy during the Cold War with multilateral institutions, pursuing an integrationist anchorage within ‘Western institutions’ such as NATO and the European Union (EU), through which it can best achieve its interests and achieve security (see Denison, 2001). Any deviation from this order, in which Germany is considered to follow its own interests, or pursuit of close partnerships with states outside this order including Russia, is unusual from a realist perspective as strategic interests are best served within this multilateral order.

Accounts vary as to the timing and extent of Germany’s increased assertiveness. Denison (2001) argues that while Germany has increased its assertiveness in terms of increased military

operations, Germany remains firmly entrenched in multilateral institutions. Oppermann (2012), a decade later, argues that the Eurozone Crisis and the German abstention in the UN Security Council resolution 1973 to establish a no-fly zone resolution over Libya pointed to the onset of a more independent foreign policy based in geopolitical ideology. This, he contends, is due to a shift in foreign policy 'susceptible to the influences and vagaries of domestic politics' (Oppermann, 2012, p.503). The idea that domestic influence plays a large role in this geopolitical 'shift' is shared by Klinke (2018), who argues that Germany's foreign policy assertiveness is coupled with an increase in the prominence of geopolitical ideas in German discourse, leading to the development of a central power more independent from the USA and Russia. Comparing the 'muddling through' in internal coalition politics with its role in Europe, Janning (2018) suggests that, despite a tension between German multilateralist discourse and action, Germany is pushing for a strong cohesive EU as a foreign policy actor by aligning German and French strategic interests to become stronger on a world scale. Studying Germany's leadership role in Europe since the Ukraine Crisis, Daenhardt (2018) emphasises that Germany has dropped its traditional geopolitical 'culture of restraint' altogether and is pursuing a new, geopolitically assertive course with the aim of emancipating Germany both from the Western multilateral order and the close relationship with Russia.

Analysing German economic strength since the Cold War, Kundnani (2011) emphasises the primacy of the geo-economic in German foreign policy, justifying it with Germany's uncharacteristically strong relationship with Russia. The leading role taken by Germany in the Eurozone Crisis of 2011 and its results has even led to some assertions that Germany is pursuing the role of a regional hegemon (Bulmer & Paterson, 2013; Crome, 2013; Phillips, 2011). Some realist literature has described Germany as fulfilling a certain foreign policy role. For example, Leithner (2009) perceives Germany in a 'civilian power' role, suggesting continuity after the Cold War driven by economic means and goals.

The German-Russian relationship after 1991 at least until 2014, as a strong relationship that seems to defy the integrationist and multilateral logic of post-war German foreign policy, is a subject of ongoing debate around the issue of continuity and discontinuity in the strength, mechanisms and discourse that define this partnership. Analyses from realist and geo-economic perspectives focus on the strong economic relationship, given high importance by scholars such as Stepanovich (2013). This, she argues, enables the strong cultural exchange between the two states. Adomeit (2012) agrees that the economic relationship is a key dimension for Russia considering the mediating role of Germany within Europe. Franzke (2013) argues that Russia continues to be a key country economically for Germany even after the start of the Syrian Civil War, overweighing normative considerations. The Ukraine Crisis of 2013-2014 is often seen as symbolising a break between Germany and Russia, though. Getmanchuk & Solotkyy (2018) contend that in response to the Ukraine Crisis, Germany's chose a different route, emphasising European unity against Russia, and normative values over the economic interests it upheld by keeping good relations with Russia. Speck (2015) argues that German economic strength and strategic power are not enough for effective mediation between Russia and Ukraine. US military backing, and so Germany's strong relationship with the Western order, remain necessary. Myers (2018), though, argues that Russia's only NATO 'ally' is Germany, as they share a close strategic relationship.

Since this literature does not take into account social domestic factors and party discourse, it cannot explain the results of internal foreign policy debates that point to why German foreign policy change has been so ambiguous. Some realist literature improves on this deficiency like Rudolf (2006) who selects the Iraq War to demonstrate that German foreign policy discourse vis-à-vis its transatlantic commitment has not changed to an emergence of a new assertive 'German way'. Oppermann (2018) shows how the reaction to the Ukraine Crisis followed a shift of discourse by senior politicians towards one that wanted to see Germany take on more international responsibilities. However, even these scholars use domestic factors and discourse

to justify their explanation of continuity or discontinuity on a strategic level. They do not talk about the intense internal debates that interact with sociological factors and norms to produce these foreign policy outcomes.

Roles, Norms and History

A second body of literature studies German foreign policy from a normative and constructivist perspective. Constructivist theory of foreign policy states that ‘identity and interests of foreign policy actors are socially constructed and develop in the context of national and international norms’ (Brummer & Oppermann, 2014, p.51). This literature on German foreign policy can be split into two groups: one that emphasises learning and socialisation of German foreign policy processes in a European context; and the other which conceptualises German foreign policy as expressing a certain role as a foreign policy actor. While these literatures overlap, they differ as one emphasises to a greater extent the external process of socialisation, whereas role theoretical approaches tend to study the internal development of foreign policy roles.

The addition of a European dimension to foreign policy with the adoption of the CFSP in 1993 has given rise to literature relating to this change to German foreign policy. Voigt (2017) points to the importance of the EU for the achievement of foreign policy aims, emphasising its primacy of values and compromise. Harnisch (2018) strikes a similar tone, arguing that Europeanisation of German foreign policy has led to further common goals and rarely to pursue national ones. Aggestam (2004) uses a political-cultural approach to suggest that foreign policy learning takes place in a European context through the evolution of the EU as a normative power. In contrast, Miskimmon (2007) explains how Germany uploads its foreign policy preferences on to a European level, but argues that this is limited resulting from an EU and NATO overlap. Security issues are mainly in the domain of national policymaking, to the detriment of Europe, as analysed by Fischer (2016) on the new German-Russian pipeline project North Stream II (NSII). The literature emphasises limitations that exist in the ‘Europeanisation’ of foreign

policy and highlights domestic constraints and economic interests as reasons why German foreign policymaking is largely national. These limitations give rise to doubts about whether Germany's foreign policy has been sufficiently conceptualised by role theory, as this has usually conceptualised Germany as a multilateral, 'civilian power' (Harnisch & Maull, 2001), or whether other factors might be useful to study. Aggestam & Hyde-Price (2019) perceive a new European foreign policy dynamic since the Lisbon Treaty, but combine this with a theory about leadership that is derived from domestic factors and other actors' expectations. This body of literature thus emphasises the norms and learning done by Germany by interaction in the field of foreign policy on the level of Europe.

Leading on from the literature on learning and socialisation, which is mainly underlaid by constructivist assumptions, a popular method to study German foreign policy has been role theory, an approach that combines the study of foreign policy and social context (Aggestam, 2004, p.88). The theory contends that 'defining a foreign policy role and having it accepted by others is one of the basic objectives of a state' (*ibid.*, p.109). Thies (2009) argues that it can be used to bridge the gap between foreign policy and national identity, as well as seeing its integrative potential for foreign policy analysis and the field of international relations (IR). Role theory derives from constructivist literature, emphasising the role of norms, learning and identity as essential in the formation of national role conceptions (NRCs). The utility of role theory lies in demonstrating the combination of norms and domestic factors in the development of foreign policy roles. Role theory can explain cooperation over certain actors' rational utility functions, adding the variables of norms, aims, principles and ideals (Kirste & Maull, 1996, p.308) to form a more complete picture of German foreign policy. Role theory has often been applied to it, beginning with Maull's seminal work *Germany and Japan: The New Civilian Powers* (1990), which focuses on the development of an international identity in Germany, creating a sense of responsibility for the world that translates into the role conception of a 'civilian power'. This common role theoretical explanation declares that the aim of German

foreign policy, rooted in its historical legacies, is the ‘civilisation’ of European politics. This suggests a continuity in German foreign policy since the Cold War. Maull (2018) differentiates between reflective, hegemonic, geo-economic and civilian power approaches to German foreign policy and highlights that the notion of a ‘civilian power’ broadly corresponds to the methods and aims of German foreign policy. Malici (2006) ascribes the absence of any radical foreign policy transformation after the end of the Cold War to cultural factors within the German policy elite. Brummer and Oppermann (2016) suggest that the civilian power role is changing as the German foreign policy role becomes increasingly assertive due to a change of norms.

Many scholars contend that recently, this balancing ‘civilian’ mediation role has changed, particularly when looking at the negative developments in German-Russian relations. Devyatkov (2013) explains how the implementation of a strategic partnership between Russia and Germany is hindered by decreased German legitimacy in its role as mediator in Russian eyes. He further contends that there has been a shift towards Europe in Germany’s view of the Eastern Partnership, which has emancipated itself from Germany’s close relationship with Russia, enabling a perspective for a new *Ostpolitik* based on the interests of CEE countries. Görtemaker (2009) argues that post-Cold War foreign policy represented a ‘modified continuity’ of the previous West German foreign policy, as Germany has supported the extension of Western institutions to Eastern Europe, thus continuing in its institutional multilateralism but changing the focus of its *Ostpolitik*. However, a strong partnership was maintained with Russia in order to prevent its alienation. Link (1999) finds a similar ‘as well as’ non-exclusionary policy of European integration coupled with strong transatlantic ties as well as an interest in the stabilisation of the entire Eastern neighbourhood, including Russia (Link, 1999, p.126). He cites the use of the Bundeswehr abroad in Kosovo in 1999 as an indicator of Germany’s new ‘middle way’ foreign policy direction between East and West.

Role theoretical and constructivist scholars often point to continuity in German foreign policy, in that it has remained norm-led and institutionalised. Crawford & Olsen (2017) employ a historical-institutionalist approach to show the continued strength of the values of anti-militarism and multilateralism after unification, upheld by both the public and the elite. They contend that changes in the international system have strengthened this norm-based German policy and so German normative power has remained a realistic option. The importance of history is not only highlighted by them. Harnisch highlights the historical legacy of normative embeddedness and the strong role of multilateral institutions taken over from the Bonn Republic (Harnisch, 2000, p.8). The importance of values is thus highlighted by most role theory. Much research focuses on 'historic guilt' derived from World War II, and the influence this has on the restraint of contemporary German foreign policy, for example in terms of military operations (Hyde-Price, 2015). The normative role that historical legacies play in German foreign policy has been examined by Hampton (2000), who posits that Germany could be a 'normal' foreign power in terms of its sovereignty and embeddedness but is restrained by its 'unmasterable past'. Russian-German relations too have been influenced by reconciliatory motivations and other historical legacies. Cordell & Wolff (2007) place *Ostpolitik*, the leading pragmatic idea in recent German-Russian relations, in a domestic context, contending that it has always been driven by a normative consensus. They assert that it can more fruitfully be analysed through a constructivist lens that takes domestic historical factors into account. Siddi (2017) argues that the German historical culture of remembrance leads to an apologetic identity with respect to Russia and highlights the importance of reconciliation as an integral aspect and motivation of the strong German-Russian relationship in culture and politics.

The idea that Russia is an essential partner for lasting peace in Europe is an important idea derived from a long history of mutual understanding, from the 18th century. Brandt's policy of *Ostpolitik* (officially *Neue Ostpolitik*) was a foreign policy implemented by the first SPD Chancellor Brandt from 1969-74 that relaxed and normalised tensions with the GDR, Eastern

Europe and the Soviet Union. Meister (2013) highlights the integrative legacies of *Ostpolitik* and differentiates between norm-led and interest-led approaches within Germany to Russia. Moeller (1996) analyses examines the history of *Ostpolitik*, arguing that the ‘end of Ostpolitik’ after the Cold War is indicative of the uncertainty in the SPD’s political direction. Wright (2018) explains how the Ukraine Crisis has led to a deep shift in German leadership in Europe. *Ostpolitik* has evolved and is a factor in German leadership and its commitment to effective multilateralism. Daehnhardt & Handl (2018) argue that there has been a profound change in *Ostpolitik* towards a hybrid policy that takes into account normative foundations but has become more active and accepted a leadership role in Europe. This hybrid policy combines the focus on norms and economic engagement, as argued by Siddi (2016).

Yet other literature has focused on German discourse as a method to explain the nature of German foreign policy and foreign policy in general. Scholars such as Henrik Larsen (1997) or Daddow (2015) provide an overview of the possibility of applying discourse analysis to foreign policy, highlighting its advantages in terms of understanding the identity-policy nexus and the role of language of exposing the judgments and assumptions of policymakers. This literature enriches foreign policy, as it goes beyond positivist and individualist views about the nature of foreign policymaking. This literature is thus intimately connected to that about norms, culture, and history. Applied to Germany, Makarychev (2013) emphasises the prominent and important role of dialogue and communication within the German-Russian relationship. A second example is provided by Blanchoff (1997), who argues that foreign policy discourse and making are inextricably linked by historical memory and the policy prescriptions and views of history it influences. Eberle & Handl (2018) use a three-layered model of self, the significant other, and the international order to show how, after the Ukraine Crisis, Germany managed to portray its altered stance towards Russia using discursive methods in terms of a continuity in its civilian power role.

Gaps in the Literature

The dominant approaches to German foreign policy and especially German-Russian relations cannot adequately explain the reasons for the recent deterioration in German-Russian relations starting from Putin's Munich Speech in 2007 and changing radically after the Ukraine Crisis in 2014. At least three things are missing or not adequately explained in the literature. For one, the literature focuses on German government as a unitary, objective actor, whether it be from a role theoretical perspective or from a more realist or economic standpoint. This is especially true for realist and geopolitical statement, which assumes a unitary actor and state power as a given. This criticism is levelled at role theory by Cantir & Kaarbo (2012) who argue that a weakness of role theory is the idea that roles are shared across the public and the elite, in effect unitarising NRCs (Cantir & Kaarbo, 2012). The theory does not take enough into account the shifting nature of domestic preference and domestic discourse. This focus, however, leaves out a whole dimension of domestic and party-political dispute that is often more than 'behind the scenes.' The governmental position is often assumed to be final and absolute, while it is actually the result of intensive domestic bargaining and party-political compromise, involving a complex web of parties, public opinion, and domestic actors. Secondly, historical legacies in German foreign policy, especially vis-à-vis Russia, are often split between different political parties. This is relevant because these different legacies and their conflict in domestic politics add an important explanation of why foreign policy role change happens that is missing from other explanations. As Harnisch states: 'Strong domestic norms limiting repressive power have been a core feature of Germany's polity...since 1945' (Harnisch, 2009). Studies pointing to domestic factors often do not explain how these find expression in the political process and the formulation of foreign policy. More geopolitical studies often ignore the importance of domestic politics for foreign policy more generally. While some studies have indeed been made of domestic actors in German-Russian relations (see Rittberger, 2001; Goetz & Dyson, 2003), works that examine these aspects from a party-political perspective on a party level of analysis are scarce. However, studying this aspect is important to connect the domestic and

governmental level of analyses, in order to contribute to a nexus between social constructivism and foreign policy analysis. Party-level analyses, and the way that historical legacies interact with other social and cultural factors, are important because parties in Germany have specific and important foreign policy legacies and connections with Russia. Thirdly and leading on from the second point, foreign policy discourse has been understudied in the realm of German foreign policy. The recognition that politics are not absolute, but involve dispute and are made through and influenced by discourse, is essential. Current approaches that study cultural or social factors do not show how these factors influence the making of foreign policy. An important work was written by Forsberg (2016), describing how the German approach to Russia since the Ukraine Crisis was not the result of unanimity. In contrast, the SPD, part of the coalition, was against sanctions at first (Forsberg, 2016, p.25) and wanted a crisis solution that accommodated Russian perspectives (Forsberg, 2016, p.32). Studying discourse as expressions of this disagreement could more intensively lead to important insights in the justifications underlying German foreign policy.

The need to take a more differentiated view on the German foreign policy process, especially in light of the aim of contributing to role theory, political parties, and their discourse on foreign policy are a suitable unit of analysis. Political parties are integral to the foreign policy process in Germany. Since the evolution of a 'party democracy' instead of a more top-down 'Chancellor democracy' during the time of the first Chancellorship in the FRG, the CDU's Konrad Adenauer, 'internal divisions...are usually related to the party affiliation of the respective minister' (Risse-Kappen, 1991, p.488). Given the structure of German government with the traditional party divisions of the most important foreign policy positions, the role of the party thus seems to be an essential factor in the decision-making process. Hofmann argues that, especially in Germany, 'national aggregate concepts are contested at any point of time' (Hofmann, 2019, p.19). Political parties transmit political divides and engrain political values and cleavages (Rensmann, 2009, p.271) and so are a useful intermediary to study. They draw

heavily on domestic factors and historical and cultural factors, and upload these on to a policymaking level. This suggests that party legacies are a good place to start when looking at contestation of NRCs.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Foreign policy analysis (FPA) comes in various forms with distinct focuses. The three main theories are realism, liberal institutionalism and social constructivism. The importance of subnational actors, discourse, and ideas in German-Russian relations points to the pertinence of using a social constructivist FPA method. In social constructivist analysis, two steps are necessary. First, the norms that arise from domestic factors must be defined. Second, foreign policy must be seen as conforming with these norms (Brummer & Oppermann, 2014, p.52). In this thesis, the principle domestic factors from which the relevant norms are taken are party-political legacies, however other norms arising from German-Russian relations will also be studied. Norms will also be filtered from the discourse and documents analysed. These will be studied in the context of the period of German-Russian relations 2014-2017. The thesis builds upon the role theory literature in foreign policy, focusing especially on the self-conceptualisation of Germany as a foreign policy actor and partner, and links the discourse studied to role theory through a social constructivist lens. Additionally, the literature and debates of foreign policy normalisation will extensively be drawn upon to form a picture of the party-political motivations of the SPD and the CDU/CSU during the process of foreign policy normalisation towards Russia in a time frame spanning the Ukraine Crisis and one legislative period.

Conceptualising Foreign Policy

‘Foreign policy’ is a contested term in the literature. As defined in this thesis, it refers to policy that ‘encompasses the complicated communications of governments and among its diverse agents, plus the perceptions and misperceptions, the images of other countries, and the ideologies and personal dispositions of everyone involved’ (Kubáľková, 2001, pp.17-18). The body of literature concerned with understanding foreign policy is foreign policy analysis (FPA). FPA is a sub-section of IR that deals primarily with the making and execution of the policies that affect the dealings between states. As opposed to IR, one of the advantages of FPA is that

it opens up the 'black box' of the state to allow examination of interior processes and actors (Brummer & Oppermann, 2014, p.3). Although there are different ways of analysing the state this way, this thesis falls into the social constructivist tradition and emphasises the prominence of ideas and discourse. The constructivist definition of foreign policy above highlights the themes that are prominent in this thesis: that of the *image* of other countries, the possibility for conflict and debate *among* foreign policy agents, and the fact that we are dealing with *perceptions*, not objective facts. The three schools of classical realism, neoliberal institutionalism and social constructivism, as mentioned in the literature review, entail different assumptions about the nature of foreign policy making. This passage will argue that the first two fall short in explaining German foreign policy, before advocating an approach that is based on the third school.

The assumption that the international system shapes foreign policy, as portrayed by classical realism and neorealism, entails that foreign policy is seen as an inevitable product of the power position of the state within the world system. This lends little agency to the state, which is dependent on the international structure and its level of power for the type of foreign policy it pursues. The further assumption that states are unitary and strategic actors (Carlsnaes, 2016, p.120) ignores that fact that, at least within democracies, the foreign policy is a contested field that is played out in party politics and is affected by domestic issues. Further, foreign policy is often a product of history, not (just) a reaction to the current balance of power.

The second school of IR, neoliberal institutionalism, emphasises the role of institutions and international cooperation to a greater degree (*ibid.*) and stresses the relevance of multilevel governance for foreign policymaking. Arguably, though, neoliberal institutionalists take positivist ideas about the state and the nature of foreign policymaking for granted by assuming the existence of fixed interests. Therefore, they also tend to take the existence of universalisable patterns of relations between states for granted. This is a problem because there are often variety

of domestic, social and political peculiarities that affect IR and make such universal assumptions untenable.

Social constructivism, the third main school of thought in IR and FPA, indeed shares much with liberalism, such as the importance of ideas, institutions, and domestic politics (Steele, 2007, p.27). On the whole, however, it emphasises the idea that foreign policies are ‘a product of discursive factors and socio-cultural constructions’ (Behraves, 2011). Constructivist theory uses social norms ‘as independent variables for explanations of foreign policy behaviour’ (Boekle et al., 1999, p.5). By virtue of being a ‘concrete, socially shared, value-based expectation of behaviour’ (*ibid.*, p.6), norms act as linkages between abstract world views and foreign policy behaviour. The way that these norms play out in the making of foreign policy is contested, though a persuasive answer is that they are bound up in language. As speech acts combine *is* and *ought*, they have normative consequences (Kowert, 2001, p.164). Discourse is normative as it structures the present, the *is*, in a particular way. But at the same time, it provides an idea of what reality should be like, an *ought*. Discourse is therefore instrumental in expressing normativity and, assuming that speech is practice, is an integral part in the creation of the social world (*ibid.*, p. 165).

Role Theory

However, this fact alone does not escape academic criticism, as Jervis argues that it provides few insights as to why discourses rise and fall (Jackson, 2006, p.174) in addition to explaining their essence. The constructivist approach suggests that one should look at shifting identity, influenced by historical, economic, and domestic factors as a key to understanding the reason why discourses change over time. Limitations of FPA are corrected, like the tendency to focus on the individual decision-maker, the reliance on positivist approaches, and ignoring the role of language in the construction of belief systems (Larsen, 1997, p.3). A sub-category of social constructivism that is grounded in studying politics from a behavioural standpoint is role theory.

Role theory is a body of literature whose concern is analysing politics (and foreign policymaking behaviour) in terms of a 'comprehensive pattern for behaviour and attitude' (Turner, 1979, p.124). Roles are 'the notions of actors about who they are, what they would like to be with regard to others, and how they should therefore interact in (international) social relationships' (Harnisch et al., 2011, p.1). Largely utilised by constructivist scholars, role theory has further been influenced by behaviourism and social constructivism. The latter has affected role theory in the sense that the sources of roles are 'a nation's history, culture and social characteristics' and have a social origin (Cantir & Kaarbo, 2012). The main contention of role theory is that states act in accordance with roles, formulating distinctive NRCs. Role theory supplies an important dimension in foreign policy analysis by focusing on these NRCs and the part they play in shaping foreign policy.

Role theory's advantage in the analysis of foreign policy is that it can 'bridge...traditional levels of analysis' (Thies, 2009, p.36). Specifically, it can bridge that gap between the system and individual actors (Harnisch et al., 2011, p.), because role conceptions reveal indications of who and what actors are and would like to be in a national and international context (*ibid*). Further, role theory can explain the NRCs of states in the international system through analysis of 'recurring decisions and actions' (Holsti, 1970, p.233) that can be used to shed light on the motivations and outcomes of party-political discussions about German-Russian relations. Role theory presumes that policymakers formulate foreign policy goals in line with these NRCs.

A weakness of role theory as stated in the literature review is that, too often, role theory assumes that NRCs are unitary and shared between the elite governing body and the general public (Cantir & Kaarbo, 2012, p.7). Despite Thies's claim (2009, p.3) that role theory allows the researcher to 'focus on any level of analysis commonly used in the study of foreign policy,' too often national roles are assumed to be coherently formulated at the state level. This is problematic because the assumption is then often made that the NRCs endorsed by state

executive or legislative are shared by the society at large. This fact has often led to an application of role theory on a state level of analysis especially within early role theory scholarship (Harnisch et al., 2011, p. 7). Although role theory been frequently applied to German foreign policy since Maull (1990), who analysed the ‘civilian power’ aspect of German foreign policy, this weakness has been present throughout. What is necessary according to Cantir & Kaarbo (2012) is the recognition that NRCs often vary between the elite and the society at large, as well as within the elites itself, for example in terms of party politics. This frequently occurs within government coalitions, if the constitutive parties have different NRCs and vie for political influence over the foreign policy process. As Cantir & Kaarbo (2012, p.14) recognise, NRCs may vary within government as they ‘may stem from party ideology’ (*ibid.*, p.14). Indeed, the way NRCs are formulated and change over time is also related to the domestic structure and coalition-building processes within a society (Risse-Kappen, 1991, p.485). This thesis adds a domestic, party-political dimension to the formulation of foreign policy goals. It combines the decision-making levels of analysis with a societal approach through the addition of a party-political dimension. It challenges the assumption that elite or state level NRCs are somehow separated from the society as a whole, and explains this in terms of the role of the public, the German political system, and the strong ‘party democracy’ (Risse-Kappen, 1991, p.488), whose dynamics affect the formulation of foreign policy and NRCs. The analytical part of the thesis, in line with its constructivist methodology, integrates party political discourse on German-Russian relations with role theory in order to contribute to the larger role theoretical debate about the role of Germany in the international system.

Relationship between Social Constructivism and Discourse

Taking into account the historic, social and economic factors, this allows one to paint a picture of foreign policy change, indeed of role change, that does not accept the fact that a foreign policy role needs to be coherent or consistent. Social constructivism assumes that the social world and relations ‘consist of thought and ideas’ (Jackson, 2006, p.164). This means that if

the assumptions behind the social world change, i.e. the thought and ideas alter, then the world changes as well (*ibid.*, p.162), for the actors. Social constructivism takes the view that the state and foreign policy are socially constructed, but it also emphasises the ideational character and the importance of the shared rules, symbols, and language that ‘shape how we interpret the world and the actions of others’ (Flockhart, 2016, p.85). Discourse analysis (DA) is not based on rejection of ‘the reality of the world out there, but on its interpretation and constitution through systems of significations’ (Loisin, 2005, p.9) and of the combination and integration of text with and into context (van Dijk, 1985, p.6). Additionally, discourse is a key medium that reveals assumptions made about identity, norms, and ideational structures on which actors rely according to social constructivism. Although norms often are domestic, especially in the case of Germany (Harnisch, 2009), parties use them differently to construct and justify foreign policy. If discourse is seen as being a product of the identity and norms of the actors that emit the discourse, then a change in discourse can only be a result of a change of these factors, or the way they are interpreted by the foreign policy actors studied.

Methodology

This thesis will proceed by conducting a DA and supplementary document analysis, and analysing the findings from a social constructivist perspective. This approach is different to previous ones because it assumes that domestic actors can use norms in different ways. It also stresses historical and social factors as a driver of German-Russian relations. As this thesis is focused on social and political identity, linking these to the meaning of discourse, the analysis will utilise qualitative methods. Qualitative research emphasises meaning and words rather than quantification and ‘embodies a view of social reality as a constant shifting emergent property of individuals’ creation’ (Bryman, 2012, p.36). As mentioned before, the role of language in creating as well as describing the reality of German-Russian relations is emphasised. Discourse is analysed in a role-theoretical, constructivist setting which emphasises the connectedness between language, politics, and identity. An epistemologically post-positivist methodology will

be used, which stresses that reality in this field is not objectively knowable, but that knowledge is affected by individual identity, history and culture. All one can get at is different *interpretations* of reality, rather than objective truth. The importance of language in this thesis, combined with the absence of quantitative data as well as the interconnectedness of discourse with political images and role conceptions justifies the choice of a qualitative method.

Discourse Analysis in Foreign Policy Analysis

The role of discourse as an object of analysis in foreign policy is a relatively new approach to FPA. DA is the study of discourse which focuses on discovering the *meaning* of what is said. Theory about discourse focuses on ‘framing, specifically what and who is actually included, and what and who is ignored and excluded’ (Gasp & Apthorpe, 1996, p.6). Context is attributed an important role, as discourse is never produced outside its context but is always influenced by and an integral part of the context itself (Adolphus, 2019). Thus, the intertwining of text and context is important (van Dijk, 1985). This interplay means that language cannot ‘(have) a fixed, objective meaning’ (*ibid.*) as advocated by objectivism, but rather language must be seen through the lenses of the author’s belief system and its interpretation of contextual factors. Only through language that we can get as close as possible to meaning (Larsen, 1997). Party-specific constructions of meaning in foreign relations entail that a shift in foreign policy discourse is achieved when the specific nexus between language and context, i.e. the interpretation of the context by party actors, changes. It is a method that is underpinned both by social constructivism as well as post-positivism.

Linguistic analyses, like any other, aim to discover a part of the truth (Jäger, 1994). In this investigation, DA ‘emphasises the way versions of the world, of society, events and inner psychological words are produced in discourse’ (Potter, 1997, p.146). DA is useful as a tool as it is applicable to manifold types of communication. It enables one to understand how particular linguistic methods are used to frame concepts in certain ways (Bryman, 2012, p.528). As reality

is socially constructed, discourse is a topic and a form of action simultaneously, a 'social activity' (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.102). This thesis sees discourse as social practice and contextualises and historicises the discourse studied as advocated by van Dijk's functionalist perspective (1985). This theory does not only consider the historical situation of the subjects studied, but additionally focuses on its effect on the understanding of the motives and purposes of the communication and the relative positions of the subjects. Combining contextual and textual analysis has the added advantage of being able to make political and sociological inferences (Godinho, 2016). It analyses the speeches and texts and cross-references them to several contextual and historical indicators as described in Chapter 8. It also analyses the positions of the politicians relative to one another and the policy process. This will ensure that context, history, culture, and politics all feature in the analysis of the discourse examined.

In practice, this involves studying discourse outputs and analysing their role in the creation of a social world and construction of foreign relations. For example, DA has been applied to French and British foreign policy by Henrik Larsen (1997), who examines the establishment of national discursive frameworks in foreign policy that provide meaning from a post-positivist standpoint. By analysing several indicators in discourse, including foreign policy legacies and the use of social and historical factors in relations, it constructs with reference to the context the way the two studied parties, the SPD and CDU/CSU, view German-Russian relations.

Discourse and Role Theory

Integrating party discourse into role theory adds a new dimension to role theory that takes into account the role of discursive elements in formulating NRCs, which can more finely analyse the debates and social background underlying the formulation of an NRC. In line with Cantir & Kaarbo's (2012, p.6) claim that role conceptions are social phenomena, this thesis, seeing discourse as a social activity, integrates the latter into the former. It argues that NRCs are flexible, influenced by party-political legacies, and liable to complex patterns change rather

than being unitary and objective. Additionally, discourse acts as an intermediary between social, cultural, historical and other sociological factors, and the expression of NRCs and other role theoretical considerations.

Because social constructivism underlines that the world 'is a world of human consciousness: of thoughts and beliefs, of ideas and concepts, of languages and discourse of signs, signals and understandings among human beings' (Jackson, 2006, p.165), discourse analysis that studies these signs and language is an appropriate way of determining the conflicts and debates behind the make-up of NRCs and foreign policy. The language used in debates also serves to condition it and emphasise certain issues over others. Thus, language can have an indirect effect on the making of foreign policy, by defining the agenda.

One of the critiques levelled at social constructivism is that it provides few insights as to why discourses rise and fall (Jackson, 2006, p.174). This thesis challenges the critique by focusing on party discourse. Party discourse is affected by domestic factors such as public opinion and historical legacies that shift and adapt to foreign policy situations. Studying party ideology, therefore, is a crucial step in determining how and why certain roles are emphasised over others in parties. Discourse intertwines with the changing context of social, historical, and political factors in German-Russian relations, and makes use of these factors in ways that entrench and adapt to the discourses and practices of already extant party ideology. Germany's NRC is a doubly contested idea. Not only is it one that is contested amongst the parties and even within them, depending on various social and political factors. Further, it also evolves through external shocks such as the Ukraine Crisis. This was a major European crisis that Germany reacted to in complete disbelief, shifting to 'adopting a critical stance' on Russia and taking the lead in the European reaction with sanctions and mediation. It also had an effect on domestic factors, identity, culture, and the way historical legacies are perceived and used politically and in discourse by parties.

The sources used in this thesis are mainly documents from Bundestag debates¹ that cover German-Russian relations from 2013-2017. These will be cross-checked with party documents and major foreign policy speeches to ensure that they are representative of the party line. The relevant extracts are filtered to ensure that only the discourse of SPD and CDU/CSU speakers studied, although note is taken of any other cross-party references and disputes. The DA is applied to statements by parliamentarians and senior foreign policy actors about German-Russian relations, the behaviour of Russia and any attempts to define a European order, with or without Russia.

Translations and Discourse Analysis

Throughout this thesis, many documents, speeches, and secondary literature are reviewed in the original German text and have been translated to English by the author. The relevance of the role of translation within this work is heightened by the use of discourse analysis, which relies on intimate knowledge of the original language to detect variance. Translation is, above all, a communicative process involving the actions of reading, interpreting, analysis, and making decisions (Olher, 2004 p.75). The aim is not only to create a new ‘act of communication’ (ibid., p.76), but further one that is *credible* and conforms to the meanings in the existing text. It is therefore important to regard the translator as serving a social role rather than a neutral one. For the purposes of general comprehension, the author translated the relevant parts displayed in the thesis to the best of his knowledge. Any discourse studied as part of the analysis is translated and the original put in a footnote.

¹ These documents can be found under www.bundestag.de/protokolle filtered by time and with a search for ‘Russland’ and ‘Außenpolitik’, thus resulting in a set of documents which all contain some reference to Russia. These are further filtered for relevance. For example, all large-scale debates about Russia are analysed whereas occasional references to Russia by agents from other parties or in contexts that are not relevant to this thesis are excluded from the analysis.

Scope of Analysis

This thesis will examine the period of the beginning of 2013 until mid-2017. This period was chosen because it was a period of intense interaction of German politics and society with Russian relations. This was due to the manifold international crises that were happening at the time, examples being the Syrian Civil War, the Ukraine Crisis and the resulting Minsk Agreement brokered by the Normandy Format, of which Germany and Russia were integral parties. Furthermore, other events on a world scale might well have impacted German-Russian relations, for example the election of Donald Trump as President of the USA in 2016. Additionally, this period spans the campaign for the German general election in 2013, and the whole next legislative period until the subsequent election in 2017. The fact that the time frame studied spans a bit more than a legislative period is useful because then two different campaigns can be studied in terms of party-political discourse.

The decision to examine the CDU/CSU and the SPD rather than other German parties in this investigation was mainly based on three reasons. For one, the two parties made up the German government from the end of 2013 to 2017. This gave them the possibility to shape German foreign policy from a governmental position. As the SPD started 2013 in opposition and only after the election became part of the government, another interesting potential shift to analyse is that of a party in opposition to one in government. Analysing governmental parties in Germany has two main advantages. For one, foreign policy in Germany is constitutionally the domain of the executive. This means that there is only a limited role for the opposition parties compared to those in government as opposed to other policy areas. This makes the comparison of the SPD before and after entering the government in late 2013 even more interesting. Further, there is a traditional split in German governments, with the two main foreign policy actors (Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs) conventionally coming from different parties within the government. As there has always been a coalition government since the end of World War II in the Federal Republic, it is important to differentiate between the different parties and

actors, in order to uncover the role conceptions that might not be as obvious at first due to the structure of the coalition.

Conceptualising German-Russian relations

German-Russian relations were put on a new institutional footing with the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the resulting reunification of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in 1990. However, turning to a more detailed analysis of the developments in recent German-Russian relations, it is necessary to describe German foreign policy and relations with Russia before German reunification in 1990. This is because foreign policy themes that define the priorities of the two parties studied arose from the context of the Cold War and the FRG's institutional position and relations with both the Western order and the Soviet Union, the predecessor to the modern Russian Federation.

Relations during the Cold War

German-Russian relations share a long history of mutual understanding. This was first articulated after the Peace of St Petersburg between Russia and Prussia in 1762, which led to a mythical idea of brotherhood between Germans and Russians versus the West (Reichsfrei.de, 2018). More recently, during the Cold War, the FRG developed several foreign policy maxims that defined its relations to the occupying and later allied powers of NATO and the Eastern Bloc respectively. The FRG was under coalitions led by the CDU/CSU for twenty years, from 1949 to 1969. Following the disastrous end of World War II, the most important foreign policy priority of CDU's Chancellor Konrad Adenauer² was *Westbindung*, the integration of the FRG into 'Western' political institutions through *Westverträge*³ such as entry into NATO in 1955 and integration into the European Community. Under Adenauer, the *Westverträge* were signed from 1951 onwards, binding FRG to the Western Allies. Integrating closely with Western institutions and having good relations with the Western Allies has since been a central priority for the CDU/CSU (Neumann, 2009). Furthermore, its anti-Communist agenda and Western

² Adenauer was Chancellor from 1949 to 1963

³ 'Western treaties': The treaties that Adenauer signed in order to bind Germany close to the European and Atlantic Community.

outlook led to the Soviet Union becoming an ideological antipode (*ibid.*, p.100). The construction of this image of the Soviet Union was further grounded in the CDU/CSU's general party ideology (Narr, 1966, p.101), which is pro-free markets and stresses conservative, Christian values in a European setting. There was thus a need to provide a social and political alternative to the Socialism of the Eastern Bloc. The claim in 1949 that the FRG was the sole representative of the German people⁴ (Hagedorn, 2006, p.123) and the Hallstein Doctrine⁵ further entrenched German trajectory in the West. Central to its foreign policy was the Atlantic Alliance with the USA which 'coupled the security of the Federal Republic with that of the United States' (Haftendorn, 2006, p.83). This opposition was grounded in the ideological rejection of Communist power (Narr, 1966, p.101). Relying on the trust and support of Western Allies entailed a strong reliance on multilateralism in the conduct of foreign policy. This multilateralism required that foreign policy would be exercised through joint actions and coalitions, through NATO or with its partners and allies. National decision-making competences were readily ceded onto a supranational level, for example the European Community (Webber, 2001, p.3). This integration into multilateral structures was compatible with a further central foreign policy legacy of the CDU/CSU, that of the self-determination of a reunified Germany (Crawford, 1996, p.506). This commitment later became relevant when Germany was reunified under the CDU Chancellor Helmut Kohl in 1990, when this self-determination led to further integration into Europe while emphasising certain rights and interests and becoming more assertive in terms of foreign policy, for example through military action. Therefore, multilateralism in Western institutions, European integration and peace with France and USA were essential in the CDU/CSU's foreign policy. However, German foreign policy changed once the SPD gained power in 1969.

⁴ This was called the *Alleinvertretungsanspruch*.

⁵ This doctrine, coined by State Secretary Walter Hallstein in 1955, was a doctrine of diplomatically isolating the GDR by classifying any uptake of diplomatic relations as an 'unfriendly act' by the acting country.

The SPD under Brandt and later Helmut Schmidt led the government in Germany from 1969-1982. A Socialist party, it was at first sceptical of integration with the West, and rejected Adenauer's *Westbindung*, including Germany's integration into Europe, primarily due to its economic ideology. From 1969, Brandt, a pragmatist who accepted the necessity of integration into the West, made it his foreign policy priority to pursue a policy of *Ostpolitik* with the GDR and Soviet Union. This was a policy that relaxed tensions by recognising the existence of two Germanys, and other Socialist countries. *Ostpolitik* was guided by the maxims '*friedliche Koexistenz*' (peaceful co-existence) and '*Wandel durch Annäherung*' (change through rapprochement), and had the aim of improving not only West Germany's relations with its Eastern neighbours, but also to work towards peace more generally in a cooperative way, through peaceful co-existence (Niedhart, 2003, p.133). *Ostpolitik* was grounded in the idea that there could not be a lasting European peace without recognition of and cooperation with the GDR and the Soviet Union. *Ostpolitik* on the practical side consisted of the signing of the *Ostverträge*⁶, recognised the GDR's statehood, giving up the *Alleinvertretungsanspruch*, and encouraged security talks encompassing both the Socialist and the non-Socialist countries in Europe. Thus, the SPD was 'led by a policy of national cohesion...through agreements with East Germany' (Bundeskanzler-Willy-Brandt-Stiftung d.ö.R.). Not only did *Ostpolitik* provide a more secure basis for negotiations and talks with the Eastern countries, primarily the GDR and the Soviet Union, but it also became the first prominent example of a distinctive German foreign policy path, which had been more or less 'the subject of American control' (Stent, 1981, p.11). It must be considered, however, that this 'emancipation' of Foreign Policy occurred from a West German standpoint of firm anchorage in Western institutions and was 'much facilitated' by this status of deep integration (Webber, 2001, p.3) allowing some freedom only within the Alliance. Therefore, *Ostpolitik* was not a *Sonderweg*⁷, but an alteration of Germany's foreign policy while staying within a multilateral framework. Again, *Ostpolitik* was a policy partially

⁶ 'Eastern treaties', in order to complement the 'Western treaties' signed by Adenauer.

⁷ A *Sonderweg* is a political term that means as much as 'own/exceptional way'. As such, it symbolises German unilateralism and an emancipation from both the 'East' and 'West'.

influenced by general party ideology. The SPD, a leftist social democratic party grounded in Socialist ideology that emphasised the need to implement Socialism on a European and national level, wanted good relations with the Socialist countries of the Eastern bloc, though it rejected the specific Socialist models they pursued. *Ostpolitik* was a resounding success: it bound together the Soviet Union and Germany, for example in that Germany became the Soviet Union's largest trading partner (Neukirch & Schepp, 2012). It contributed to the West-East détente in the 1970s and opened up new intra- and inter-state perspectives for cooperation. From a social constructivist perspective, *Ostpolitik* was a result of the influence of new norms such as liberalisation and historical responsibility for the war (Post, 2017, p.4), which shifted Germany's focus on peaceful coexistence peacefully with the Warsaw Pact countries. It also influenced and developed norms, such as that of the importance for close ties with Russia for a variety of reasons, ranging from economic, cultural to historical.

When in opposition during the Brandt years, the CDU/CSU was opposed to relaxing the relations with the GDR and the Soviet Union that were proposed through the policy of *Ostpolitik*. This was partly due to its role in parliamentary opposition at the time, but also due to its Western outlook. However, due to its resounding success in bringing together East and West Germany and fostering peaceful cooperation, *Ostpolitik* was accepted by the CDU/CSU when Kohl came to power in 1982 and became the defining idea within German-Soviet and intra-German relations as Kohl's CDU/CSU strove towards reunification and self-determination. The positive results showed that the results of *Ostpolitik* were a resounding success in bringing about a climate of trust and détente between the GDR and the FRG.

The key norms for the CDU/CSU were therefore Western integration (NATO and EU), freedom from Socialism, self-determination, conservatism, free market capitalism and multilateralism. The SPD stressed close social and economic cooperation with Socialist countries, Socialism, but later also stressed the European project as a means of bringing people together.

Post-Reunification Relations

Reunification of the FRG with the previously Socialist GDR in 1990 meant that a large part of Germany had been under Socialist rule for over 40 years, controlled and monitored by the Soviet Union. This must be recognised when elaborating the factors that emerged after reunification, which changed the dynamics of German party politics. The CDU/CSU's legacy of self-determination for a reunified, confident Germany proved a success, which made the CDU/CSU successful both in West Germany and in the former GDR after reunification. Another factor was the strength of the PDS⁸, the successor to the party that had controlled the GDR, the SED. The PDS/DIE LINKE was and is especially strong in East Germany. It is strongly Socialist, has a stronger pro-Russian stance than the SPD, is openly anti-NATO, and critical of cooperation with Western political institutions and countries, especially when directed against Russia. The inclusion of East Germany into the party-political system also led to an increase in right-wing party support too, such as of the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), a party fighting for the votes of *Russlanddeutsche*⁹ against their traditional party, the CDU/CSU. Thus, the SPD has faced strong pressure from the left, and the CDU/CSU from the right, since reunification. Both parties are now more centrist and similar than before, agreeing on the importance of the EU as the foundation for Germany's strength and success, and both emphasise the importance of Europe for Germany's success. NATO is more of a contested issue, with the CDU/CSU being strongly in favour of NATO whereas the SPD prefers a European security order that takes Russia's interests into account and is thus less confrontational and more inclusive than NATO.

Central foreign policy legacies and norms from Adenauer and the CDU Chancellors' terms in office that have continued into Germany's foreign policy today and are accepted as

⁸ Party of Democratic Socialism. It has since changed its name to DIE LINKE (Left Party)

⁹ Soviet and later Russian citizens of German descent who moved or fled to Germany, mostly in 1990 during the Kohl era. They often voted for the CDU/CSU out of gratitude to Kohl as well as the conservative values many entertained.

indispensable for German security and foreign policy by both CDU/CSU and SPD are the multilateral foreign policy, the strong support for and deep integration into supranational institutions, especially the European Union, the strong Atlantic Alliance and the commitment to the Western World that Germany remains a part of today. *Ostpolitik*, the SPD policy of the Cold War, has also remained a leading idea within German-Russian relations, as seen by the close social, cultural, and political bonds between the two countries even after reunification and the increasing integration of Germany into Europe. Party-political contestation today mainly exists on the level of relative importance of these issues vis-à-vis other foreign policy legacies, such as European integration, the relative closeness of the relationship to the US and Russia respectively, the importance and role of NATO and the foreign policy role that Germany should play in the contemporary world and Europe.

The end of the Cold War signified a rupture in German foreign relations, as it put the reunified German state on a new institutional footing. The Two Plus Four Agreement, an agreement between the two Germanys as well as Poland, France, the US, and Russia, was an international treaty that renounced the Allies' rights to sectors in Germany and so settled the status of Germany as a fully independent state, able to pursue a sovereign foreign and security policy (Deutscher Bundestag). However, it is necessary to bear in mind that German reunification was 'negotiated and agreed upon with four World War II Allies – the US, the Soviet Union, France and Britain' (Webber, 2001, p.1; see also Sarotte, 2001, p.175). Doubtlessly, reunification ushered in a new period of German foreign policy: that of a united, larger, and stronger Germany, willing to assume a leadership role in the international community (Lefebvre & Lombardi, 1996). Germany broadly continued conducting foreign policy in its civilian and multilateral tradition, despite gaining in strategic and geopolitical strength.

As explained in the introduction, German-Russian relations have stagnated from 2007. A few turning points in the relationship can be summarised as follows: The start of the Chancellorship

of Angela Merkel in 2005, Putin's 2007 speech at the Munich Conference, the involvement of Russia in the Syrian Civil War from 2011, and lastly the Ukraine Crisis of 2013-2014. While strategic cooperation and close economic ties continued up to 2013, the Ukraine Crisis has really marked a turning point which will be analysed later. Since Merkel became Chancellor in 2005, high levels of commercial and economic cooperation, as well as the strategic partnership continued. An event that affected German-Russian relations was the Putin speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007, where he attacked the USA for its insistence on a 'unipolar' world. The German reaction to this speech, although shocked and leading to exchanges about human rights between Merkel and Putin, was not a change in strategy. Rather, the German then-Foreign Minister, the SPD's Frank-Walter Steinmeier 'took the initiative to broaden the allegedly still 'strategic' partnership by forging a 'modernisation partnership' between Germany and Russia' in 2008 (Adomeit, 2012, p.7), thus keeping up close ties. The idea was to improve the Russian economy while the German economy gained from this growth at the same time. The SPD was always supportive of this position, whereas the CDU/CSU's view deteriorated to see Russia as a destructive force (Popławski & Kwiatkowska-Drożdż, 2014). Relations with Russia gradually soured during the years 2011-2014 with the return of Putin, the end of the Modernisation Partnership and the start of the Syrian Civil War. In 2013-14, the Euromaidan protests in Ukraine and the Russian invasion added a military dimension within Europe to the worsening relations.

As this thesis adds to the role theoretical understanding of Germany as a foreign policy actor, historical, economic, social, cultural and party-political factors will be studied, to understand and contextualise German-Russian relations in a constructivist way. Understanding these in relation to foreign policy discourse provides a more complete understanding of Germany's relations with Russia, the dynamics of change and the extent of foreign policy normalisation. This is because politicians using domestic factors and invoking roles to justify their positions are 'tapping into the normative power of roles' (Cantir & Kaarbo, 2012, p.18). The next section

will explain how they are perceived by political actors from the CDU/CSU and SPD, and focus on their relevance for role theory.

As the CDU/CSU's Western orientation developed into a legacy of self-determination of a reunified Germany (Crawford, 1996, p.506), the CDU/CSU became dominant in both West and East Germany, and used self-determination as a motivation to integrate into Europe and follow a European trajectory. While many policies were 'Europeanised' as part of the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, and the following European Treaties, foreign policy remained a national domain. 'Europeanisation' of the foreign policies of European states, including Germany. Some efforts to find intergovernmental European approaches have been made. For example, the creation of the CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy) and the current form of the ESDP (European Security and Defence Policy) in 1993 and 2009 respectively. Regional concentrations that are part of the ENP (European Neighbourhood Policy) include the Eastern Partnership (EaP), that focuses on countries in Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union. EU relations with Russia, however, are governed by a separate Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), signed in 1997. While in theory the relationship between the EU and Russia is a common one governed by the norms of rule of law, market economy, democratic principles and human rights (European Union External Action Service, 2017), often national interests get in the way. In practice, foreign policy is still a matter of national policy in Europe, and countries follow their own interests without finding consensus in Europe first. One example of this is NSII, the pipeline project that Germany and Russia are pursuing, whereas Poland and other European countries are against it.

What must crucially be considered, in line with the post-positivist social constructivist outlook, is the ways in which the parties interpret these social and historical legacies and relations, combine them with certain norms and use them in their discourse about what German-Russian relations and German foreign policy should be like.

Analysis: Dimensions of German-Russian Relations

In this chapter, the research is shown to explain the factors that underlie close German-Russian relations. Moving beyond explanation, the research findings of the analyses of documents and discourse in the SPD are presented. The main research question about evolution is answered through analysis and interpretation of the discourse about German-Russian relations. The debate is sorted into sections of analysis that conform to the transitioning ‘phases’ of discourse about Russia in the SPD and CDU from 2013 to 2017. The results show that there has been a parallel shift in the discourse of parties about Russia since 2013, but that this shift is played out differently for the two parties. It is important to bear in mind that discourse presenting certain opinions and value judgments has the objective of guiding public opinion and conforming to certain party ideals, not objective facts.

Historical factors

From the end of World War II there has been a willingness to remain on peaceful terms at all costs. The rejection of German unilateralism and only careful and multilateral use of force is grounded in the lessons that Germany has learnt since the horrors of World War II; therefore, the role it plays today must be seen in light of this historic guilt. This guilt cannot be separated from the restrained and cooperative way in which West, and later reunified, Germany has conducted relations with Russia. This is because of the historic guilt at the war crimes committed against the Soviet Union during World War II. The Cold War also affected German-Russian relations through Socialist occupation of East Germany and the different party legacies of the FRG. Since 1989, reconciliation policy has continued ‘to assure neighbours that reunification would not derail European integration’ (Phillips, 2001, p.171). However, Russia continues to be an object of reconciliation shown by, for example, the mutual Battle of Stalingrad commemoration in 2016. Gratitude towards Russia for enabling reunification (as part of the Two Plus Four agreement) is another important emotional and historical element

within German-Russian relations. Therefore, historical factors play an important role in German-Russian relations.

Economic and Social Factors

Germany and Russia have maintained strong economic ties since the end of the Cold War. For a long time after this conflict, Germany remained Russia's largest economic partner in Europe (Trenin, 2018, p.2). Szabo (2014) argues that the economic part of the relationship has become a stronger dynamic between the states and has been hollowing out normative aspects. Certainly, many of the post-Cold War initiatives to improve relations with Russia have relied on economics. For example, the German Modernisation Partnership with Russia from 2008 placed hope in the incoming President Medvedev to modernise Russia with German help and expertise which would benefit both mutually. However, this initiative petered out with the onset of the Ukraine Crisis despite a reaffirmation of its importance and willingness to extend it in the coalition agreement between SPD and CDU/CSU in 2013 (CDU/CSU & SPD, 2013, p.118). Economic relations are entrenched in manifold multilateral fora, along with social and cultural issues, with the aim of encouraging cooperation and mutual understanding. The most prominent example is the Petersburg Dialogue, a yearly meeting between high-ranking German and Russian politicians and actors in the fields of business, civil society, culture, and education. In recent years, despite sanctions agreed upon against Russia in the aftermath of the Ukraine Crisis, the economic relationship still stands strong, exemplified in the pipeline project NSII that, when built, will give Russia more leveraging power over the economic fate of Ukraine (The Economist, 2019), showing the importance of economic factors despite angering partners such as Poland and the United States. The *Ost-Ausschuss der deutschen Wirtschaft* (the Eastern committee of the German economy) is an interest group in the economy, representing more than 350 large German companies that trade in Russia. This further shows the dedication Germany has to maintaining economic relations with Russia.

Another important social factor between Germany and Russia is the large numbers of Russians that live in Germany and vice versa, not only the *Russlanddeutsche* but increasingly others that are coming for economic and business purposes. More evidence for close social ties is the many non-government organisations, both political and non-political, that Germany undertakes in Russia. The importance of these organisations before the Ukraine Crisis was revealed when, in 2013, there was a raid on party-near foundations in Russia. This action was criticised harshly in Germany and contributed to strained relations. This shows the high interconnectedness of people and organisations in Germany and Russia.

The German population has a split opinion of Russia, reflected in the Bundestag. The so-called *Russlandversteher* (those who understand Russia) oppose a norm-led approach to Russia and advocate more ‘realpolitik’, i.e. pragmatic relations, with Russia. In 2012, 80% people had a positive image of Russia, and more than 90% perceived the economic ties with Russia to be important. A majority believed that exchange of people and trust-building is especially important with Russia (Posch, 2012). This reflects the close social and relations from a domestic perspective, and suggests that most Germans connected positive images and norms with Russia. These opinions are often reflected in the discourse and policies of the SPD, the Left Party, and in the new AfD party. They are opposed by those that advocate a norm-led and critical approach, such as the Representative for Russia in the German government, Andreas Schockenhoff (von Salzen, 2013). This shows that within German society, there is intense debate about Russia, with most Germans having a positive image before the Ukraine Crisis.

Europe

‘Europe’ features a lot in the discourses of both the SPD and CDU/CSU, not only but also in the field of foreign policy. Often, the parties advocate common EU solutions to crises involving Russia, a success being the sanctions placed on Russia over the Ukraine Crisis by the European Council in 2014, the withdrawal of which was linked to the fulfilment of the Minsk Agreements

in 2015. Both parties are in favour of a 'European' response, as seen in the next section. However, what is interesting to note is the varying definitions of Europe and ideas about the response. One difference in the parties' approach to Europe is the fact that the CDU/CSU is more likely to exclude Russia from their definition of Europe, while the SPD emphasises the need to find common ground and include Russia in questions of European security.

Analysis: Party discourse, 2014-2017

The analysis of SPD and CDU/CSU speeches and documents from 2013 and 2017 has shown that there were three broad phases of discourse. The analysis tackles ideas about Russia, but also how they link to certain domestic factors, and attempts to reveal some of the functions of the discourse on German-Russian relations.

Phase 1: January 2013 – September 2013

The context of this phase is the run-up to the general election in September 2013. The discourse of the parties of the SPD and CDU towards Russia were remarkably different. The reasons for this discrepancy in discourse are manifold. As the SPD was in opposition during this period while the CDU/CSU were in government with the FDP (Free Democratic Party), the CDU/CSU had to actually conduct official foreign policy. Being in opposition, the SPD was able to entertain more idealistic ideas about Russia due to its political position. However, the success and legacy of *Ostpolitik* have led the SPD in the post-Cold War years to continue to pursue characteristically Russia-friendly politics, at least when compared to other German political parties. Their Russia positions was the same when the SPD was in government, particularly under the Schröder Chancellorship (1998-2005) and under Merkel's first term (2005-2009) when Steinmeier, a disciple of ex-Chancellor Schröder, was foreign minister. Hence, the SPD's pro-Russian sentiment should not be reduced to its role in opposition.

The CDU/CSU stressed cooperation with Russia in several pragmatic fields; for example, in order to reduce the level of weapons. Merkel often referred to the need to be open for dialogue with Russia and granted good relations with Russia a high status together with those of EaP countries. However, she also portrayed Russia as an actor that blocks rather than promotes peace. Indeed, a strong Europe was her priority and Russia, she argued, benefits rather than loses from a strong Europe. The values between Russia and Europe were perceived slightly different, however, but this was restricted to the Russian regime. For example, MP Wellmann

(2013) pointed to the incompatibility of cooperation and working with the regime under the authoritarian President, Vladimir Putin. A reason for this was the CDU/CSU's disappointment of Putin's renewed Presidency and the Russian trial against the punk band Pussy Riot, in which Western norms were not upheld (Windisch, 2012). For the CDU/CSU, this untrustworthiness brought up connotations of the Cold War and suggests that the Russian regime's foreign policy behaviour cannot change. However, in the CDU/CSU party manifesto, good Russian relations are explicitly made conditional on the extent to which Russia acts in terms of its international duties (CDU, 2013, p.120). Western norms are aims for Russia to work up to, and adaptation to European norms is the only alternative.

On a European level, the CDU in this phase aimed to intensify efforts to create a common European foreign policy. In contrast to the SPD, Russia was not mentioned in this particular discourse, and it is clear from the context that Europe in the CDU's view is defined in opposition to Russia. Europe was portrayed as a power with norms that clearly distinguish it from Russia. Thus, the normative gap between Germany in Western institutions and Russia affected the CDU's discourse about Russia. While the need was stressed for Russia to reduce weapons, including chemical ones due to the Syrian Civil War, NATO had the full moral and political support of the CDU. Russia was perceived as a threat to European interests, such as the AA (Association Agreement) with Ukraine that would bind Ukraine closer to the European Union as a first step towards potential membership. Ukraine was portrayed as having a choice between the AA and closer ties with the Russia-dominated Eurasian Union; a normative choice. However, the EaP and other European foreign policy initiatives, were simultaneously portrayed as not being opposed to Russia. The CDU/CSU thus clearly portrays Russia as opposed to Europe, at the same time defending the EU's actions.

Social and cultural links tie in prominently in the discourse of the CDU/CSU. Because the regime was seen as criminal, the 'right' points of contact in Russia were perceived to be non-

governmental and civil society actors. Cooperation with these was the CDU/CSU's means to develop and democratise Russia, and Russia's oppression of civil society, shown in the Pussy Riot trial, is opposed. Frequent reference was made to cultural, academic, and social that focus on intercultural relations on a grassroots level. Cultural policy was given a special place in the CDU/CSU's discourse about foreign policy. Rather than a neutral medium of exchange, it was viewed as an instrument to spread German and European values to Russia. Interestingly, the party manifesto makes direct reference to *Russlanddeutsche* (Russians who moved to Germany), supporting the creation of social assistance networks for them (CDU, 2013, p.80). This shows the relationship between the *Russlanddeutsche* and the CDU, historically important because of their thankfulness to Kohl for letting them into Germany.

General themes in the discourse of the SPD were those of improving cooperation and increasing dialogue with all sectors of Russian society. Brandt's *Ostpolitik* and its leading idea of ever-improving relations between East and West, was carried over from history as the central concept behind the SPD's friendly policy in 2013. The importance of cultural, social and economic exchanges, such as the number of cross-state businesses and students learning Russian or German, affected the SPD's discourse on Russia. These factors were used to deny that everyone in the Russian regime pursues malignant goals as the Russia side recognises the need for greater cooperation. SPD Russian expert Thönnies (2013b) emphasised social factors like the numerous language exchanges between Germany and Russia, plus highlighting the fact that 7000 German businesses are located in Russia. Thönnies criticised the government for not doing enough to foster relations with Russia, saying that 'we need to talk about science. We need to talk about youth. We need to talk about students, about sports, and about the economy.'¹⁰ A holistic approach that goes beyond political ties but brings together both societies was thus favoured. The SPD wanted to build on dialogues that already exist between Germany and Russia, such as

¹⁰ 'Wir müssen über Wissenschaft reden. Wir müssen über Jugend reden. Wir müssen über Studenten, über Sport und über Wirtschaft reden'

the Petersburg Dialogue and the German-Russian Forum, extending them to the level of nuclear weapons and European security, striving to give Russia another chance at cooperating within a European order.

The SPD's discourse is influenced by *Ostpolitik*. Steinmeier, the previous and subsequent Foreign Minister, entertained the policy of *Wandel durch Verflechtung* (Change through integration) (Adomeit, 2012) in line with the ongoing Modernisation Partnership. This would broaden of cooperation on all levels, especially on the economic level. In rhetoric, it was based on the *Wandel durch Annäherung* motto of Brandt's original *Ostpolitik*. In Bundestag speeches, reference was made to the importance of Brandt's *Ostpolitik* and its emphasis on common aims and values. The SPD sees Germany as between America and Russia, but taking an active approach to include both in foreign policy cooperation. This was confirmed by the Party Manifesto in 2013, in which Germany was described as a 'mediator between Russian-American dialogue' (SPD, 2013, p.112). Generally, the SPD 'is committed to a policy towards Russia that combines economic cooperation, political and social dialogue in a comprehensive modernisation partnership' (SPD, 2013, p.113). This includes all the high-level dialogues such as the Petersburg Dialogue, but also dialogue at the civil society level. This shows that the SPD was deeply committed to continuing a close relationship with Russian on all levels, as well as advocating a symbiotic relationship.

Some of Russia's strategic preferences were taken seriously by the SPD. The demand by the Vice-Chair of the Committee on Foreign Policy, that '(American) weapons are taken back into their own territory' (Zapf, 2013), continuing on to explicitly mention Russian interests justifiably, provides a good example. This connects to the criticism of the priorities of NATO in the SPD. While the SPD subscribes to values of the European Convention of Human Rights and held Russia to account by these values, it also, as exemplified through Thönnies (2013a) demanded European initiative to deepen cooperation with Russia. This was echoed by the Party

Manifesto of 2013, in which the SPD advocated strengthening the strategic partnership with Russia (SPD, 2013, p.113) as the only way to bind Russian behaviour to European norms. Drawing on the experiences of the Cold War, the SPD saw NATO's expansion to Eastern Europe as repeating a Cold War-style arms race and opposed it. While Eastern Europe's interests were mentioned, these were explicitly weighed against Russia's with the suggestion that a European peace order needs to take both into account. This stands in contrast with the purported aim of integrating European interests further into a real common CFSP (SPD, 2013, p.109). Thus, the basic tenet of Russia's indispensable participation is kept.

Trying to construct an NRC through this discourse needs to take account of the conflict in the discourse on Russia, especially the question of its exclusion or inclusion within a European security order. Both parties agreed that Germany should take an active civilian role in concert with Europe on a foreign policy level. Thus, both parties saw Germany as a civilian and European power. The definition of Europe, though, is different, as the CDU/CSU take it to be the EU whereas the SPD has a more holistic definition of Europe. Whether Germany was meant to be a power within or without NATO is also a critical question. NATO's role as a civilian power through focus on disarmament in its strategic concept and at the summit in Chicago in 2012 were portrayed as a success of *German* foreign policy by the CDU/CSU, coupling the aims of NATO together with those of Germany and making the latter a driving force. While NATO was not disputed as such by the SPD, it clearly favoured a Germany that reached out to West and East alike. Further differences arose on the political level. While the CDU/CSU favoured a more ground-level foreign policy with Russia that reaches out to civil society and social links, the SPD is more comfortable with maintaining strong economic and political links with Russia.

In this phase, therefore, different conceptions of Russia were pursued. While parties disagreed on the desired extent of Germany's *Westbindung* vis-à-vis inclusion of Russia into European

security structures, both parties emphasised the close social and economic ties between countries. The SPD, in opposition, was set on keeping good relations with Russia in terms of and warned against the threatening disengagement and harmful rhetoric. However, both parties' rhetoric deteriorated once the Ukraine Crisis started and worsened.

Phase 2: October 2013 – December 2014

This second phase begins with the new government of Germany: the coalition between the CDU/CSU and the SPD. In the coalition agreement modernisation, cooperation and dialogue were emphasised, while it was demanded Russia keep to arranged norms. The statement 'security within...Europe can only be achieved with and not against Russia' (CDU/CSU & SPD, 2013, p.118) shows influence by the thinking of *Ostpolitik*. Coincidentally, the beginning of that period was almost simultaneous with the beginning the Ukraine Crisis, which quickly started dominating the discourse. The Euromaidan protests against the suspension of the AA by Ukrainian President Yanukovych and his willingness to integrate further towards Russia started on the 21st November 2013. The annexation of the Crimea by Russia occurred in February to March 2014. The second phase focuses on the changes that the crisis in Ukraine had on the party politics and domestic factors within Germany. Overall, the rhetoric of the CDU/CSU became much more assertive, while the SPD criticised Russia yet tried to keep a middle way foreign policy, open to future cooperation.

During the time of the Euromaidan protests, the discourse of the CDU/CSU as well as the SPD retained and sharpened its distanced position vis-à-vis Russia stressed retention of Russia's economic and strategic importance and cooperation. In light of the invasion of Crimea, Schockenhoff (2014a) emphasised that every European country has an EU perspective and efforts to integrate into the Western order are supported by the CDU's longstanding cultures of responsibility and aid. The CDU described the willingness of Ukraine to integrate more closely with the EU as a desire for 'freedom' (Steinbach, 2014), linking Europe with that norm.

Simultaneously, dialogue and cooperation for Russia were only important instrumentally; in contrast, their aim is to instrumentally ensure that Ukraine can integrate more closely into the EU. MP Steinbach, for example, contended that dialogue is important with Russia to settle the question of Ukraine in the European interest. Thus, integration into Western European institutions is a key value for the CDU/CSU. The discourse of CDU/CSU politicians is laden with historical factors that interact with their statements on foreign policy. For example, Merkel continually emphasised how any response to the crisis in Ukraine must be one where the lessons out of history have been learnt. This means, that one cannot solve the Ukraine Crisis militarily, but that diplomatic pressure should be applied together with sanctions (Merkel, 2014b). Schockenhoff (2014a) emphasised how Russian security guarantees are not worth anything, while MP Hasselfeldt charged Russia with a long history of harassing Ukraine economically. Military intervention is its zenith according to her, labelling militarism and dishonesty as traditional in Russian foreign policy. Hence, the importance of European interests was highlighted after the annexation by Russia of Crimea.

The normative gap between Europe and Russia widened due to the Russian actions in Ukraine according to CDU/CSU discourse. A large discrepancy was shown to exist between the desirability of the systems of Russia and Europe. Schockenhoff (2014b) stated that the Russia model of society, politics, and the state is unattractive to other countries, whereas that of the EU is attractive; so presenting similarities to the CDU/CSU rejection of the Soviet Union in the Cold War. This, he contended, is the reason why so many Ukrainians wanted closer integration into Europe with the signing of the AA. This readiness and ability to learn out of history when it comes to formulating a foreign policy response was contrasted with Russian inability to do so ('Russia has not learnt anything out of history – Motschmann, 2014), suggesting a normative gap between Germany and Russia. Further, Schockenhoff (2014b) argued that the inability of Russia to apply soft power disqualifies it from contributing at all to the solution of the conflict. Doubt was thus cast upon inclusion of Russia in the European security architecture. The foreign

policy speaker of the CSU, Hahn (2014), turns the SPD-like phrase ‘peace only with Russia’ into the slogan ‘peace only with human rights,’ signalling the primacy of normative considerations over partnership with Russia. Thus, Russia’s inclusion in European security is doubted by the CDU/CSU due to a normative gap.

Before the annexation of Crimea, the readiness to continue the Modernisation Partnership and to invest in the Russian civil society still existed (Schockenhoff, 2014a) despite the rejection of the regime’s involvement in Ukraine. During the annexation of Crimea in February-March of 2014, Merkel (2014) continued to stress cooperation and dialogue as important whereas the economic sanctions were threatened, citing the Petersburg Dialogue, the German-Russian Forum, the G8, G20, and many bilateral deals as proof that cooperation between Germany and Russia is possible on many levels and should be kept up.

The unity of the ‘Western world’ together with its policies was especially emphasised by the CDU’s discourse. The breaking of norms, such as territorial integrity by Russia in Ukraine, ‘cannot be accepted by the Western world’ (Motschmann, 2014). The unity ‘despite different positions’ (*ibid.*) shown by the West in de-escalating the conflict, however, is notable for demonstrating the strength and will of the West in solving this issue responsibly. The role of the Western world in the construction of this binary set of values is highlighted. The CDU’s historical *Westbindung* had an effect on its security priorities. MP Kiesewetter (2014) showed this by suggesting to intensify the links between Europe and America out of the need to prevent another Cold War. Thus, altogether the CDU/CSU highlighted European interests and values, a normative gap, sanctioning Russia and the unity and norms of the West.

As the SPD went into government almost simultaneously with the beginning of the Ukraine Crisis, it is difficult to untangle the effects that the two events had for the discourse of the SPD. However, the SPD’s discourse about Russia become much more critical after the Russian

actions in Ukraine. For example, SPD openly criticises Russian behaviour like breaking norms like human rights laws, territorial integrity, and international agreements. Russia is seen to have left a deep curb in German-Russian relations (Mützenich, 2014). Still, though, Russia is seen as an essential partner and cooperation remains necessary. The major speech by old and new Foreign Minister Steinmeier displays this ambiguity, as Russia is criticised for exploiting the state of emergency in Ukraine, while the role of the EU in helping to create the conflict is condemned too (Auswärtiges Amt, 2013). This ambiguity on the side of the SPD is a constant theme in its foreign policy discourse from the Ukraine Crisis onwards. The SPD struck a middle path, blaming both Russia and the Western order alike for creating the conditions that led to the Ukraine Crisis. Additionally, Steinmeier and MP Gabi Weber (2014) condemned the chaotic conditions inside Ukraine for being unhelpful to the conflict but does not explicitly link this to Russia's actions. This ambiguity also extended to the SPD's statements about the helpfulness of the AA in promoting peace in Europe. The SPD's speaker on European Affairs, MP Spinrath (2014), contended that the EU's insistence on the AA contributed to the escalation of the conflict. Steinmeier connects openness to Russia and being integrated in the West as essential. He connects this with Brandt's legacy explicitly (Auswärtiges Amt, 2014b). This middle way is highlighted by Steinmeier (2014), who emphasised the role of Europe in bringing together East and West since the Cold War, its role in combining *Ostpolitik* and good transatlantic relations to form a stable order.

Although Russia's action was condemned as such, the rhetoric on the need for an integral European security architecture continued. The SPD's discourse made clear that cooperation would continue as soon as a possibility for positive change were perceived. For example, Thönnies (2015) remarked that 'since the last Paris conference, one can discern an increasing reliability of Russia. This path is simultaneously the path to the reduction of sanctions.'¹¹ The

¹¹ „Nach dem letzten Pariser Gipfel lässt sich zunehmend auch eine Verlässlichkeit Russlands erkennen. Dieser Weg ist gleichzeitig auch der Weg zum Abbau der Sanktionen“

SPD was therefore still willing to reduce sanctions as soon as Russia became more ‘reliable.’ It was indeed the perspective of many inside the SPD that the solution to the Ukraine Crisis should accommodate Russian perspectives (Forsberg, 2016, p. 32). Many high-profile social democrats openly displayed pro-Russian positions. The tradition of *Ostpolitik* certainly affected much of the high-level rhetoric regarding the response to the annexation of Crimea. For example, the SPD’s Platzeck, head of the German-Russian Forum, suggested re-arranging international law in order to make the annexation of the Crimea acceptable (Knitt, 2014). This shows that despite Russia breaking law, many in the SPD continued to advocate for better relations – following the pattern of *Ostpolitik*.

The SPD thus became more critical of Russia, while remaining in favour of cooperation and emphasising that the solution should accommodate Russian perspectives. Altogether, the discourse of the SPD was marked with focus on security and cooperation. Thus, social and cultural links between Germany and Russia were not as important as for the CDU/CSU, as Russia was keen to prioritise political ties.

Implementing sanctions on an EU level was hotly debated between the CDU/CSU and SPD. While Steinmeier emphasised that they were not an end in themselves and warned that Russia was destabilising, Merkel was adamant they should stay (Deutsche Welle, 2014). Interest groups such as the *Ost-Ausschuss* were also virulently against sanctions. The fact that she was successful perhaps points to the influence of an evolving domestic image of Russia: Fewer people wanted close relationship with Russia in the aftermath of the Ukraine Crisis and a majority connected Russia with danger (Zeit Online, 2014). There was a clear East-West divide on the opinion of Putin, too, as many more in the East had a positive image (Tagesspiegel, 2015). This demonstrates historical differences of the two parts of Germany, and the importance of the Cold War for establishing a pro-Russian stance. This altogether shows that public opinion was critical of Russia in the aftermath of the Ukraine Crisis, possibly justifying why the SPD

shifted to a more critical stance vis-à-vis- Russia too, and accepting the sanctions placed upon Russia.

The rapid change of relations following the events of the Ukraine Crisis also changed the parties' NRCs. While both parties saw the need for Germany's role in Europe to step up to take an assertive leadership role, different aspects of this that are highlighted by the parties. The SPD saw Germany as an 'active mediator' (Spinrath, 2014) between Russia, and Europe, changing from the role between Russia and America from Phase 1. The more active role is highlighted by Steinmeier too, as he advocates for Germany to be a European 'impulse-giver' and a player in world politics (Spiegel Online, 2014). Building on the advantages of Europe of bringing together East and West, Steinmeier advocated a more active foreign policy involving Germany as the driver of the European CFSP (Auswärtiges Amt, 2014a). Wellmann of the CDU/CSU took a more nuanced approach and suggests that Germany should steer rather than lead¹² Europe out of historical consideration for its other European Allies, particularly considering the skepticism about assertive German foreign policy in CEE countries. Another condition for taking up this role is prolonged domestic discussion (Wellmann, 2014). Thus, the role is not to be a European hegemon, but to act carefully and cautiously, guided by common European norms. CSU MP Friedrich (2014) struck a connection from the normative foundation of the Western order to Germany's role as a civilian power in concert with the USA. While the SPD saw Germany in a role of active mediation, therefore, the CDU/CSU advocates Germany in a Western role in which European interests are attuned and expressed.

Phase 3: January 2015 – September 2017

After the initial shock of the Ukraine Crisis, this was a phase in which the parties' foreign policy priorities became clearer. Other issues such as the Syrian War also were important for affecting

¹² 'Leiten', not 'führen'

discourse in this phase. Parties converged on a few issues, however traditional views and patterns were often kept up. The actions of Russia in Ukraine and Syria were prominent on the agenda, coupled with the question of the role and relevance of Germany in the world in general. History and educational ties continued to play a large role in the relations between Germany and Russia. This was demonstrated by the Stalingrad remembrance event. Here, the fragility of peace was highlighted by the President of the Bundestag, Norbert Lammert (2016), and the current Ukraine Crisis was presented as an example of this fragility. Further, good educational ties exemplified in the German-Russian Year of Youth Exchange¹³ were presented as representing this deep connection. Thus, the importance of social and cultural ties to Russia was maintained and highlighted over the political ties. The role of historical factors is notable too. A noteworthy statement, because it demonstrates the importance of German-Russian relations for German foreign policy in general, was Steinmeier's (2016) claim that 'our responsibility for peace in Europe is intimately connected with the responsibility for German-Russian relations'. Germany has a specific and explicit responsibility for solving the Ukraine Crisis (*ibid.*). More evidence of the continued emphasis on maintaining close cultural ties was shown by Russia being taken up by Germany in 2016 as a further country in its collaboration programme for the civil societies in countries of the EaP (Bundestag, 2017, p.28). This phase shows that parties' views on Russia's regime have moved in tandem to a more negative stance.

In general, CDU/CSU discourse towards Russia was anchored in negative ideas about the historic importance of the threat of Russia. The regime in Russia was criticised for thinking in terms of hegemony, so highlighting the strength of the danger and delegitimising its actions (see Grund, 2015). Also, the continued threat was seen to affect the Baltic States and other parts of the European Western order, as well as Western security interests in Syria. The discourse of the CDU/CSU, binding Eastern Europe closer into a European, Western order, became ever

¹³ Deutsch-Russisches Jahr des Jugendaustausches

more important. The normative strength the AAs provide in Eastern Europe of ‘open, modern, free, social societies’¹⁴ (Grund, 2015) stand in stark contrast to a Russia that is portrayed as weak and going against its own interests through its foreign policy. Russia needs to be ‘freed’, in the interest of security, peace, and freedom in Europe (Jung, 2015) according to the CDU/CSU. This shows the increasing importance of the Western normative outlook of the CDU/CSU.

Any *Ostpolitik*, for the CDU/CSU, must be based on norms such as fundamental rights and the rule of law for everyone. Cultural and educational politics were highlighted over political ties. Civil society provided an important role for the CDU/CSU, as something that should be protected against the Russian regime (Kiesewetter, 2015), and dialogue should continue with its NGOs and students (Uhl, 2015). Emphasising the role of the Petersburg Dialogue in bringing up critical themes (Merkel, 2017) demonstrates a new critical, normative, and political dimension of civil society ties. Thus, the German-Russian Year of Youth Exchange in 2016 was seen as important for mutual understanding, but especially for Russia understanding the European idea (Kaster, 2016). Historical factors played a major role in the discourse of the CDU/CSU about Russia in this period. Russia was seen to be acting in a long-standing tradition of opposition to the West rather than a potential partner. In contrast, the foreign policy role of Germany was seen by the CSU/CSU to be something that needs to be defined in the future as a response to the actions of Russia within Europe (Hahn, 2015). Thus, historical and cultural factors dominated the CDU/CSU’s discourse in this phase.

CDU/CSU politicians delegitimised Russia as a normative actor, rejecting its regime, values, and world views. Its political behaviour of thinking in terms of zones of influence was rejected in the discourse of the CDU/CSU. Wellmann (2017) implied that the Russian view of the world

¹⁴ ‘offene, moderne, freiheitliche, soziale Gesellschaft’

is warped and not 'real'; Russia is presented as a liar. This was exemplified through Russia's use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Civil War (Hardt, 2016), for which Russia is deemed responsible (Kauder, 2016). MP Röttgen (2016) claimed that there is a fundamental conflict between the rule-based European order and power-based Russian order under Putin. Contrasting, in Europe, the 'civilised world,' not the law of the powerful, but law as such is the foundation (Karl, 2016). This was confirmed by Merkel's rhetoric, as she calls Russia's actions criminal frequently, even at remembrance event in Moscow (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 2015). The clear assertion by MP Lorenz (2015) of the CDU/CSU that Germany takes its NATO responsibilities seriously and explicitly sends this signal to Russia and Eastern Europe can be interpreted as a strong commitment to a NATO-protected Europe while threatening Russia with the value of European unity. This is important because it shows how the CDU/CSU used its embeddedness in the Western order to aggressively project normative claims on to Russia, and saw Germany and the Western order as a superior opponent. Thus, the CDU/CSU in this phase emphasised historical, cultural factors, constructed the image of a conflict of Western vs. Russian order, and emphasised the normative gap.

The SPD continued in its movement towards a stance more critical of Russia. It frequently highlighted that Russia has upset the European peace order, broke fundamental law in Ukraine, and threatened EaP countries' sovereignty (Roth, 2015). The case of Ukraine was especially noted by the SPD as the fundamental obstacle for better relations with Russia (Steinmeier, 2015). This fact was linked by Steinmeier to the history of peace in Europe which he says has been unilaterally broken by Russia. However, this fault on the side of Russia, for the SPD, translates into responsibilities for Europe that transcend the specific issue of the threat from Russia; instead, the risk of Europe, NATO, and the world descending into an arms race and spiral of violence should be counterbalanced under any circumstances (Thönnies, 2016). This shows how, for the SPD, Europe's responsibilities as mediator becomes ever more important after Russian aggression.

Cooperation on practical issues such as trade continued to be highlighted alongside cultural connections as the foundations for the future of German-Russian relations. The SPD still promoted the aims of *Ostpolitik*, and a connection from the original policy by Brandt to the current policy was made by MP Felgentreu (2017). Following in this vein, the SPD highlighted that should cooperation would carry on as usual if Russia changed its behaviour. This shows that SPD discourse at this point had reached a similar point to that of some CDU/CSU actors in the previous phase. Thus, Russia's specific actions, especially in Ukraine, were criticised but there was no clear anti-Russian sentiment. Social factors are seen to have an important place in any contemporary *Ostpolitik*. Relations should be based not only on political exchange, but especially on economic, scientific, and human basis. This is emphasised by Steinmeier at the commemoration of Stalingrad, as he advocates the necessity of maintaining good relations with the Russian *people* at all costs despite current political differences (*ibid.*). This shows the continued emphasis the SPD places on Russia despite it also critiquing its current behaviour.

While the SPD's stance on the necessity for common solutions together with Russia in Europe remained (SPD, 2015, p.4), the tone of discourse towards Russia changed. The SPD called on Russia to take the initiative and find common solutions with Europe rather than blaming Europe for not doing so. While the opinion remains that security for Europe needs to include Russia, security for Russia can only be guaranteed with Russia (Steinmeier, 2016). Indeed, MP Annen highlighted that Russia, not NATO, caused the crisis (2015) and the ongoing threat by Russia calls for NATO defence marking a bigger priority. This turn of the SPD towards commitment to the aims of NATO is significant, considering the difficult relationship of the SPD with NATO in the past, as it shows a turn towards accepting Western institutions. However, NATO and Russia alike are requested to cooperate (SPD, 2015, p.4). Altogether, this shows that the SPD's discourse towards Russia is hardening and accepting Western values and positions, without becoming as extreme as that of the CDU. However, certain loopholes exist in the SPD's

discourse that show it is still driven by *Ostpolitik*, for example the claim that an option should be kept open for Russia joining the European security architecture (*ibid.*).

The SPD supported Germany being an assertive civilian power, but without not gaining military power to oppose Russia in Ukraine militarily. Interestingly, the SPD advocated for a Germany's leading mediation role because the Ukraine Crisis was a European challenge (SPD, 2015, p.5), showing that Germany implicitly should act in Europe's interest. The CDU/CSU's discourse was more assertive and aggressive, threatening Russia and committing itself clearly to Germany's role and responsibilities in the EU and NATO. The role the CDU/CSU advocate, therefore, seems that of a Western power, of a European power, but not as much of a civilian or mediating power as for the SPD. Both parties appealed to keeping cooperative ties with Russian civil society, but, as stated in the analysis, this is tied to different ends and seems part of the CDU/CSU's conception of Germany as a normative, Western actor, whereas the same link to civil society is used by the SPD to advocate keeping cooperative links with Russia as such. The SPD in this phase became more critical, therefore, advocating a mediation response and cooperation. Its tone became more critical of Russia.

The German-Russian relationship can also show to what extent Germany conceives itself as an economic versus a normative power. While the CDU/CSU party quickly changes from political and economic ties to cultural and social with Russia, the SPD continues to want to cooperate with Russia and highlights the importance of economic projects (such as NSII) for continued good cooperation. Therefore, it seems that the SPD, perhaps curiously considering its party ideology, supported a more economic role, whereas the CDU/CSU pursued a norm-based role for Germany. However, this must be qualified by the fact that the economic ties to Russia, for the SPD, are also part of a normative construction of Russia which ties into its tradition of *Ostpolitik* and emphasises good relations with East and West.

Summary

Altogether, therefore, cultural and social links were used by the CDU/CSU to justify a more critical approach to Russia's politics. The SPD, meanwhile, advocated cooperation on all levels. The important role of social and economic factors in the relationship was thus reflected in the discourse. Historical factors such as the emphasis on reconciliation, as well as party-specific legacies from the Cold War that emphasised Western integration and cooperation with the East respectively remained not only relevant, but dominant in party discourse.

Over the three phases convergence between the parties happened in the criticism of Russia's actions and the importance of cultural and social ties for the relationship. In contrast, there was a divergence in the emphasis on political and economic cooperation: while the SPD continually advocated this, the CDU/CSU rejected it and advocated closer ties with civil society as an alternative. While government parties' discourse on Russia remained contested, German foreign policy after 2013 moved in a certain direction: towards Europe and away from Russia, reflecting the discourse of both parties. This foreign policy behaviour could be seen in Merkel taking a lead role in Europe's response to Russian foreign policy behaviour, in the mediating role of Germany during the Normandy Format talks with France, Russia, and Ukraine, and in the willingness to safeguard 'European interests,' including especially those of Poland and other CEE (Central and Eastern European) countries. Altogether, the social constructivist approach in this analysis highlighted the importance of social, domestic, and historical factors for the party discourse and foreign policy of Germany.

Conclusion

This thesis used a social constructivist approach to show how the CDU/CSU and SPD parties' discourse evolved on the topic of German-Russian relations in the years 2014-2017, particularly as a result of the Ukraine Crisis. The thesis took a social constructivist approach and highlighted the role of historical and social factors for explaining norms relevant in German-Russian relations, and for formulating NRCs in accordance with role theory. It thus tried to correct the deficiency highlighted by Cantir & Kaarbo's (2012) criticism that often, NRCs are described as unitary. In contrast, German-Russian relations and German foreign policy role should be seen as a contested field, influenced by historical, domestic, social, and economic factors, as well as party legacies. These were used and emphasised differently by the CDU/CSU and SPD in justifying foreign policy aims, suggesting they play an important job in the formulation of foreign policy roles. Contrary to other interpretations of German foreign policy that observe a shift in assertion due to a more economic or military power or a shift in norms, this thesis contends that the interaction of parties with their historical legacies as well as social, cultural and domestic factors is the key for obtaining a fuller, historically informed understanding of German foreign policy change.

The fact that the CDU/CSU and SPD converged on some issues but not on others suggests that Germany's NRC and foreign policy will be contested for years to come. Despite a turn towards a more normative foreign policy with a European outlook, there are many voices, not least the rising AfD party, that are opposed to this trend and instead continue to advocate for close ties with Russia. Whether this will overstrain the European order, or whether Germany will continue to fit in this tension in a multilateral setting, remains to be seen.

A limitation of the thesis was the number of parties studied. As only two out of five parties were studied in the Bundestag, nothing like a complete picture of Bundestag debates about

Russia could be conveyed. Another limitation was that not all domestic factors could be included due to the limited scope of the thesis, and thus an incomplete picture of the domestic factors that might or might not have affected foreign policy change was given. This was due to the focus of the thesis on the mechanisms rather than the reason for foreign policy change.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study has shown that a more conflictual level – the parliamentary level – might give rise to more nuanced idea of discourse in the *formation* of foreign policy priorities and role concepts. One possible future line of research could therefore be to integrate the methods and level of analysis of this thesis in a more general model that would stress the importance of discourse in role theory and foreign policymaking in other instances, particularly if the subject matter at hand is conflictual. Further, this analysis could be extended to other parties' discourse of the time. The large range of views from the normative Green foreign policy to the pro-Russian Left Party suggests this could be a fruitful undertaking. Analysing an earlier time in Russian relations would also be helpful to further elaborate the context underlying current and future German-Russian relations.

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