The War and the securitisation of the German Foreign Policy Discourse - Between "Zivilmacht" and "Zeitenwende"

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Content

1 Introduction[1]

Since the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine began, Germany's social and political discourse has experienced enormous polarization. The main elements of the controversy related to the justification, the nature and the scope of military support for Ukraine. The heated debate departed from the previous self-perception as a "civilian power" (Zivilmacht). This self-

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perception as a „civilian power" can partly be explained by long-standing German foreign policy tradition, which developed in the decades after the Second World War in the so-called Bonn Republic and remained a foreign policy paradigm even after German reunification in 1990. In particular, the „civilian power" paradigm entails reassurance to international partners that Germany would continue to remain committed to the multilateral paradigm of German foreign policy established after 1945 anlad that Germany will seek to resolve conflicts by non-military means, or will tend to hold back on the use of military means. The German controversy that we analyse in this conference paper in this respect can also be understood as some sort of turning away from the tradition of the civilian power concept. On the one hand, conflicting interpretations emerge about how the political decision to support Ukraine militarily can fit with the German civilian power tradition. On the one hand, it is emphasized that the war in Ukraine is a European fight for freedom and democracy and should therefore be supported at all costs. On the other hand, those opposing weapon supplies to Ukraine mainly stress the risk of military escalation possibly leading to a direct clash between NATO and Russia.

The respective positions within the German party spectrum show an interesting crossing of party lines. Whereas parts of the far-left (the Left) and far-right (Alternative for Germany, AfD) parties show certain overlap in their understanding of Russia's "security interests", the Social Democrats (SPD) have only belatedly moved away from their previous self-understanding as a bridge-builder with Russia (see its tradition of "Ostpolitik"). In contrast, positions among the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) are more diverse, encompassing vocal support for Ukraine, the problematic political legacy of the former chancellor's support of the Nordstream 2 pipeline, and individual voices, still highlighting the negative economic impact of turning away from Russia. Alliance 90 / the Greens (the Greens), on the other hand, have shifted away from their more uncompromising pacifist ideal in favour of calling for values and solidarity-based military support. In addition, within the discourse, the perceived German commitment to multilateralism, the close coordination with its NATO and EU partners, plays a substantial role. Finally, the increased polarization remains focused on military support and economic sanctions, rarely contesting humanitarian support.

The overall ambition of this paper is to study the German security discourse by party representatives from all parties currently represented in the German Bundestag on aid and arms deliveries to Ukraine. This paper covers the first year of the war, from 24 February 2022 to 24 February 2023. Within our study, we mainly build on securitisation approaches. Based on this, the guiding question of our paper is the following: We intend to explore patterns of justification to move away from the civil power conceptualization and the doctrine of the German foreign policy to not deliver military equipment into violent conflict areas or war zones. We are interested in elaborating on how the German government's decision on arms deliveries to Ukraine is justified and how respective arguments rely on securitising or counter-securitising moves. In doing so, we analyse social media texts as speech acts. We select statements from Facebook, Twitter and press releases from government officials as well as high-level representatives of the parliamentary parties in Germany (SPD, CDU, FDP, Greens,

die, Linke, AfD), plus a smaller group of further influential members of the German Bundestag. The data collection set has been collected for this conference paper.[2]

The approaches we apply from securitisation theory help us to identify and interpret security frames within the respective (social) media statements, providing us with rhetorical instruments as part of securitising moves, within which, according to Buzan et al. (1998), an issue is framed as an existential threat to a certain referent object and a possible way-out in terms of an extraordinary measure is proposed to counter this threat. As security discourse is always about the allocation of resources to deal with the perceived security issues (Williams and McDonald 2018, p. 6), analysing the elite security discourses on potential security issues helps us to uncover the justifications for choosing one measure over another. Securitisation theory helps to identify and classify statements that follow a certain grammar of security and thereby function as (counter-) securitising moves within a broader discourse. There are numerous references to the main paradigms of the German Security Policy Tradition that form the intellectual context of this debate, which is mainly visible in referring to the civil power concept and the German Ostpolitik. Doing so helps to reconstruct meaning within these securitising statements and interpret them within their specific system of meaning. Framing something as a security issue that needs to be dealt with urgently and through extraordinary measures functions as a justification for the proposed measures, narrowing down the (security) policy toolbox.

Hence, this paper aims to contribute to the following research gap: First, the paper is embedded in the field of (parliamentary) party research, related to foreign policy contribution. In current party research, foreign policy preferences have not been deeply embedded into e.g., cleavage research. For the German case, the impact of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine might contribute to the emergence of a new sort of cleavage, which, however, is still not fully clear. Second, we contribute to foreign and security policy research, while studying the fundamental change of the decade-long foreign policy paradigm of the German "civilian power". Third, we contribute to research on social media discourse analysis, which is of special relevance as the use of social media by parliamentarians has been increasing since the beginning of the war. Finally, we apply analytical tools from securitisation research to contribute to the analytical frameworks, suitable to better understand the foreign policy positions within the German security policy discourse.

Against this background, the paper proceeds as follows: After briefly introducing the so-called "Russia-First-Strategy" in Germany and its decrease in relevance after 2014 (section 2), we turn towards a brief introduction of party preferences after 2014 (section 3). This is followed by a brief introduction to the German „Zeitenwende"-approach (section 4) as well as a short conceptualization of the German Zivilmacht-Tradition (section 5). Section 6 conceptualizes the

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securitisation approach, as deployed in this paper and section 7 briefly introduces the methods deployed.

2 Germany's "Russia First" Strategy and its policy turn since 2014.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, German-Russian relations were characterised by the German ambition to build a trusting relationship with Russia and to push for close economic integration. The German focus on Eastern Europe is justified as

> „a result of Germany's historical obligations based on the experiences of World War II and post-war reconciliation in Europe. German reunification in 1989 and the big-bang enlargement of 2004 have placed Germany in both the geographic and the political centre of a new Europe" (Kempe 2007, p. 34).

German foreign policy towards Russia had been accompanied by personal high-level ties with Russia - as could be seen in the relations between Chancellor Helmut Kohl (CDU) and Russian President Boris Yeltsin during the 1990ies as well as between Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (SPD) and Vladimir Putin during the 2000s. The Schröder government furthermore adhered to the idea of the German "Ostpolitik", which has been led by the idea of "Wandel durch Annäherung" (change through rapprochement). The policy goes back to the early 1970ies Cold War period, when Chancellor Willy Brandt (SPD) established a foreign policy strategy, which placed good economic ties with the Soviet Union as a prerequisite for long-standing peace, while believing that the Western economic model would, in the long run, be the more convincing one (Fix 2016, p. 5). Later, the German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD) turned towards a strategy of "Annäherung durch Verflechtung" (rapprochement through interdependence) towards Russia, which aimed to lower the risk of conflicts through interdependence (Fix 2016, p. 5). Germany's Ostpolitik, sought not to risk good relations with Russia, while at the same time integrating the countries of Central Eastern Europe into the European Union (EU) and establishing close ties with the Eastern Partnership region (Amelia Hadfield 2018, p. 452).

This ambition had arguably failed already before the beginning of this war, as the close energy ties with Russia, mainly embodied by the Nord Stream II gas pipeline, has been in conflict with Polish and Ukrainian economic and security interests from the get-go and led to permanent tensions, especially with Poland (Fix 2016, p. 121; Westphal 2021; Härtel 2021). Hence, it is often argued that German foreign policy followed a "Russia first" strategy (Fix 2016, p. 121). Nevertheless, despite the arguably pro-Russian energy policy, when Angela Merkel became chancellor in 2005, relations with East Central European states such as Poland (Kempe 2007, p. 37), gained importance, especially as a result of the EU enlargement. In reaction to the Euro-Maidan revolution in Ukraine (2013/2014) and the subsequent Russian annexation of Crimea, the former "Russia first" policy slowly but surely came to an end. Russia was no longer perceived as a strategic partner (Fix 2016, p. 115). During the highly dramatic revolutionary phase, Germany, France and Poland, the so-called Weimar Triangle, had been involved in negotiating the political transition towards a new political regime (ibid), which was followed

by the Normandy format, negotiating the Minsk Agreement (Minsk II) in 2015 (Fix 2016, pp. 118–119).

3 Party Perspectives After 2014

It has been broadly criticized that Germany did not come up with a new policy towards Russia after the annexation of Crimea. Seemingly, the strategy of the grand coalition of CDU/SPD rather tended to stress continuity (Stewart 2023, p. 31). Astonishingly, the overall European party system still encompassed a broad range of Russia-friendly attitudes in the aftermath of 2014. This applies mostly to the right and left wings of the party systems (Karolewski and Mehlhausen 2017, p. 273). Russia's attempts to influence the European party system, mostly through election interference, disinformation campaigns and cyber-attacks, arguably wielded success. Moreover, recent Washington Post investigations suggest, that Russian intelligence services have explicitly targeted representatives of the German far-right and far-left parties to mobilize the German public against further aid to Ukraine (Belton et al. 2023).

In a German-Polish comparison of parliamentary debates related to the annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine in 2014 Karolewski and Mehlhausen find that German politicians invoked notions of a "Russia First" orientation, whereas Polish debates put Ukraine's fate in the forefront of the discussions (Karolewski and Mehlhausen 2017). During that time, parliamentary contributions by the governing CDU/CSU avoided emphasising both, the collaboration with Russia and with the countries of the Eastern Partnership, even though sanctions against Russia were supported (Karolewski and Mehlhausen 2017, p. 301). This was largely similar concerning the positions of the governing coalition partner SPD. Despite the annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine, European peace in confrontation with Russia seemed to be beyond imagination.

Within the parliamentary group of the green party, while being in the opposition at that time, it is particularly remarkable that they did not emphasize political instability in Ukraine (e.g. through extreme right-wing political forces as highlighted by CDU/CSU and SPD). In contrast, the Greens demanded an EU membership perspective for Ukraine (own data set Vandergrift 2023), hence the EaP was not perceived as an instrument to keep Ukraine out of the EU. During the 2021 election campaign, today's Vice-Chancellor and Minister of Economics Robert Habeck, then leader of the oppositional Green Party, came strongly to the fore when he spoke after a visit to Ukraine in May 2021 out in favour of arms deliveries. This has been highly unique as within the German party landscape and his party, these demands met with solid rejection (Deutschlandfunk 2023).

As far as the SPD is concerned, the 2021 federal election saw a generational shift within the SPD, and many of the party's younger MPs became increasingly critical of the paradigm of the Ostpolitik, which has been some sort of strong legacy in the SPD party tradition (Stewart 2023, p. 32). This, however, did not contribute to quicker decisions on arms delivery after the start of the war. As Karolweski and Mehlhausen have shown, the position of Die Linke in the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea and the start of the war in 2014, emphasized so

perceived "provocations" by the West towards Russia and insofar justified Russia's aggressive behaviour towards Ukraine. There was less argumentation towards the breach of international law or the Budapest Memorandum. These arguments, however, show lots of continuity with lines of arguments within Die Linke in 2022/2023. In 2014, the right-wing populist AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) had been a non-parliamentary party and hence has not been part of the study Karolweski and Mehlhausen. However, also as a non-parliamentary party, its positions related to the Russian aggressions towards Ukraine, resembled that of Die Linke. Hence, the pro-Russian arguments from AfD and Die Linke, resemble an interesting crossing of party lines (Stewart 2023, 32).

4 The Zeitenwende as a Turning Point in German Foreign Policy Perceptions

Three days after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, on 27 February 2022, Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) made a speech in the German Bundestag in which he explained that the world situation and the German position had now fundamentally changed due to the start of the war. His framing of the *Zeitenwende* in between became a very popular frame within the German discourse, which, however, is understood in numerous directions.

The German chancellor mainly emphasized new funds for the modernization and full equipment of the Bundeswehr, hence, less broad than the societal and political discourse later developed (Stewart 2023, p. 29). In the meantime, in various other speeches and contributions, the German chancellor "filled" the term with broader understandings. From his article in Foreign Affairs in December 2022, we can derive that the Zeitenwende as "an epochal tectonic shift" is to be understood as a commitment to strengthen European unity, to strengthen good relations with the UN and with NATO and, on the whole, to move closer together as democracies in the world since war is also a struggle between autocracy and democracy, but not to forget, to understand the world order as in a competition between these states, which would require close collaboration also with computers like e.g. China (Scholz 2022e).

5 Defining the German Zivilmacht Paradigm

Zivilmacht refers to foreign policy role concepts and behaviours, which are tied to objectives, values, norms, and instruments committed to a "civilization of international relations" (Klein 2018; Maull 2007, p. 74; Kirste and Maull 1996, p. 297). Civilian power requires congruence between internal values and goals and interaction in foreign policy (Kirste and Maull 1996, p. 299). Germany's foreign policy paradigms after World War II relate to multilateralism, the willingness to transfer sovereignty and the advocacy of international norms and values, even if those conflict with own national interests (Brummer and Kießling 2019, p. 13; Steiger 2022, p. 50; Maull 2007, p. 74). Civilian power rejects the use of force if not legitimized by the UN Security Council or self-defence as specified by the UN Charta (Schmidt et al. 2007, p. 201; Kirste and Maull 1996, p. 298). Germany's role as a civilian power, related to multilateralism,

transfer of sovereignty and advocacy of norms, can be observed over since WW II (Oppermann 2019, p. 622). However, international crises, such as the euro crisis in 2008 or the Ukraine crisis in 2014, increasingly challenge Germany's self- and external expectations. Also, national party competition likewise contests Germany's role in the international system, most notably since the entry of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party into the German Bundestag in 2017, which fundamentally criticizes German foreign policy (Oppermann 2019, p. 627; Harnisch and Schild 2014, p. 381).

In her work on rhetoric and action at the turn of the century, Susan Stewart (2023, p. 30) notes that there is a contradiction between political rhetoric and aid and arms deliveries to Ukraine. As an example, Germany's hesitant position towards Ukraine's EU candidate status is mentioned as well as the demands of some German politicians to continue close economic relations with Russia (Stewart 2023, p. 30). It can be seen as an element of the German Zeitenwende that Germany avoided confrontational rhetoric towards Russia. The German Chancellor emphasized the avoidance of (nuclear) escalations between NATO and Russia as well as the compensation of consequences for the European and German economies (ibid., 31). This might partially explain, why the political will towards the delivery of heavy weapons only came up after the war crimes in liberated Bucha and other places in April 2022 became evident (Auel 2022). An additional challenge might have been that the German government just looked back to only some months of being in office and represents the first German government at the federal level supported by more than two parties, which complicates compromise settings (Stewart 2023, p. 34).

One of the most evident disputes on weapon deliveries emerged in September 2022, when Chancellor Scholz remained reluctant to agree in ring exchanges on German Marder- and Leopard-2 tanks for Ukraine. However, the argument he uses, fits well with the role model of the German Zivilmacht, as he stressed that arms delivery should happen in close coordination with allies and not as a solo strategy (Daniel et al. 2022). Nevertheless, Stewart (2023, p. 33) revealed some contradiction as Germany's argumentation is selective as it behaved unilaterally in economic and energy policy issues. Furthermore, the tank delivery debates in December 2022/January 2023 showed that Germany has been hesitant towards following the pressure from the US and Poland to deliver tanks as quickly as demanded (Tagesschau 2023). Germany did not take over as much leadership as wanted in the military support of Ukraine and continued to rely on the US in the field of security policy (Daniel et al. 2022; Stewart 2023, p. 34).

6 The Securitisation Approach as an Analytical Tool to Study the German Security Discourse

As indicated already in the introduction, the main analytical pillar of this contribution builds on securitisation approaches. We understand securitisation as part of the constructivist research framework, employing an interpretivist ontology to uncover, compare and interpret commonly used rhetorical security constellations (the so-called "grammar of security") or

securitising practices. Instead of having the ambition to reduce complexity and to reach for generalizable rules, these approaches acknowledge the complexity and highlight the context of a given discourse or practice, to reach for more plausible interpretations of what „makes something a security issue? What kind of responses does this call for? What are the specific consequences of agreeing that something is a threat?" (Balzacq et al. 2016, p. 496).

Others stress the link between securitisation and practice theory, which, however, is less relevant for our study as the "collection of routinised and patterned practices, typically carried out by bureaucrats and security professionals, in which technology comes to hold a prominent place" (Bourbeau 2014, p. 188). However, others (i.e. Guzzini 2011, p. 336, Bourbeau 2014) argue for the combination of both logics to establish a more comprehensive picture of the securitisation process. In contrast to these approaches, our study is limited to rhetorical *securitising moves* as we intentionally focus on single speech acts and therefore highlight the discursive practices of a (possible) securitisation process.

As we will be showing during our study, securitising moves might be faced with contestation, either in de-securitising *moves*, as "shifting of issues out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining process of the political sphere" (Buzan 1997, p. 11) or counter-securitising *moves,* while challenging attempts to generate support and legitimacy for security measures (Stritzel and Chang 2015, p. 549). Those might be "directed against the securitising actor, the securitising speech act, the referent object and/or emergency measures using the same or different referent objects". According to Stritzel and Chang, such moves can "include securitisation and desecuritisation, and typically involve processes of legitimization/delegitimization with the result/impact of, if successful, delaying, prohibiting/stopping or reversing a securitisation process" (Stritzel and Chang 2015, p. 553).

The grammar of the security concept helps us to differentiate eventual securitisation attempts or their respective contestation (de- or counter-securitisation) and interpret them in a more nuanced fashion. Within their speech acts, securitising actors "construct a plot that includes existential threat, point of no return, and a possible way out […]" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 33). It focuses therefore on the very survival (Buzan 1997, p. 14) of the referent object (i.e. the people, nation-state, political system, military alliance, international law) with the referent subject" threatening the breakdown or ruin of some principle or some other irreparable effect" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 148). The securitising move usually emphasises the urgency and the need to implement extraordinary measures by dramatizing the threat and advocating for prioritization (Buzan 1997, p. 14; Dunn Cavelty 2007, p. 23). This is often done along the lines of "if not handled now it will be too late, and we will not exist to remedy our failure" (Buzan 1997, p. 14).

Hence, securitisation follows a "logic of exception" through "speech acts that legitimise exceptional policies and practices in the face of an existential security threat" (Bourbeau 2014, p. 189). This relates to the „grammar of security", as „the designation of an existential threat requiring emergency action or special measures, and the acceptance...by a significant audience" (Buzan 1997, p. 15). Related to this, security is understood as an *intersubjective*

construction of "what is to be considered, and collectively responded to, as a threat" (Buzan 1997, p. 14). Intersubjective, as opposed to subjective, refers to the necessary acceptance of the threat by the audience (Balzacq et al. 2016, p. 499). Therefore "the 'security-ness' of an entity does not depend on objective features, but rather stems from the interactions between a securitising actor and its audience" (Balzacq et al. 2016, p. 496). Nevertheless, securitisation relates to "the intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects" (Buzan 1997, p. 14). A single securitising move or attempt thus does not qualify as (successful) securitisation but *might* lead to a (widely accepted) securitisation of an issue and the accepted implementation of extraordinary measures (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 25; Guzzini 2011, p. 331). All in all, securitisation theory differs between the following five elements of studying securitisation:

> "*the securitising actor (i.e. the agent who presents an issue as a threat through a securitising move), the referent subject (i.e. the entity that is threatening), the referent object (i.e. the entity that is threatened), the audience (the agreement of which is necessary to confer an intersubjective status to the threat), the context and the adoption of distinctive policies ('exceptional' or not).*" (Balzacq et al. 2016, p. 495)

According to this, we within our study, perceive the German government members and the members of the German Bundestag as securitising actors addressing various audiences: the public, their parties, their cabinet or the parliamentary groups. Related to the Russian war of aggression, the referent subject is the Russian war against Ukraine on the one hand, but also Germany's measures to support Ukraine on the other hand, which could be understood as a counter-securitising move.

The referent objects are diverse and do not only relate to the territorial and political integrity of Ukraine but also to perceived threats against the security of Germany, the EU, the NATO, both as collective referent objects, the territorial integrity of Eastern European EU member states as well as the security of countries like Georgia and Moldova. In addition, systemic referent objects like the "Euro-Atlantic (Security) Order", "European Security Architecture", "Regional Stability", International Peace and/or Stability, and International law do count here. While the quality of the "extraordinary" condition for proposed measures is disputed among securitisation scholars (see Balzacq et al. 2016), we assume this is given through the German Zeitenwende approach as a result of the war in Ukraine.

We perceive the delivery of weapons to conflict regions as a crucial turning point, while previously being a taboo in Germany.[3] Furthermore, also the clearance of third-party deliveries of Germany-made or licensed weapons can be classified as an extraordinary measure, since the German government previously usually prohibited such requests. In addition, "the whole analysis only makes sense within the specific cultural contexts [bold by the authors] in which the performatives are realized" (Guzzini 2011, p. 335) as there is "a quite huge repository of common meanings and self–other understandings within which we can understand why certain political processes may lead to securitisation or desecuritisation"

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[3] This has also been indicated in the coalition treaty of the current government.

(Guzzini 2011, p. 335). We argue, building on Guzzini (2011), that references to existing security paradigms in the German discourse provide an additional justification for or against a specific measure. For example, arms deliveries to Ukraine *might* be justified by referencing Germany's historical responsibility towards Ukrainian victims of the Second World War and the Shoah or Germany's commitment to multilateralism to gain higher levels of audience approval.

7 Ways of Data Collection and Methods Used

To analyse the German political discourse from members of the government and the parliamentarians related to the war in Ukraine and the German support measures (between 24 February 2022 and 24 February 2023), while applying the securitisation theory, we provide an analysis of social media discourses. It is our ambition, to reveal patterns of justification of the extraordinary measures, implemented by the German government related to the Zivilmacht tradition and the Zeitenwende framing. We study, how these measures are (counter-)securitised with the concept of grammar of security.

Our units of analysis relate to speech acts in text forms from the social media platforms Facebook and Twitter, as well as press statements. Social media platforms are understood as "low barriers of interaction" (Ernst et al. 2017, p. 1350), as politicians and their "followers" build an intimate relationship on the platforms - politicians often still personalize their Twitter and Facebook accounts and thus also frequently provide insights into their everyday life.

Our selection criteria are the following:

1)   We cover the period from 24 February 2022 to 24 February 2023, hence 12 months of the full-scale war. Within this period, we identify several crucial incidents, which impact the debate (e.g. war crimes).

2)   We selected Twitter and Facebook as they are geared towards virality and broad audiences. Political actors communicate as users of the platforms. Their posts and events can be commented on, they can promote their political agenda and share their network with potential voters (Ernst et al. 2017, p. 1349).

Facebook is oriented towards "one-way or reciprocal friendship ties" (Stier et al. 2018, p. 54), as users must be actively "friends" with politicians, or at least subscribe/like them. As indicated by Boulianne, politicians "typically see Facebook as an opportunity to influence the public and one's supporters, while Twitter holds the opportunity to influence journalists" (Boulianne and Larsson 2023, p. 120). The work of Stier et al. (2018)emphasises that German politicians use Facebook rather than address those users, who already actively follow the politician and thus already have a potential interest in his/her activities. Moreover, in their analysis of how Facebook and Twitter have been used by German politicians in the 2013 election campaign, the authors observed that politicians on Facebook primarily referred to local issues (Stier et al. 2018, p. 55). Nevertheless, in German social media discourses, Facebook is widely used (ARD/ZDF-Forschungskommission 2022).

Even though Twitter is only in fifth place, behind Instagram and TikTok (ARD/ZDF-Forschungskommission 2022), we select it for our analysis, as we focus on speech acts as text forms. Hence Twitter could be seen as an "index of public opinion" (Stier et al. 2018, p. 55), particularly used by journalists, as tweets, posts and comments by politicians on Twitter often have "the potential to create spillover effects to other media" (Stier et al. 2018, p. 55). Moreover, in their analysis Stier et al. (2018) observe that "politicians prefer Twitter over Facebook [...] for the commentary of policies and unfolding public events while trying to mobilize Facebook users to attend campaign events" (Stier et al. 2018, p. 59). Hence, while Facebook is primarily used for mobilizing the electorate, politicians on Twitter comment on events and political incidents. However, the limited length of tweets and the resulting speed of the medium, characterize Twitter rather as a platform to distribute information rather than for broad discussion (Thimm et al. 2012, p. 302), due to the maximum length of 140 characters. However, it is our observation that the relevance to write threats, hence, a tweet series, increased in the German war-related discourse on Twitter. The takeover of Twitter by Elon Musk did not substantially affect the German debates.

When collecting data from Twitter and Facebook, we selected the political actors according to members of the government (Chancellor, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Defence), as well as leaders from parliamentary parties, parliamentary groups in the Bundestag as well as party spokespersons. In addition, we relate to the most influential members of the Bundestag Committee on Defense and the Foreign Affairs Committee.

3) We decided not to include newspaper and TV appearances as those are often anyways announced on Facebook and Twitter.

4) We include press releases of all parliamentary groups represented in the Bundestag on German support for Ukraine. The press releases of the parliamentary groups were not narrowed down to specific politicians. However, the press releases of the members of the government have been differentiated according to their position: Chancellor, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defense)[4].

5) In addition, we select prominent party politicians, holding main responsibilities in the government and/or the Bundestag. This can be justified by recent research on parliamentary debates, as according to Proksch and Slapin, parties in the German Bundestag are, in comparison to the UK, "careful about allowing backbenchers, especially those who are unlikely to toe the party line, to take the floor" (Proksch and Slapin 2014, p. 123). According to our findings on the war in Ukraine, this is not always the case. Some of the high-profile parliamentarians, such as Michael Roth (SPD) and Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann (FDP), as well as Servim Dağdelen (Left) currently hold important parliamentary positions but do not represent the mainstream position of their respective parties.

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[4] Minister of Defense Christine Lambrecht (SPD) resigned on 16 January 2023 and Boris Pistorius (SPD) took that position over during 19th of January 2023
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6) Finally, the relevant (social) media posts were selected based on content relevance. They were first collected by filtering the respective social media presence of the politician, respectively the press pages of the parliamentary groups, the Federal Chancellor and Defense and Foreign Ministers with the keyword "Ukraine" and saving those statements that contained references to measures to support Ukraine. Statements that did not contain a position or reference to a specific measure were then excluded from the data set. To reduce the risk of bias or mistakes, the authors double-checked the collected statements and in cases where assessments did not match, we took individual decisions about the proceeding.

As a result, our data set comprises a set of total of 267 tweets, 205 posts and 136 press statements.

Discourse analysis

To analyze the collected data employing discourse analysis in the sense of Keller and Viehöver (2006, pp. 107–109), the authors created a system of categories, where all tweets, posts and statements were coded manually using the MAXQDA analysis software. Our category system has been oriented towards the previously explained elements of securitisation and focused on the proposed "extraordinary measures" towards Ukraine, which politicians called for to support Ukraine. We understand as discourses what has been externalized verbally or non-verbally on a certain topic within a given society during a certain period. This covers as well the strategies of the actors involved in the discourse (Blatter 2018, p. 124). We intend to explain the role of the discourses we selected in German society and a particular arena and indicate, how the securitisation of the war is identified as the main cause of this. We try to identify patterns within strategies of discourse, while at the same time uncovering and describing power relations (hence, opposition versus government parties or government member versus a member of coalition parties within the Bundestag) (see on such a proceeding also Burnham et al. 2008, pp. 251–252). We conclude our analysis of the tweets, posts and statements as a fine analysis of the data, to avoid duplications (Keller and Viehöver 2006, pp. 107–109).

8 On Threats, Values and Measures - securitisation of the War in German Political Discourses

8.1. A brief general characterization of our Data Set

As already introduced above, our data set comprised 276 tweets, 205 Facebook posts and 134 press statements. Our data collection took place in 2023, between February 15th and March 8. We are aware that some relevant posts or tweets could have been deleted in the meantime. This is especially relevant for tweets by the former Minister of Defense Christine Lambrecht. In her case, no tweets could have been found on the Twitter account, but numerous posts on Facebook were still available. The new German minister of defence, Boris Pistorius, did not use Twitter before and after taking over this position. Furthermore, Pistorius's Facebook account has only been used for political issues and regional election campaigns. This fits with

what we introduced above on different strategies by politicians to use Facebook and Twitter, hence that Facebook is mainly used for personal or local political issues. However, other politicians also deleted posts and tweets after a certain period, without any clear reason. This is the case related to the party chairwoman of the Greens, Ricarda Lang, who does not provide tweets before June 18th 2022, even though her profile is active since May 2013. Furthermore, there is an astonishing variance in social media activity between the parties. For example, within SPD only the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Michael Roth, and the spokesman for foreign policy, Nils Schmid, tweeted on the topic relevant to this paper.

In contrast, we observe a comparably high number of tweets from the CDU/CSU, which is part of their oppositional role in the parliament. Hence, while being an opposition party, politicians have to strongly rely on the wider public to bring their issues to the agenda. Hence, Christian Democrats might use Twitter to also address journalists (Stier et al. 2018, p. 59), criticize the government coalition and make their positions more visible. Such a pattern of using social media as a tool for doing oppositional work is also deployed by the Left and the AfD. This was frequently observed among all the politicians surveyed. However, it is striking that the Left Party and the AfD used Facebook much more intensively and more than twice as often as the Moderate parties. Seemingly, they rather address their party audience (as on Facebook, you only address your "friend") instead of the wider public, addressed through Twitter. Hence, the AfD and the Left, rather address their social-media-related parts of their constituency, oriented towards local politics, while giving the impression of interacting with their voters (ARD/ZDF-Forschungskommission 2022).

As Figure 1 below shows, the intensity of social media communication mainly relies on the opposition-government dichotomy, less on, which party is expected to communicate in a more traditional or rather modern manner.
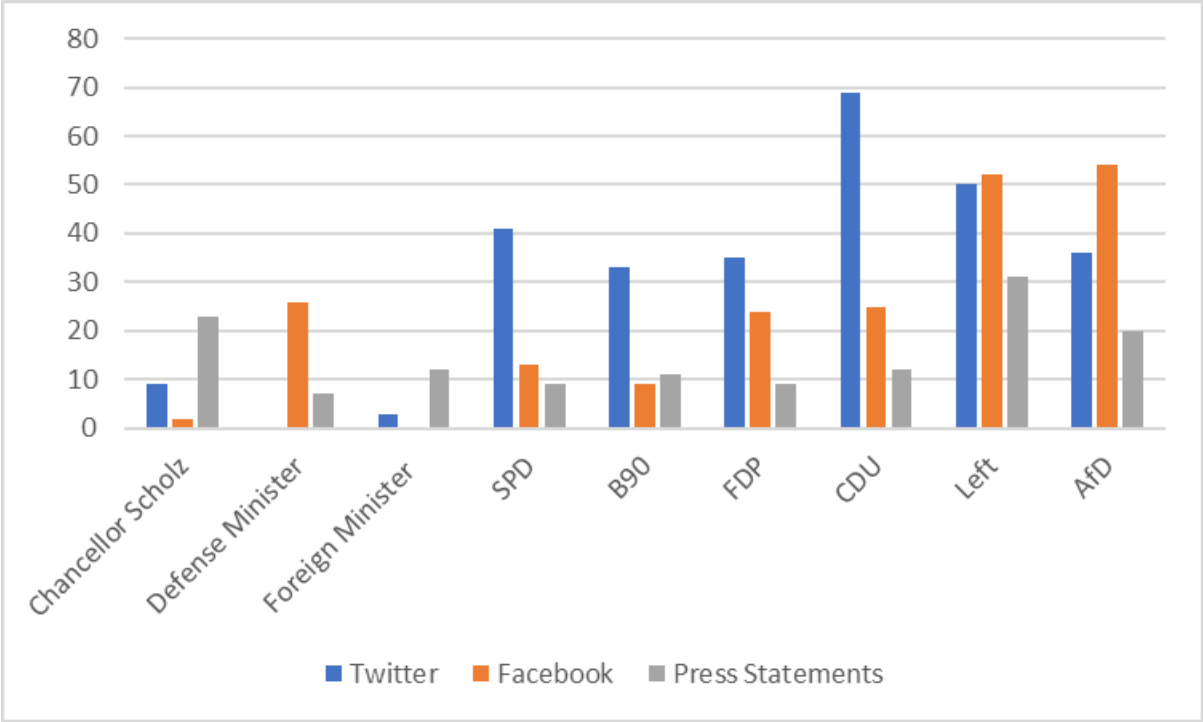
The intensity of social media discourses has also been highly dependent on several incidents, related to the war and German government decisions. Hence, several issues directly impact the intensity of social media discussions. Within our time frame of analysis, the spreading information about the Russian war crimes committed in Bucha and other places, in early April 2022, triggered the debate about the delivery of heavy weapons (such as tanks). Social media usage calmed down since May 2022, without a clear reason. In August, probably due to the parliamentary summer break, hardly anything was said on the subject. From September 2022 on, related to broad demands to better equip Ukraine ahead of an expected Russian winter attack, a broad debate on the potential delivery of Leopard 2 tanks emerged, which led to a significant increase in social media activity, particularly on Twitter. This dropped down during November 2022 but increased rapidly on Twitter during December 2022 and January 2023. As you can see in Figure 2 below, there is at least some sort of congruency between the intensity of social media statements and the issued press statements.
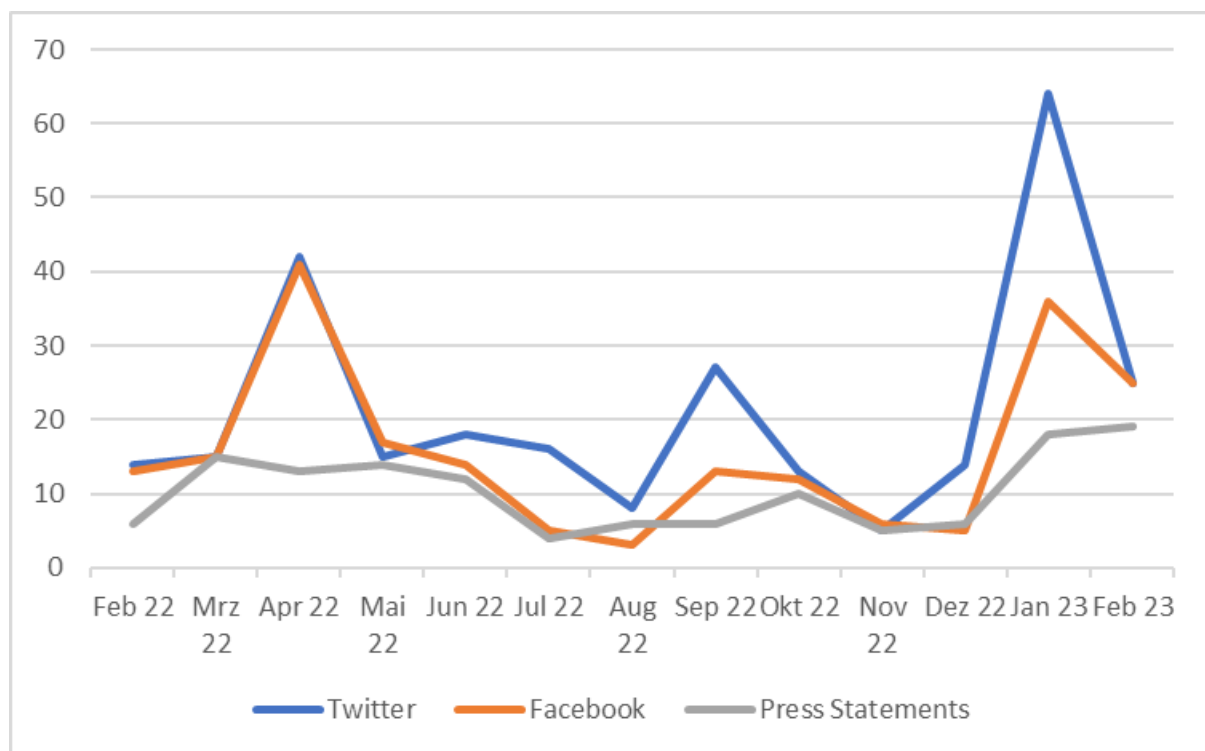
Figure 2: Frequency of utterances on platforms from February 24, 2022, to February 24, 2023.

8.2. A Variety of Referent Subjects - securitising the Role of Russia, even of Ukraine and „the West"

Russia as a referent subject

In the analysis of the politicians' statements, the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine was unanimously named as a threat, especially among the more centrist parties. This initially led to the formation of a first category of threat in the sense of *the Grammar of Security*. This

could then be divided into three sub-categories as follows: a) Russia and the war of aggression in general; b) a Russian victory; and c) Russian nuclear threats.

Thus, all parties, except for the AfD, consistently clearly name Russia as an aggressor and a danger both for Ukraine, Europe and the European Security Order, Germany, but also the global South. Russia's threat to Ukraine is mentioned for its territorial integrity, but above all also for the Ukrainian civilian population, which is attacked because of its will to live in a free and democratic country. It is no surprise that Chancellor Scholz, Defense Minister Lambrecht and Foreign Minister Baerbock have expressed a clear condemnation of Russia's role as a threat to Ukraine in all the tweets and posts analysed. Some members of the parliaments (not from the left and right wings) in very detail referred to incidents of the war and framed those as war crimes or as being of genocidal intention (Roth 2022d). However, the Russian war of aggression has been furthermore related to "the West" with regard to the danger of Russian disinformation (by SPD and FDP) in contrast to the social media positions of the AfD and the Left. Interestingly, SPD, FDP, the Greens, CDU and the Left jointly emphasize a reference object of increased security risks: the danger of a food crisis in the Global South due to Russia's war tactics.

There have been different perceptions of the role of Putin himself in this war. Of the international communities' condemnation of the war, the CDU/CSU, SPD, Greens, and FDP often equate Russia and Putin, while the Left refers to either Putin or Putin and "his oligarchs" (Schirdewan 2023, own translation), but do not frame the country as such as a threat. We would like to introduce the example of the foreign policy spokesperson of the Left party, Servim Dağdelen. While she too strongly condemned Putin and the war of aggression during the first month of the war, she later increasingly argues against the West and its solidarity with Ukraine. Russia as such has still not been framed as a threat to the Western Order.

Within the debated issue of a potential Russian victory over Ukraine, the coalition parties have spoken out in a homogeneous way. Politicians from the SPD, the FDP and the Greens, as well as Chancellor Scholz, emphasize the danger of Russian imperialism and revisionism, which is also understood as the cause of this war of aggression. The mainstream parties directly point to German (and European) strategic security interests in a Ukrainian victory or to the avoidance of a Russian victory - with consequences simultaneously portrayed to have further threatening implications for German and European / regional security (see 8.3 on this).

Related to Russian nuclear threats, mostly AfD and Left Party statements are represented, warning of a nuclear confrontation between NATO and the nuclear power Russia. Russia is portrayed as disproportionately more powerful in these statements, due to its nuclear arsenal. The Greens also address the shelling of the Ukrainian nuclear power plant Zaporizhzhia as a threat to the Ukrainian population, while Putin's nuclear threats are characterized as a breach of existing international law (Wagener 2022). Statements by members of the SPD confirm the hesitant stance already outlined due to fears of the confrontation with Russia - in tweets and posts, Social Democrats warn that "Putin is pushing the button and going nuclear" (Roth 2022g,own translation). However, SPD representatives do not take Russia's threatening

gestures as a reason not to supply weapons per se but argue that such measures must be carefully considered to avoid nuclear escalation.

Why also Ukraine has been perceived as a Referent Subject

As eventually known, Ukraine itself has been framed as being a threat by representatives of the Left and the AfD. The main arguments to blame Ukraine relate to its refusal to again enter diplomatic negotiations after the events in Bucha and other places. Representatives of both parties also argue that German support for Ukraine might become a threat to the German economy and portray weapons deliveries as a security risk for Germany. While showing a lack of empathy for the local situation in Ukraine, representatives of both parties blame Ukraine for not acting according to Western values and also acting against the interests of the Ukrainian people. We can illustrate this with the following quotations:

> *"While the warmongers continue to supply tanks and want to fight to the last Ukrainian, the latter are evading the war and fleeing by the hundreds of thousands. In Germany alone, there are over 163,000 men of military age who do not want to die for Selenskyj" (Bystron 2023c, own translation).*

In particular, the former Ukrainian ambassador to Germany Andrej Melynk has been broadly blamed for too ambitious demands towards the German government. Dağdelen, the spokeswoman from the Left, takes over Russian fascist framing by portraying Melnyk as a "friend of fascists" (Dağdelen 2022e, own translation) and accusing him of provoking a NATO Article Five intervention based on supposed lies and lack of transparency. All in all, members of the Left Party repeatedly construct the narrative of supposed "Nazis" in Ukraine. This relates to the Azov regiment and Bandera-related discussions. Hence as a result of his argument, German arms deliveries are framed as a danger to the German people. Since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, this narrative of Ukrainian Nazis has been used again and again in the German Bundestag by the Left as a reason to prevent funding to Ukraine (original data set Vandergrift 2023).

The US, the NATO, the EU and the German Government

Members of the AfD and the Left emphasize military assistance to Ukraine by German and NATO partners (in terms of arms deliveries and to a lesser degree military training) as an even graver threat to German and partly European or Regional Security invoking a possible arms race, escalation spiral or even nuclear war scenarios exhilarated by arms deliveries and/or increasing militarization. Closely connected to this narrative is a frame of the German government as lacking de-facto sovereignty in its foreign policy decisions that are supposedly closely controlled by the US administration. This narrative is mostly, but very frequently, invoked by Sevim Dağdelen of the Left party who paints a picture of a German government pressured by its US allies to act against its own security interests in a US/NATO scheme to let Germany take the fall for its supposed proxy-war against Russia. AfD politicians also emphasize this point by highlighting that "the deputies are obliged to the people, not to NATO or the USA" (Bystron 2023a, own translation) – suggesting that the German government acts more

to please the US or NATO than in the interest of its citizens. This is, as shown through this article, a re-appearing narrative for the far-left and far-right in the German political landscape. The Left takes the view that the war in Ukraine is a proxy war between NATO and Russia and that the West, above all the US, is using the war to secure its "global supremacy" (Dağdelen 2022d, own translation). Within these narratives, Ukrainian losses are usually generalized in a way that conceals the original threat actor and instead focuses on the responses by the US and German governments that are especially emphasized to be the most prominent threats to Regional Security and World Peace. While the AfD also highlights the pressure of the US but does not go as far as Dağdelen, this invokes a far-spread anti-American ideology within parts of the German left in the foreign policy discourse (Lloyd 2002; Gienow-Hecht 2021).

As far as the AfD is concerned, their representatives, on the other hand, voice suspicion by not addressing Western partners, but rather framing the coalition partners FDP and Greens, as well as the CDU, as "warmongers" (own translation). Chancellor Scholz is even portrayed as some sort of victim of his coalition government, pressured to approve arms deliveries. These charges are mostly waged towards Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, whose advocacy for arms deliveries is portrayed as a contradiction to diplomatic efforts: "Ms Baerbock, you are not the Minister of Defense, but the Foreign Minister, so the chief diplomat, I also expect diplomacy from you!" (Mohamed Ali 2022, own translation). German media outlets and journalists are also depicted as a threat – they are accused of "war propaganda" (Chrupalla 2023b) in submission to the government position by members of the Left and AfD. Thus, both the Left and the AfD accuse the federal government (and the CDU) of endangering its state, failing its obligation to serve and protect its citizens. Also, on the part of the mainstream parties, the actions (especially hesitancy or lack of communication on the whole decision-making process of arms delivery) of the federal government are constantly mentioned as a danger for Germany, Ukraine and its partners. Representatives of CDU, FDP and Greens voice concern that the chancellor's inaction could diminish German credibility among its partners, which could pose a long-term risk of isolation, harming German security interests. The most frequent accusations come from the largest opposition party in the Bundestag, the CDU, which sees the hesitancy of the chancellor and his party, the SPD, as an existential threat to Ukraine.

> "If #Russia lays down its arms, the war will end. If #Ukraine stops fighting, the physical existence of the country is at risk. The lack of support for Ukraine is simply the lack of will on the part of the #FederalGovernment." (Merz 2022b, own translation).

The EU is seldom if ever, framed as a threatening or escalating actor. Only representatives of the Left and AfD speak out against the EU's role in sanctioning Russia (albeit in different ways). The AfD primarily emphasizes that financing the reconstruction of Ukraine or even weapon delivery is a threat to Germany, because "Germany, as the largest net contributor, has the highest obligations in this regard" (Weidel 2023, own translation). Here, however, the US is also frequently mentioned as a threat, because in its narrative it is pushing the EU and ultimately Germany into a war with Russia. Individual members of the AfD and Left also suggest that Poland is contributing to an escalation dynamic by pressuring the German government to deliver more/other types of weapons to Ukraine, allegedly calling for a NATO

intervention (Dağdelen 2022c) or initially "dramatizing" the missile incident in November 2022 (Dağdelen 2022e). By acting in this way, Poland would (similarly to the US) "try to pull Germany into the Ukraine war" (see Chrupalla 2022a; Dağdelen 2023a).

8.3. Threatened objects: Ukraine, Germany, Values or World Peace?

While most statements by representatives of the Greens, SPD and FDP explicitly highlight the threat to Ukrainian civilians, political values and state survival, it is striking, that this dimension is often missing from statements by politicians of the CDU, AfD and the Left Party. Especially within statements by representatives of the Left Party, warfare is mostly emphasized as a terror in itself and only seldomly is the threat to Ukraine (mostly in terms of civilians) explicitly described. From other statements of the Left and AfD, it can nevertheless be deduced that the threat of war is mostly seen on the side of Ukraine. However, with statements of certain politicians like the speaker for international policy from the Left, Dağdelen, and the party leader of the AfD, Chrupalla, the chosen rhetorical frames point to indirectly equating Ukrainian and Russian victims. Moreover, members of the AfD advocate for "security guarantees for Ukraine and Russia" (Bystron 2023b, own translation) or criticize the supposed re-emergence of the Western "enemy images" of Russia (Bystron 2022).

Threats to Germany and its partners

Representatives of all parties emphasise an abstract threat to peace and security in Europe, sometimes explicitly portraying German national security as threatened. These statements can, again, be split into those depicting Russia's war against Ukraine and possible inaction as the most prominent threat to Germany (and its partners) and those who portray the actions of the German government (and partners) as the bigger threat by risking further escalation and spillover of the war to European partners or Germany.

Most representatives of the Greens, FDP, CDU/CSU and SPD frequently frame Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine as a threat to peace, security and/or freedom in Germany and Europe more broadly. A more precise, and less frequently voiced, argument, suggests that a Russian success over Ukraine (however this might look) would encourage Russian aggression even further and constitute a long-term threat to the security of Germany's partners like Moldova, Georgia and the Balkan states, therefore threatening German security interests. This argument is mostly brought forward by Foreign Affairs committee chair Michael Roth (SPD) (i.e. Roth 2022g & Roth 2022b) and individual representatives of the Greens (i.e. Baerbock 2022c). Strikingly, a security threat to Central and Eastern European partners like Poland or the Baltic states is never directly referred to. If at all, it can be found in government representatives' statements (mostly foreign minister Baerbock i.e. Baerbock 2022a & Baerbock 2022b) underlining NATO's Article V commitment. Other representatives highlight attempts of political division and intimidation (Scholz 2022d) or destabilisation through increasing existing refugee movements (Roth 2022c) by Russia as more political threats to Europe (mostly encompassing but not limited to the EU).

Moreover, especially members of the Greens, the SPD and the Left highlight consequences of this war (in more general terms) for the global South, often referencing the example of grain shipments and the impending food crisis. More abstractly, and less frequently voiced, the successful use of military coercion and undermining of international law principles is portrayed as a possible encouragement to other states with revisionist ambitions like China (vis-a-vis Taiwan). The chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee Michael Roth (SPD) stands out with many tweets in which he emphasises the potential threat to democracies worldwide (Roth 2022e) and mentions its consequences:

> *"Has anyone ever wondered why faraway Australia is so committed to supporting Ukraine? If Russia wins with its imperialist policy, this can also be a blueprint for China to be even more aggressive in the Indo-Pacific region, e.g., against [Taiwan]" (Roth 2022f, own translation).*

Furthermore, the CDU, FDP, SPD and Greens, highlight threats to shared values (freedom, democracy, human rights, international law) more often than others. However, it can be distinguished between Ukraine defending these shared values for its population ("values that we share with them [Ukraine]" Scholz 2022a, own translation) and Ukraine defending these values in place for all liberal democracies (i.e. Roth 2022d). In the same manner, SPD party co-leader Saskia Esken portrays the „weakening of European democracies" (Esken 2022) as one of Putin's main goals.

Within the second group, mostly representatives of the Left and AfD talk about threats to freedom and peace in Europe, with the AfD employing a more nationalist framing around "German interests" instead of referencing the security of the EU as a collective or the German partners. Representatives from both parties (however mostly AfD) voice the concern of diminishing protection of the German population by its government due to arms deliveries that are supposedly increasing the risk of nuclear war between NATO and Russia, equating it to a Third World War. While members of the SPD also frequently voice concern over the risk of escalation, representatives of the Left and AfD more openly criticize German arms deliveries to Ukraine, portraying them as provocations towards Russia's nuclear power. Additionally, AfD (and partly CDU) highlights how arms deliveries from Bundeswehr stockpiles might increase (Link 2023)the lack of equipment of the German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr), posing a risk by decreasing German defence capability (see proposed measures). Another risk entirely is highlighted by members of the Left, who voice concern over the possible strengthening of right-wing extremists in Germany through the uncontrolled proliferation of (small) arms sent to Ukraine (Dağdelen 2022b) or combat experience gained through participation in the international legion (Al-Dailami 2022b).

On a more systemic level, threatened objects are not frequently mentioned but mostly indirectly voiced in terms of regional security and/or stability, European Security Order, International law, the world economy and world peace. The supposed threat to regional stability and/or security is often invoked indirectly by pointing to the risk of a spill-over effect of the war. This argument is used by both, proponents (especially Foreign Minister Beaerbock)

and opponents of arms delivery as either long-term instability caused by Russia's war and/or encouraging Russia through, for example, concessions (like an unconditional ceasefire or territorial gains) or inadequate punishment on one side or increasing the likelihood of miscalculation and provocations by contributing to an escalation dynamic. Some members directly address either threats to the "European Security- and Peace Order" (i.e. Dröge. Katharina 2022), the breakdown of this order caused by Russia (i.e. Mützenich 2022) or explicitly Russias breach of its commitments in the context of the OSCE (Link 2023).

Moreover, possible threats to international law (as a systemic referent object) are more often emphasised by representatives of the Greens, FDP, CDU, and SPD suggesting that the Russian actions undermine and de-legitimize international law principles like territorial integrity (i.e. Scholz 2022c) as well as (simplicity) the Geneva Convention might – in the long run - lead to a breakdown of international law. By using this framing (mostly military) assistance to Ukraine is framed as a necessary measure to avoid long time security risks outweighing short-term risks inherent in escalation dynamics. Most party representatives (also highlight threats to the international economy. Risks to "world peace" are mostly employed by representatives of the Left and AfD, with the Lefts spokesperson for international affairs Dağdelen and AfD party leader Chrupalla frequently using the term "world war" (Dağdelen 2022a; Dağdelen 2022c; Chrupalla 2022b). Many representatives of the Left Party frequently condemn breaches of international law and war crimes by Russia. At the same time, *individual* members of the Left and AfD also characterize certain German or EU arms deliveries to Ukraine as unlawful, with most representatives accusing Ukraine of an intention to breach international law by (allegedly) calling for the supply of cluster ammunition (i.e. Wissler 2023; Dağdelen 2023d).

8.4. Proposed and contested extraordinary Measures

As introduced in section 3 above, part of the securitisation process is the so-called „grammar of security", which is understood as arguing towards an existential threat, which requires the targeted audience to legitimise the use of extraordinary measures. Within our study, we differ between military and political/diplomatic measures, which are visible in the social media discourses.

The Grammar of Security and German Military Measures

Most supporters of arms deliveries to Ukraine highlight the urgency of action and the high cost of inaction (see 5.2.). In stark contrast to AfD and the Left, who portray arms deliveries as threats of escalation or as an unnecessary prolongation of the war, proponents of arms deliveries frequently highlight Ukraine's right to self-defence enshrined in international law as a justification. Addressing the potential conflict with Germany's long-standing taboo on arms exports to conflict regions, Foreign Committee chair Roth emphasized that arms deliveries to Ukraine are an exception highlighting deliveries to Israel and the Peshmerga units in Northern Syria as other cases of self-defence (Roth 2022a). Most supporters of arms deliveries emphasized a necessary duality of diplomacy and Ukrainian military readiness. The underlying argument expresses a need to strengthen Ukraine's defence (and possibly liberation of

territories) as the only way to pressure Russia to negotiate. Demands for more arms deliveries gained momentum after especially brutal (and publically debated) Russian war crimes like those performed in Bucha, Mariupol and Kremenchuck, immediate Ukrainian counter-offensives or backed by the perceived need to counter Russian offensives. Concerning the latter two, they were often justified by highlighting their possible role for Ukrainian to recapture their territories, with especially the Greens portraying Western weapons as a possible „game changer" (Nanni 2023).

Arguments usually differentiate between (more or less) unilateral German arms deliveries and deliveries in the context of broader coalitions, with mostly Social Democrats (especially Chancellor Scholz) justifying longer decision-making processes or delays by referring to the need to avoid German *"Alleingänge"*(solo actions) (Scholz 2022b, see 5.6.). While most supporters of arms deliveries acknowledge the need to form an international coalition, CDU and party FDP (Strack-Zimmermann) highlight that Germany should go ahead if it wishes to play a leadership role. The contribution of German partners to arms supply initiatives is not emphasized by defence ministers Pistorius and Lambrecht and representatives of the opposition party CDU (see Erndl 2023).

Especially striking is the level of detail and debate over specific weapons systems that marked most of the debate. The different waves of debate regarding arms deliveries were defined by disagreements over which weapons Ukrainian soldiers could or could not master or rhetorical differentiation between „offensive" and „defensive" weapon systems. We saw different stages of debate starting with the debate about anti-tank and anti-rocket weapons, and the perceived need for air defence systems before entering the very specific debate on the different tank types the German defence industry had to offer - from Marder Armored personnel carriers to Infantry fighting vehicle Puma, Anti-aircraft gun tank Gepard and, finally, the Leopard battle tank (arguably the most notorious debate to date).

While CDU, Greens and individual FDP representatives welcome the decision to supply German Leopard tanks to Ukraine, all emphasize that the decision comes too late, having expressed their support for weapon deliveries early on and their discontent over alleged hesitation by Chancellor Scholz by using the #FreetheLeopards (mostly CDU and Greens). Greens and CDU criticize an alleged hesitancy and call for a more comprehensive and diverse supply of arms. FDP, Greens and parts of the SPD put it in the most dramatic terms – suggesting that inaction on arms deliveries risks immediate Ukrainian losses and increases the long-term threat to survival for central and Eastern European partners, Germany itself. At the same time, especially SPD and FDP highlight the difficulty of considerations for or against arms deliveries. In this context, both parties frequently point to shortages in the stockpile of the German Bundeswehr, emphasizing a need to weigh the need to support Ukraine with the need to uphold German defence capabilities. Foreign Minister Baerbock also emphasizes the need to acknowledge limited Bundeswehr resources while highlighting that Germany was also commissioning arms for Ukraine with the industry. However, the FDP-chairwoman of the Bundestag defence committee argues for prioritization of fast help to Ukraine (Strack-

Zimmermann 2022), while CDU member of the defence committee Hennig Otte demands modernization of the Bundeswehr simultaneously to sending military aid to Ukraine (Otte 2022).

The Left and AfD are opposed to sending weapons to crisis regions and war zones as a matter of principle, referencing "a rupture in German foreign policy" (Facebook 28.01.2023, Bystron), closely linked to the concept of civil power (see 5.6.). However, representatives of the Left are more directly connecting this stance to a (supposed) long-standing pacifist ideology. The underlying argument here being that arms deliveries would needlessly prolong the conflict, causing more harm and civilian deaths. The speaker of the Left for defence issues Al-Dailami even questions the self-understanding of the European Union as a peace project on the backdrop of its support for joint weapons deliveries and alleged breach of its Arms Export Directive (Al-Dailami 2022a). Especially striking is the accusation of the Left and AfD according to whom the coalition government is constantly overstepping self-proclaimed „red-lines" in weapon deliveries (i.e. Chrupalla 2023a; Chrupalla 2022a), occasionally cautioning of a trend that might lead to the deployment of NATO troops to Ukraine and the spill-over of the war (i.e. Dağdelen 2023c).

While most members of the Greens, CDU, FDP and SPD support arms deliveries in general or have come around to supporting them eventually (in the case of the SPD), many have positioned themselves more critically at some time in the multiple debates on specific weapon systems before changing their position. Most statements still show wide opposition to the provision of fighter jets (at the end of the observation period). Representatives of the Left and AfD portray military training of Ukrainian soldiers (on German as well as partner or Ukrainian territory) as increasing the risk of escalation, manifesting an alleged German status as a warring party. While members of the SPD and FDP also deem the risks of military training on *Ukrainian* territory as too high, they generally support military training in Germany as a necessary measure to strengthen the Ukrainian defence like members of the Greens, FDP and CDU does. While there have been no statements explicitly or implicitly supportive of a NATO intervention and deployment of German troops in Ukraine, warnings of such a measure are frequently expressed directly by representatives of the Left and AfD, and indirectly by SPD and FDP.

Diverse Securitisation of the German Political & Diplomatic Measures

In a very general manner, all party representatives call for Russia to withdraw its troops from Ukraine, (German and/or European) diplomatic initiatives and eventual negotiations between the conflict parties. However, stark differences between the negotiation participants, timing, conditions and priorities are observable. In contrast to statements by the Left who unanimously demand an immediate ceasefire and peace negotiations, representatives of CDU and SPD caution about an immediate ceasefire as it would possibly offer Russia an opportunity to re-arm and continue its offensives at a later time. CDU party leader Merz even implies historical parallels warning of appeasement practices (Merz 2022a). Especially representatives of the Greens, CDU, FDP and SPD highlight conditions for negotiations. Accordingly, Ukraine

has to be in a military and political position to negotiate at eye level with Russia to avoid a conflict settlement dictated by Russia.

Moreover, most parties highlight that Ukraine must be part of the negotiations and its interests considered while AfD and Left call for ceasefire and negotiations mostly without explicit conditions or frameworks. However, both parties do emphasise the value of the "peace initiatives" led by China and Brazil, calling for Germany and the EU to participate. While most other representatives do not specifically oppose these efforts, they do voice scepticism regarding the concrete measures and their value (i.e. Schmid 2023). Strikingly, while members of the Left highlight the support by Latin American governments, AfD politicians mostly focus on China as a possible mediator. While some CDU representatives call on Germany to be more active on the international stage, criticizing the supposed hesitancy of Chancellor Scholz, alleged shortfalls in diplomatic efforts are a constant argument in statements by AfD and the Left. Members of the Left usually call for the German government to engage in international initiatives or persuade Ukraine of negotiations. AfD politicians moreover accuse the Scholz government of not standing up for German (mostly economic) interests. Simultaneously, International Organisations are rarely addressed directly. AfD politicians call for a United Nations or OSCE peacekeeping force to Ukraine (Weidel 2022) and an OSCE-led peace delegation to Moscow and Kyiv (Bystron 2023b). At the same time, FDP politicians point to Russia's unwillingness to engage in OSCE mediation efforts (Link 2023). Other German politicians voice support for Russia's exclusion from the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly and condemnation of Russia's war of aggression through the United Nations general assembly.

Besides more general calls to „support Ukraine" politically and offer solidarity, most SPD, FDP, CDU and Greens politicians highlight the importance of Western unity in these efforts. While most representatives support EU-candidacy status for Ukraine, members of the Left don't address this issue and AfD politicians voice stark opposition. According to the latter, Ukraine would present a security risk and long-term debt trap for the EU with Germany shouldering the biggest burden. Especially members of the Greens and to a lesser extent CDU, SPD, Left and FDP call for the investigation into Russian war crimes.

Germany's Humanitarian assistance as less securitsed measures

The majority of representatives from all examined parties call for (increased) humanitarian assistance to Ukraine with differences only amounting to the frequency of statements as well as the prioritization and comprehensiveness of proposed measures. While all representatives of the Left position themselves against military assistance to Ukraine, they are especially vocal in emphasizing the need for humanitarian assistance. Noticeably representatives of the AfD mention humanitarian aid rarely.

Between low securitisation and counter-securitisation: Germany's Financial and economic measures

All parties except for AfD voice explicit support for economic, financial, and person-related sanctions on Russia and most highlight the importance of the expulsion from the SWIFT banking system as well as supporting Ukraine financially and economically in broader terms. Another measure shared by all parties except for AfD is the need to offer Ukraine a long-term perspective by supporting reconstruction (with the Greens and FDP especially highlighting energy infrastructure). While both the Left and SPD highlight sanctions on Russian oligarchs, representatives of the Left call for more targeted sanctions, sanctions against the Russian defence industry, a more consequent implementation of sanctions overall, and debt relief for Ukraine. Disagreement remains regarding a possible oil embargo with individual members of the Greens and SPD voicing support, while representatives of the CDU suggest that the negative consequences might impact Western economies more than contributing to a change of heart in the Russian government.

Sanctions and other economic measures of support for Ukraine and deterrence towards Russia are contested to a lesser extent – mostly challenged by the Left and far-right AfD. Most AfD representatives and one member of parliament of the Left repeatedly question the efficiency of sanctions and frame them as an "economic war against Russia" that is supposedly hurting Germany more than it helps Ukraine. Some statements explicitly or implicitly accuse the German government of failing their duty towards the German people by supposedly prioritizing the security of Ukraine over the economic, military and political well-being of their own country. Within AfD statements this charge is more offensively connected to a narrative shaming the current German government for acting against the interests of the German public, threatening its long-term viability and even pulling it into economic doom. Often the Left and AfD refer to recent polls suggesting that their opposition to arms deliveries (and partly sanctions) is backed by the overwhelming support of the German public, portraying themselves as "the real voice of the people".

With representatives of the Left and AfD, we, therefore, observe the most counter-securitisation attempts - often framing arms deliveries and/or sanctions as equally or even more severe threats to German military and/or economic security than Russia's war against Ukraine and its consequences. However, the vocal support for political, financial and humanitarian support to Ukraine among the representatives of the Left remains a significant difference between both parties.

8.5. Grammar of Security

In line with concept of grammar of security, most actors use rhetorical instruments that emphasize the urgency of action and/or the negative consequences of inaction. However, the same applies to counter-securitising statements that frame support measures (mostly arms deliveries to Ukraine and sanctions against Russia) as exhilarating an existing escalation spiral. In the same way, the assumed threat of a nuclear step by Russia up to doomsday scenarios of an escalating war between Russia and NATO (devaluing Ukrainian agency), World War III or nuclear apocalypse are invoked to appeal to the German public to stand up against these

measures. In line with this rhetoric, representatives of the Left party and the AfD are blaming the German government for escalating the war with arms deliveries, sanctions or inadequate diplomatic efforts (often allegedly pressured by the US or Ukraine itself), while not calling out escalator moves by the Russian government. Through omittance in these statements, it appears as if the actions of the German government (and other NATO countries, mostly the US and Poland) are put on a similar risk level as those by Russia (at least, shortly after the start of the full-scale invasion). Furthermore, at least one representative of the left party and most of the AfD politicians are repeatedly stating Germany's supposed status as a warring party as a matter of fact, claiming that "Germany is already part of the war" and suggesting that a broader war directly including Germany and its European partners is almost inevitable if the people do not stand up (against the government policies) now. By using this rhetoric, the urgency of action is emphasized in a dramatic way with inaction leading to world war.

8.6. The German self-perception as a "Zivilmacht" and its reaction to the War

References to German history and foreign policy tradition are used in both directions to justify and de-legitimise proposed security measures: In this context, the moderate parties repeatedly emphasize that the German government closely coordinates any action regarding aid to Ukraine and action against Russia with its international partners in NATO and the EU. In doing so, they point out that Russia had not reckoned with the unity in the West and that Ukraine could and must rely on its partners. While building on the main rules of the German civil power framings "never again and never alone", the moderate parties and the Chancellor repeatedly emphasized that Germany does not do "*Alleingänge*" (not to act unilaterally) to avoid the danger of further escalations and to follow its principles of closely coordinating with allies. Hence, "never again and never alone" refers to the self-understanding of Germany to seek consensus with its partners, as part of the decades-old tradition of being a so-called civilian power, to always act multilaterally within the international order.

However, the CDU, as an opposition party, constantly warned that German hesitancy in arms deliveries could seriously damage the trust of its partners. As already mentioned above, CDU politicians portray the German government as too hesitant within the international coalition to support Ukraine. Hence, the government is perceived as actively preventing the joint delivery of weapons to Ukraine. As a consequence, it is seen that Germany could have triggered Ukrainian military successes and in this regard impacted the war not for the benefit of Ukraine. In contrast to the CDU, the AfD and the Left rejected the perception of a consensus among the international partners regarding arms delivery, thereby accusing the government of unilateral actions.

Representatives of the SPD and FDP perceive the German government as following some historical responsibilities within their weapon delivery politics due to the German historical guilt, as the regime of the Third Reich during World War II has been responsible for killing several million Ukrainians (Roth 2023; Dürr 2022). Members from the CDU argue in similar directiondfs while emphasizing that we can learn from World War II that diplomacy has been

too weak to end the war (Merz 2022a). In contrast, AfD and the Left also relate to German history in their opposition to arms deliveries. They refer to historical dangers of German militarism during World War II, reduce the Soviet victims to *Russian* victims, and point to, what they perceive as a "rearmament spiral" during the Cold War, as arguments against weapon delivery. While AfD party leader Chrupalla warns that "German tanks must not be allowed to roll through Ukraine (Chrupalla 2023a), Dağdelen perceives today's arms deliveries on the part of Germany as a violation of a taboo, based on historical grounds as she recalls the battle of Stalingrad during the second world war (Dağdelen 2023b).

Hence, within the social media discourse, we analysed, AfD and the Left both call for keeping up the German civil power-foreign policy, with a priority on diplomacy. This is accompanied by the self-perception of being the only "peace party" within the German political landscape. In contrast, the Greens, FDP, SPD and CDU contest this interpretation of civil power by highlighting Ukraine's fight against tyranny, for freedom and democracy (related to the "never again" dimension of civil power).

9 Conclusion

This paper introduced the very first draft result of our research within "Politicization of EU Policy Towards the Eastern Partnership States in German and Polish Foreign Policy in Comparison". Our research ambition has been fourfold: First, we wanted to provide an analytical frame to provide a better understanding of the German foreign policy turn from the Zivilmacht to the Zeitenwende as a result of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine. Second, we intended to study the parliamentary/government discourses on the war and therefore limited our study to functional elites. Third, in doing so, we build on research concepts related to social media activities by politicians. Fourth, we perceived the securitization approach as being an appropriate concept helping us to study this German discourse on the war.

As introduced above, we intended to uncover, compare and interpret those rhetorical security constellations and security moves, which are *intersubjective* constructions, usually referred to as "Grammar of Security". Empirically this relates to the main paradigms of the German Security Policy Tradition that form the intellectual context of this debate. As we indicated, we perceive those as referring to the civil power concept and the German Ostpolitik. Furthermore, we intended to explore patterns of justification to move away from the civil power conceptualization and the doctrine of the German foreign policy to not deliver military equipment into violent conflict areas or war zones. Within our study, we aimed to present various political positions within the first 12 months of the war regarding aid and arms deliveries to Ukraine utilizing the Grammar of Security approach. The social media discourses we analyzed showed an evident distinction between moderate parties (SPD, Greens, FDP, CDU) and those on the far left (die Linke) and the extreme right (AfD) regarding their positioning on supporting Ukraine and sanctioning Russia.

As our analysis shows, the own role of the government and opposition party clearly impacted the tone of the contributions. Even though the ruling coalition under SPD, the Greens and FDP

had an evident consensus with the CDU to condemn the Russian aggression and to acknowledge the violation of Ukrainian sovereignty, the CDU, despite the extraordinary threat, which stem from the war for the European security order and global politics, nevertheless did their oppositional work and blamed the government for its assumed failures in its reactions to the war, mainly in the sense of delayed policy response. Hence, we could not observe any lowering of the opposition role within this one moderate opposition party.

Our study could confirm, what already could be seen in the German public discourse: the crossing of party lines between the far left and the extreme right parties, which has been visible concerning a moderate position towards autocratic Russia already for years and has been intensified through the reactions on the war. Consequently, both parties emphasized perceiving the war also as a threat to Germany. Also, their position on Russia differs from that of the moderate parties. Their securitizing moves differ between Russia as a country and Putin and the oligarchs as responsible for the war. In contrast to the moderate parties, which see imperial Russia as a threat to democracies and European and regional security order, the AfD and the Left rather emphasize the risks of an assumed World War III through a potential nuclear confrontation between NATO and Russia, as a result of Western provocations towards Russia. One additional result of the left-right crossing of party lines between AfD and the Left is to blame Ukraine for not entering peace talks and therefore threatening any peace process on their side. This is accompanied by blaming the former Ukrainian ambassador to Germany, Andrej Melnyk, as close to fascism, thus not representing German or European values.

Additional criticism relates to framings that the German government too willingly follows Ukrainian demands, which is seen as an indirect threat to German sovereignty. The lack of sovereignty argument is also applied to the US-German relations while seeing Germany involved in this "proxy war" between NATO and Russia. Furthermore, moderate parties are seen as warmongers by supplying weapons and engaging in a confrontation with Russia.

As could have been shown, the classification of threatened objects by the mainstream parties is clear: It is Ukraine's integrity and survival as well as freedom and security in general. This is linked to breaches of international law and violations of the international order. This goes hand in hand with the dangers of destabilizing the EU and Europe. On the one hand through refugee flows and the other hand through direct Russian attacks on democratic systems. The impact of the war on the global food situation is also frequently mentioned by moderate parties, concerning Ukraine's inability to continue its grain export to the global South. In contrast, the AfD also speaks out in favour of security risks for Russia and calls here for more guarantees of security for both Russia and Ukraine. German arms deliveries to Ukraine are seen as an existential threat to German defence. Both the Left and the AfD see the threat to peace and freedom caused by the Russian war of aggression although the threatened object is always Germany and the interests of its citizens.

The exceptional and urgent measures, which are inherent to justifications within Grammars of Security, relate to weapon deliveries to Ukraine. They have been justified against the German foreign policy tradition of civilian power and through a departure from the narrative

of the German Ostpolitik, hence close ties with Russia. The arms delivery debate can be characterized, by an obvious consensus between the mainstream parties on the basic decision to deliver weapons (SPD, Greens, FDP, CDU). However, strong differentiations have been seen related to what types of weapons should be delivered. The differentiation between so-called offensive or defensive weapons has been strongly influencing the German debate.

Representatives of the moderate parties demanded faster action, action further tailored to Ukraine (technology that Ukrainian soldiers could use without long training), while the SPD determined here the need for coordinated action as a preventive measure against further escalations. The Left and AfD rejected all deliveries of weapons systems to Ukraine outright while staging themselves as actual peace parties that saw the arms deliveries as a breach of international law and the unnecessary prolongation of the war. Diplomatic ways to end the war were the main demands of the Left and the AfD, and these should be initiated immediately. It is striking that members of the left emphasize support from Latin American governments, while members of the AfD focus primarily on China as a possible mediator. The moderate parties, however, acknowledge that any diplomatic pathway requires conditions accepted by Ukraine. As concerns financial and economic measures, all parties, except the AfD, are in favour of sanctions against Russia. The left, however, wanted to limit those to Putin and some oligarchs, whereas the AfD perceives sanctions against Russia as risky for the German economy and rejects those. Related to financial support for Ukraine, we could have been showing a similar picture.

Our study has shown that the German discourse on the response to Ukraine has led to a rather unproblematic shift among moderate parties away from those parts of the civil power understanding that were directed against arms deliveries to war zones. However, the discourse has confirmed that other parts of the civil power framing, namely the close ties to allies, were particularly significant for the nature of the support to Ukraine. At the same time, it has been shown that the discourses analysed, were stringently used to exploit one's role as a governing or opposition party. For the AfD and the Left, which communicate confrontationally anyway, this meant considerable stringency in their criticism of the federal government. For the CDU/CSU, on the other hand, this meant walking a tightrope between initial support for the government and yet oppositional criticism. Of particular importance in the German debate are also opposing insecurity tendencies. Here we have seen that the AfD and the Left have framed the actions of the German government itself as a security risk, in terms of Russian escalation and the expansion of the war, as well as the consequences of the war for the German economy.

We expect further insights from our upcoming research steps. In particular, by linking our analysis with opposition and cleavage research and with regard to a more precise differentiation between Twitter and Facebook posts. In terms of content, we will also reflect on the congruence between right-wing and left-wing opposition parties. Within the German debate, there is any way a recent debate on risks stemming from that congruence as a "Querfront" (cross front), which could be seen as a destabilizing moment for the democracy

as well. The war in Ukraine seems to have been a trigger here, which has been little theorised so far.

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