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Boris Kashnikov, Marina Glaser

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Just Wars Theory as a Key Element of Germany's New Sonderweg

Boris Kashnikov

University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

E-mail address: bk463@cam.ac.uk

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4412-8802>

Marina Glaser

HSE University Moscow, Russian Federation

E-mail address: mglaser@hse.ru

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7069-4779>

Abstract

The article traces the evolution and key characteristics of the German Sonderweg – Germany's special path starting from the end of the 19th – the middle of the 20th century. The article considers geopolitical, ideological, and historical reasons for its emergence, transformation, and the specificity of its normative constitution, designed to morally justify the use of military force as an indispensable lever for Germany to achieve its goal of creating a “German Europe.” We develop a hypothesis of a possible remake at the beginning of the 21st century of a new German Sonderweg, focused on creation of the “European Germany,” stemming from liberalism and just war theory. It is demonstrated that Zeitenwende, announced in 2022, facilitated the possible resort to arms and made militant solution of political dilemmas a reality again. The discourse analysis of the German political speeches makes it possible to claim that the political elites in Germany are preconcerted with normative justification of the possible war. The article considers two major lines of transformation of the contemporary just war theory and their possible implication in the German military and defense policy. One of these is the emergence of human rights paradigm of the just war doctrine, another – the growing tendency of the theory to stick to national cultural tradition instead of moral universalism. The combination of the two tendencies may trigger an array of very special and unpredictable normative developments of the military policy in Germany. The further movement alongside the idea of jus ad bellum may provoke specific national perceptions of the justice of the war, which may merge the idea of just war with traditional German realism if not militarism. This tendency may lure Germany into a trap of, what we term, “human rights militarism.” To what extent the trap is viable depends on the normative constitution of the key elements of Sonderweg.

Keywords: just war theory; Germany; Sonderweg; moral fundamentalism; political realism; militarism

I. Introduction

In the first third of the 21st century the security environment at its global and regional levels is undergoing significant changes. This fact forces many political states to search for more viable normative alternatives to the existing approaches in the field of ensuring national security by means of force. The question is about the change of strategic behavior and its predispositions, strategic culture, and the transformation of national military identity itself. This is especially the case with some states of South Asia, Middle East, or South America, as it was defined by B. Buzan and O. Waever.¹ Perhaps it is even more true about contemporary Russia, which provides the most radical example of the general trend.² When it comes to the countries of the “old world,” such transformations towards more militant foreign policy at the first glance are less visible. However, we may witness a certain potential drift towards much more militant foreign policy. These transformations may correspond to both external and internal policy, triggering the political course, which may be generally termed as “justice with the sword.”³ Germany is of particular interest in this regard. The turn to a more militant stance is also underway in this country and this is an issue of significant importance already provoking a widespread discussion in the press.⁴

Germany is not particularly notable for its cultural tradition of pacifism, but the idea of possible radical transformation from non-militant approach to strong security measures has been rejected for a long time. From 1945 to the early 1990s Germany pursued a foreign and security policy characterized by restraint, anti-militarism, rejection of unilateral military actions, and preference for multilateral peaceful solutions. With the reemergence of the conditions of multipolarity,

¹ Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

² The propaganda of the current “special military operation” in Ukraine, unlike the previous Russian wars, widely refers to the principles of the just war theory, including the “protection of rights of the Russian population of Ukraine.”

³ We refer to a seminal work by Ivan Ilyin, *On Resistance to Evil by Force* – Russian religious philosopher of the early 20th century and a vigorous opponent of Tolstoy’s pacifism, whose legacy was recently reclaimed by Vladimir Putin. See Paul Valliere, “Ivan Ilyin: Philosopher of Law, Force and Faith,” in *Law and the Christian Tradition in Modern Russia*, eds. Paul Valliere and Randall A. Poole, 306-327 (London and New York: Routledge, 2022).

⁴ See Anna Sauerbrey, “Germany is Learning a Hard Lesson,” *New York Times*, July 05, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/05/opinion/germany-africa-west.html>.

German foreign and security policy started to adopt much less restrained and soft character for which there are many factual confirmations. For example, there was an unexpected decision promulgated by the coalition of the SPD/ “Greens” to participate in the military conflict in Kosovo in 1990s.⁵ At the same time, Germany did not support the occupation of Iraq by the United States in 2003, did not participate in the intervention in Libya in 2011 and until the events of February 2022 took a rather evasive position towards Russia.⁶ Three days after the start of the Russian “special military operation” on Ukraine, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, in an address to Bundestag, announced a turning point – *Zeitenwende* – in state’s foreign policy and cardinal changes in German strategic thinking as a *fait accompli*.⁷ The idea of change has acquired a complete if not a radical form. Its essence was expressed in very specific measures: the creation of a one-time special defense budget in the amount of 100 billion euros to finance large-scale and long-term arms procurement projects; an increase in the national defense budget to over 2% of GDP, which makes it the biggest defense budget in Europe, and a complete modernization of the air force.⁸

The answer to the question of why it all became possible and how it triggered the German *Zeitenwende* – to the extent to Germany’s rethinking of its national interests; the effect of the *Ampelkoalition*, expressed in its willingness to abandon the German tradition of *keine experimente* (no experimentation); the transformation of political elites, the emergence of new generation of politicians, the crisis of the idea of European nation-states as well as of the idea EU itself, etc. But what is even more fundamental, it has much to do with the very normative background of the military politics. In this article, we focus on one of the related aspects – characterizing the essence of Germany’s departure from pacifism and transition to the just war rational. In a wide range of academic and expert studies, *Zeitenwende* has already been interpreted by Russian academics either as an outright transition to

⁵ Kerry Longhurst, *Germany and the Use of Force* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 6.

⁶ Jacob Eberle and Vladimir Handl, “Ontological Security, Civilian Power, and German Foreign Policy toward Russia,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 16, no. 1 (2020): 41-58.

⁷ Olaf Scholz, “Resolutely Committed to Peace and Security,” *The Federal Government*, February 27, 2022, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/policy-statement-by-olaf-scholz-chancellor-of-the-federal-republic-of-germany-and-member-of-the-german-bundestag-27-february-2022-in-berlin-2008378>.

⁸ See Philip Trunov, “The Line of the FRG in the Military Field: Drift from the Concept of ‘Strategic Restraint?’” *Social Sciences and Modernity* 1 (2023): 83-100.

militarism or as “a departure from pacifism.”⁹ In our opinion, it is more accurate to pin down the German “paradigm change” as a transition to just war theory.

However, which just war theory? There is a diversity of versions. Unlike militarists, who glorify war as an intrinsic moral value, just war theorists seem to be more aware of the indispensable dangers of war and tend to seek moral constraints on the use of force.¹⁰ Nevertheless, as it was emphasized in our previous publications, the just war theory is driven by its unfolding logic, paving the way to full-fledged militarism and should be conceptualized not as a middle ground on the continuum between the extremes of realism and pacifism, but rather as a normative conception, hovering uneasily between pacifism and militarism.¹¹ As a result, the normative leap from pacifism to militarism may stem from gradual cultural developments towards the obsession with implementation of global justice and further on towards just war frenzy. This should be considered when we characterize the most recent normative transformations in Germany. It is true, the recent discourse of the German political elites and the public opinion of the country still stands firmly against militarism, objects to the reemergence of militant adventurism and propagates vigilance to the danger of war. Still, the formation of a new ideological landscape in Germany is also clearly visible, namely, the general trend to outright normative justification of the use of military force, which may trigger new militarism. In March 2022, opening the discussion on the national security strategy of the Federal Republic, Annalena Burbock stated: “When it comes to the questions of war and peace, when it comes to the issues of good and evil, not a single country, even Germany, can be neutral.”¹² Very similar statements of the Russian politicians triggered the 2022 war in Ukraine. In our opinion, this notifies the drift in the direction of just war doctrine if not outright militarism as a political marker of the announced *Zeitenwende*. This marker designates the new special way of

⁹ See Alexander Davydov, “Rearmament of Germany? Militarization without Strategy,” *Valdai Discussion Club*, May 4, 2022, <https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/rearmament-of-germany-militarisation-without-strat/>.

¹⁰ Nicholas Fotion, et al., “Introduction,” in *Moral Constraints of War: Principles and Cases*, eds. Bruno Coppieters, Carl Ceulemans, and Nicholas Fotion, 1-24 (London: Lexington Books, 2020), 12-15.

¹¹ Boris Kashnikov, “What of Jus Post Bellum if Just War Theory Rests on a Category Mistake,” in *Jus Post Bellum*, ed. Patrick Mileham, 146-169 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, Nijhoff, 2020), 151.

¹² Karolin Schäfer, “Ukraine-Krieg: Baerbock kündigt neue Sicherheitspolitik an ‘Kann nicht neutral sein,’” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, March 18, 2022, <https://www.fr.de/politik/ukraine-krieg-annalena-baerbock-sicherheitspolitik-nato-deutschland-russland-putin-news-zr-91420580.html>.

Germany in Europe – *Sonderweg*. The key research question of the article is how the doctrine of just war as a constituent of the new German *Sonderweg* is constructed and to where it may lead.

II. Research methodology

The research brings together three basic methodologies: the philosophical normative analysis; historical-comparative method, which allows to understand the political-historical development of Germany in a diachronic perspective; and the discourse analysis. Discourses may be regarded as means by which the authorities create the logic of the political events, problems and tasks of domestic and foreign policy. In particular, the paper uses N. Fairclough's model of discourse analysis, the essence of which is to trace the "explanatory links" between the use of language (discourse) and social reality (structure).¹³ Focusing on ideas and identities, discourse analysis goes through three stages: the analysis of linguistic, discursive and social practices through description, interpretation and explanation. Description reveals the linguistic features of the statements; interpretation is an analysis of the production, distribution and consumption of statements.

Interpretation can be seen as a complex process with various different aspects. Partly it is a matter of understanding what words or sentences or text mean, understanding what speakers or writers mean [...]. But it is also partly a matter of judgement and evaluation [...].¹⁴

Explanation is an analysis of the sociocognitive effects of what the participants in the discourse say. Linguistic (text) and social practice (context) are connected through discursive practice.

Discourse analysis is applicable at three possible levels: individual (microperspective), where the subject speaks for himself as an individual citizen; institutional (mesoperspective), when the subject speaks as an official or unofficial representative of a political unit, for example, a party (Chancellor, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Defense, etc.); social (macroperspective), where the subject speaks as a citizen of the country, identifying himself with the German society at large. At the same time, it is assumed, that what individual subjects think and

¹³ Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 72; 80; 95.

¹⁴ Norman Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003), 11.

say positively or negatively, correlates with the “statements” of political institutions to which they belong or with which they fully/partially identify themselves. It also correlates with a broader social context. In our case, it is socio-political processes related to *Zeitenwende*, a rethinking by the Germans of their attitude to war, military and defense policy. Through language and concrete linguistic realizations, manifested at the micro, meso and macrolevels, discourse analysis reveals the political and ideological phenomena of German defense and security policy. When it comes to normative analysis of the current transformation, we will have to look on the latest development of the just war theory and put it in conjunction with both the current discourse and political-historical development.

III. The concept of just war

The just war theory, a special area of normative and applied ethics, is well developed and represented in scientific literature. However, it is rather diverse. The limited space of this article does not allow to expand on all trends and paradigms of the theory. But it is necessary to pay attention to at least the two most recent developments, which are not only the most telling, but which may also provide the most cardinal driving force for the major normative transformations of German military policy. First, there is an important general major shift of paradigms taking place in the just war theory. The traditional paradigm, represented by M. Walzer,¹⁵ the so-called *sovereignty paradigm* is rapidly substituted by what is called *human rights paradigm*, represented by J. McMahan and others.¹⁶ The former insists on national self-defense as the only conceivable criterion of the justice of the war. The latter insists on the protection of human rights all over the world as the true justice of the war. Accordingly, whilst the second paradigm triggers humanitarian intervention, the first more or less corresponds to the UN Charter, which does not presuppose any other justification for war except national self-defense and which may be already regarded as a relic of the past. Correspondingly, there is a threat of the returning militarism in the sheep's skin of humanitarianism. This transformation obviously has its cost, as Claude puts it:

¹⁵ Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustration* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

¹⁶ Jeff McMahan, *Killing in War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009); Brian Orend, *The Morality of War* (New York: Broadview Press, 2006); Steven Lee, *Ethics and War: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

The world no longer seriously purports to accept the view that peace is unconditionally a higher value than justice. We have returned to the medieval view that it is permissible and perhaps desirable and, conceivably, even mandatory – to fight to promote justice, broadly conceived. Evil ought to be overturned, and the good ought to be achieved by force if necessary.¹⁷

Despite the fact that the multidimensional conceptions of the just war of the “traditionalists-Walzerians” and the “revisionists-McMahanians” are extremely different in terms of moral criteria that they provide to identify the core of a just war, they all share a common approach: a just war is necessitated by a moral fundamentalism of sorts. The idea of morality – immaculate, incorrigible and unchangeable in peacetime and in wartime is behind it. However, it has been argued, although the formal principles of the just war theory may be the same, moral values behind them may differ significantly through cultures and times. Even if the same principles are applied, they are applying by the bearers of different foundational values and thus the question tends to arise: which culture should provide universal moral standards, to normatively unlock the formal principles of the just war theory? There are allegations that the values promoted by the just war theory are far from being universal, but are still western liberal values of the contemporary European nations in disguise. This may trigger not only the metaethical dispute on universality of values, but what is even worse, can create a new ground for hostilities – the battle of narratives. Therefore, in recent years, a number of researchers abandoned doubtful moral fundamentalism as the foundation for the just war theory and switched to “non-fundamentalist” approach.¹⁸

Its supporters argue that moral fundamentalism in matters of war and peace has no sufficient foundation, and when practically applied, proves to be useless if not harmful and dragging into absolute war. In contrast to fundamentalism, these researchers state that the international law of military conflicts can become a normative force in its own right and can acquire normative power, only if it is based on

¹⁷ Inis L. Claude, Jr, “Just War: Doctrines and Institutions,” *Political Science Quarterly* 95, no. 1 (1980): 94.

¹⁸ Allen Buchanan, *Beyond Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Seumas Miller, *Just War Theory and Counterterrorism* (New York and London: Routledge, 2013); Daniel Statman, *War by Agreement: A Contractarian Ethics of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Uwe Steinhoff, *Self-Defense, Necessity and Punishment: A Philosophical Analysis* (New York and London: Routledge, 2020).

shared legal, religious and cultural foundations, and not on doubtful universalism. We should not necessarily understand this approach as an exercise in cultural relativism. Rather we should refer to it as a case of overlapping consensus – the normative methodology widely implemented by John Rawls and displayed in contemporary international law.¹⁹ The writings of scholars, belonging to this trend also contain an explanation of why the moral rules applied in peacetime cannot be used in wartime or during an armed conflict, as well as serve as a basis for engaging into a conflict. The “non-fundamentalist” approach to just war shows that modern war cannot stem from abstract justice or from presenting one’s own moral prejudice as the summit of law and morality. This promising approach also comes with its price. The drawback of this approach is the possibility of falling into resentful traditionalism.

These two trends within just war theory are of particular importance, when it comes to understanding the possible lines of development of the German normative conception of military policy. In the long run, due to the very logic of what we termed as human rights paradigm, this policy may adopt a more traditional “crusade like” direction, reminding of the traditional medieval just war paradigm of Augustine and Aquinas. If the second tendency gains ground, it may merge for good or ill with the German cultural tradition instead of universalistic ethics. What is called particular German *Sonderweg* may be stemming in the way of paradox from recent developments within just war theory and these particular tendencies. Just war approach has its dangers as well as normative advantages, when it comes to peace and security. Global human rights are worth fighting for, but not at the expense of plunging into the hell of war. Universal ethics is to be respected, but perhaps the domestic traditions and cultural background should be taken into account. Again, which exactly the tradition and cultural background? Which interpretation of the just war theory will gain ground in German policy is hard to predict. Germany as well as many other countries is on the crossroad.

IV. The essence and evolution of *Sonderweg*

In the mid-1950s Ludwig Dehio, exploring the place of Germany in world politics of the 20th century defined it as “*Halbhegemonie*” – “semi-hegemony” as the legacy of the former empire.²⁰ Hans Kundnan,

¹⁹ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

²⁰ Ludwig Dehio, *Germany and World Politics in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Norton, 1959), 15.

draws attention to the “German question” as the problem of Germany’s overcoming its “semi-hegemonic status”: in the period from 1871 to 1945.

It was not powerful enough to impose its will on the continent; but it was powerful enough to be perceived as a threat by other powers. Its size and location in the very center of Europe – the so-called *Mittellage* – made it inherently destabilizing. This, in essence, was what became known as the “German question.”²¹

Relying on military force and nationalism, Germany tried to resolve this issue by establishing its full hegemony in Europe during the two world wars. The key goal of these endeavors was to create a “German Europe.” Kudnani believes that during the two World Wars, “German foreign policy was informed by a complex interaction between structural factors of ‘semi-hegemony’ and what might be called ideological factors of ‘nationalism.’”²² Currently, German nationalism was revealing three features: authoritarianism of the political regime; sociological legitimacy of the social imperialism, created by the Germans during the Third Reich; and the phenomenon of *Sonderweg*, the ideology of the “special way,” forged by German intellectuals to pin down the differences between German political culture and political culture of the rest of the West. All in all, it was indicating the German opposition to the Anglo-American liberal-democratic values. The origins of the thesis of a special historical and political development of Germany (*Sonderwegsthese*) can be found as early as the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries, for instance, in the discussion on the dissimilarity of German classical philosophy and the philosophy of the French Revolution.²³ By the end of the 19th – the beginning of the 20th century it seemed evident that authoritarianism, the blocking of parliamentarism, reforms from above as a substitute for the revolution, the adherence to the bureaucratic tradition, the rise of welfare state and the longevity of paternalism gave weighty arguments to the claim of gross dissimilarity of the two.²⁴ Bismarck’s historic mission of creating the new German

²¹ Hans Kudnani, *The Paradox of German Power* (London: Hurst Company, 2014), 8.

²² *Ibid.*, 20.

²³ Alexei Kruglov, “Kant as a German Theorist of the French Revolution: The Emergence of Dogma in Marxist-Leninist Philosophy,” *Kant’s Collection* 40, no. 3 (2021): 63-92.

²⁴ Jürgen Kocka, “German History before Hitler: The Debate about the German *Sonderweg*,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 1 (1988): 13.

Empire “seemed to be to forge a new synthesis of culture and force, authority and freedom, tradition and modernity, to which the future belongs.”²⁵ Ultimately, Bismarck’s mission became the mission of Germany itself in its European policy, its *Sonderweg*, the mission of creating a “German Europe.” World War I, the defeat of Germany and the revolution of 1918-1919 changed the political situation, but the core of the *Sonderweg*, its traditional, undemocratic, pre-modern mental orientations, retained great power over the minds of ordinary burghers, political, military and business elites, exerting huge influence on domestic and foreign policy, which became one of the important reasons for the collapse of Weimar with its ideals of democracy and liberalism. Germany viewed military force as a decisive tool for the policy of ensuring national security, economic development and welfare state.

V. Overcoming the *Sonderweg*

After 1945 West Germany faced the task of overcoming *Sonderweg* and sticking to the Western *Normalweg*. Similar processes took place in another part of Germany – the GDR, during the regime of V. Ulbricht, later E. Honecker. The main difference was that in western Germany, the “Allied Control Council,” taking into account the lessons of the fall of Weimar, emphasized the values of democracy and liberalism in German society, and thus creating a platform for the cohesion of liberal political elites. It was a process of renouncing of the integral part of national and political identity as a prerequisite for entering the Western world. In the GDR, a similar process of change was carried out under the control of USSR on the basis of emphasizing the political identity of Germans as fighters for socialism. Socialism itself should be regarded as the alternative to liberal version of modernity. The common feature for both FRG and the GDR ideological arrangements was the condemnation of militarism. Simultaneously the “Bonn Republic” heading to the West was not just to implement the bygone Weimar liberalism, but to surpass it in such an innovative manner, so that it would never repeat its plight. In such a way the new social practices of the new elite groups were forged and new norms and values were coined. The Constitution of the FRG had a trademark of a liberal legitimate social state, with some minor and reasonable exemptions. It did not, for example, provide the collective right of national referendum, which

²⁵ Andreas Wirsching, “Bismarck und das Problem eines deutschen ‘Sonderwegs,’” *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, March 20, 2015, <https://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/202981/bismarck-und-das-problem-eines-deutschen-sonderwegs/>.

significantly reduced the perspectives of popular democracy, thus forcing the public to rely on the decision making of elected political elites or to rely on collecting signatures and applying to the good will of the elites, promoting popular political initiatives. The course of the unified Germany seemed to be a success: the Germans officially overcame their midterm *Sonderweg* in 1990 by reunification and restoration of the German national state and finally “arrived in the West,” whatever it could mean. In addition to the unification of Germany, there was an elite change, which would be more appropriate to call not so much a change, but a circulation-like transfer.²⁶ The new Berlin Republic set new goals and established new values for political elites. “The normative integration of elites is in many ways more important for the formation of political views than East German socialization.”²⁷

VI. Formation of a new *Sonderweg*

Seemingly, soon after the war, the FRG has managed to create a window-dressing for democracy, which happened to be attractive to the GDR:

In the minds of German politicians, experts and media moguls formed after the unification of Germany, there is confidence that the model of the internal political functioning of Germany is an example of a modern democratic state.²⁸

Western liberal-democratic values have become part and parcel of the political climate of Germany, turning it into a beacon of liberal ideas and practices. To no small extent the success of democratic transition and unification was ensured by the effectiveness of German economic and social policy. The national context, “Rhenish capitalism,” differs from classical Anglo-American principle of coordinating corporate goals, directly influenced the conducting of business, which still works perfectly well as an “established habit.”²⁹ American and British companies are more

²⁶ Ursula Hoffmann-Lange, “Elites in Germany: Historical Changes and New Challenges,” *Power and Elites* 4 (2017): 43.

²⁷ Lars Vogel, “(Ostdeutsche) Politische Eliten zwischen Integration und Repräsentation,” in *Ostdeutsche Eliten: Trume, Wirklichkeiten und Perspektiven* (Berlin: Deutsche Gesellschaft e.V., 2004), 52.

²⁸ Andrey Bagay, “Russian-German Relations ‘after the Crimea’: From the ‘Partnership for Modernization’ to the Degradation of Dialogue Formats,” *Bulletin of St. Petersburg University. International Relationships* 3 (2019): 363.

²⁹ Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie* (Frankfurt am

focused on common business performance criteria and the financial market. The referents of the strategies of German companies are the production, quality and promotion of their products. These strategies are also supported by the German corporate finance model: a home banking system, less dependence on financial and capital markets. The political elites of Germany constantly present “*Modell Deutschland*” as the most valid model, to be imitated by other European partners.³⁰

With the surge of moralistic terrorism at high tide of migration crisis in 2015, Germany threw all its forces into creating a new trend in the public consciousness not only of its country, but also of the EU, factually black-mailing the public by appealing to the imperative of the necessity to comply with the highest standards of human security at the expense of rights and freedoms. This provoked the crisis of solidarity, exacerbated disagreements between opponents and supporters of multicultural Europe, but Germany lobbied the conclusion of a migration agreement between European Union and Turkey.³¹ As to climate and energy policy, Germany has embarked on the path of European leadership, proclaiming back in 1970s *Energiewende*. Its key component was the elimination by 2000 of nuclear power plants, provided by the famous “Atomic Consensus” reached by the federal government and the energy concerns of Germany.³² The decarbonization of the economy and the promotion of the “green” agenda is enshrined in the “Law on Renewable Energy Sources” (“*Erneuerbare-Energien-Gesetz*” – EEG) of 2000, continued in its updates, as well as programs for abandoning gas and coal.³³ Having signed an agreement with the United States on partnership in the field of climate and energy, Germany positioned itself not only as a European, but also as a world leader, leading the movement of the world economy towards carbon neutrality.³⁴ In the government of O. Scholz according to the Focus

Main: Zweitausendeins, 2005), 17.

³⁰ Sergio Pistone, “The Paradox of German Power,” *The Federalist*, 2015, <https://www.thefederalist.eu/site/index.php/en/notes/2192-the-paradox-of-german-power>.

³¹ “EU-Turkey-Statement,” *European Council*, March 18, 2016, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/de/press/press-releases/2016/03/18-eu-turkey-statement/>.

³² “Vereinbarung zwischen der Bundesregierung und den Energieversorgungsunternehmen vom 14 Juni 2000,” *Das Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, nukleare Sicherheit und Verbraucherschutz* (BMUV), June 14, 2000, <https://www.bmuv.de/download/vereinbarung-zwischen-der-bundesregierung-und-den-energieversorgungsunternehmen-vom-14-juni-2000>.

³³ “Das Erneuerbare-Energien-Gesetz,” *Das Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Klimaschutz*, <https://www.erneuerbare-energien.de/EE/Redaktion/DE/Dossier/eeg.html?docId=5800e547-778e-4aaf-afc0-bf6d34b3f39c>.

³⁴ “Fact Sheet: U.S.-Germany Climate and Energy Partnership,” *The White House*, July 15, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/07/15/fact-sheet-u-s-germany-climate-and-energy-partnership/>.

newspaper, “the power over climate policy, up to heating systems, is in the hands of eco-missionaries.”³⁵ Another important point is the phenomenon of the homogeneity of the German political and business elites, which was revealed by M. Hartmann. The composition of political elite tends to reflect the composition of economic elite and the attitude of the members of both elites towards the issues of social justice, taxes and allocation of resources understandably becomes more and more homogeneous. Still, there are not so many exceedingly rich people in the political elite of Germany than, say, in the United States.³⁶ This phenomenon allows the ruling circles in Germany, even better than in the US, to gradually ideologize society, turning it into a moralized instrument of their policy.

We are about to face a new incarnation of German messianism, the hasty formation of a new *Sonderweg*, less integrated with coercion, more with Kantian categorical imperative, but capable of both. As a decisive tool for security policy, economic development and the construction of a welfare state, the FRG does not as much stick to military force as to moralizing about the usage of force. The new modern, democratic, liberal, moralistic orientation of the elites and society, which replaced the pre-modern and authoritarian moralism goes out of its way to form a new disciplinary power. Thanks to its economic success, Germany has regained the status of a new European “semi-hegemon,” which is accompanied by “renewed sense of a ‘German mission’ – which restarts questioning about Germany’s relationship with the West.”³⁷ In his speeches during his recent visits to European capitals, O. Scholz constantly emphasized the special role of Germany in the events taking place in Europe: in the speech at the Charles University of Prague, he emphasized that Germany’s historic decisions brought the EU closer to realizing

[...] of its place in the history and geography of this continent and it acts strongly and cohesively around the world. Germany, as a country at the heart of the continent, will do everything in its power to bring together East and West, North and South in Europe [...]³⁸

³⁵ Ulrich Reitz, “Mit Öko-Missionaren hebeln die Grünen das Macht-Gleichgewicht einfach aus,” *Focus online*, April 25, 2023, https://www.focus.de/politik/analyse-von-ulrich-reitz-mit-oeko-missionaren-hebeln-die-gruenen-das-macht-gleichgewicht-einfach-aus_id_191994253.html.

³⁶ Michael Hartmann, “Die deutsche Elite wird immer homogener,” interview by Leonie Schlick, *Capital*, April 14, 2019, <https://www.capital.de/wirtschaft-politik/die-deutsche-elite-wird-immer-homogener>.

³⁷ Kundnani, 6.

³⁸ Olaf Scholz, “Speech by Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz at the Charles University in Prague,” *The Federal Government*, August 29, 2022, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/>

which requires changing the principle of foreign policy and defense decision-making in the EU. In an interview to the Spanish newspaper *El País* he said that Germany takes its responsibility for Europe “very seriously.”³⁹ In this *Sonderweg*, Germany, is gradually overcoming the limitations of its post-war strategic culture and is grasping the idea of no alternative to the return of moralistic violence to the political sphere. From the language of pacifism and non-usage of military force, it has moved to the language of just war, the specificity of which still needs to be determined.

VII. The just war discourse in Germany and moral fundamentalism

We have formed a paradigmatic corpus of samples of the German just war discourse from official statements, speeches, interviews of Chancellor O. Scholz, A. Baerbock, B. Pistorius, M.-A. Strack-Zimmermann, M. Roth and a number of other German politicians, from the materials of websites and other mass media, audio-visual sources, including meetings of the Bundestag in the period from February 27, 2022 to May 2023. They are arranged not in chronological order, but in the order of achieving analytical goals. Speeches and texts are presented in German and English, they are intended for domestic and international audiences. We may now follow its three stages: description, interpretation and reproduction, within three levels of each.

a. Description (linguistic practice): at the *individual* level, politicians describe the need for change with the words “disaster,” “terrible war,” “aggressive war,” “the price of blood,” “imperialist dream,” “a gun held to the temple.” At the *institutional* level, politicians claim that there is a connection between war and justice, they use strong contrasting pairs – “peace” and “war,” negotiations on a “just peace” in Ukraine; principles of a “just peace,” military economics (*Kriegswirtschaft*). At the *social level*: “We, Germans, are now the strongest supporters of Ukraine in continental Europe and we will remain so.” “We, Germans, support Ukraine and its citizens in their struggle for freedom, unity and justice.”

b. Interpretation (discursive practice) reveals a typically German political

news/scholz-speech-prague-charles-university-2080752.

³⁹ Elena G. Sevillano, “Olaf Scholz: ‘Hay que recortar los beneficios excesivos y usar el dinero para bajar el precio de la energía,’” *El País*, October 5, 2020. <https://elpais.com/internacional/2022-10-05/olaf-scholz-hay-que-recortar-los-beneficios-excesivos-y-usar-el-dinero-para-bajar-el-precio-de-la-energia.html>.

vocabulary related to the issues of war, armed conflicts, security, the duty of the state to stick to universal morality in situations of disaster and misfortune, and in relation to Russia, known as *Putinversteh*er – understanding Putin, *Russlandversteh*er – understanding Russia. At the *individual* level, politicians refer to “good,” “evil,” “shock.” At the *institutional* level they connect their speeches with the principles of international law, the values of the European Union – “values are necessary for the continued existence of the EU,” *Wertepartner* – “a partner in values,” “real politics in the 21st century does not mean putting values aside;” they do not approve of the use of violence and are in favor of peace; “to annex a piece of a neighboring state by force is unacceptable.” But Germany stands for “justice” without compromise in a “cruel war” in which “Germany cannot be neutral.” It is against “imposed peace and is for a ‘just agreement.’” Germany must stay “in agreement and in close cooperation with the allies” and carry out “supplies of weapons,” it “breaks the dogma about the non-delivery of weapons to war zones.” “We will not sit idly and watch how women, men and children are killed,” “If you don’t help people who are fighting for their lives [...] you are at least as much guilty, maybe even more.” At the same time, many politicians position themselves as pragmatists – “ideology has given way to pragmatism. We must take this as a basis.” They see in what is happening (Russia has always been an “unreliable partner and an aggressor”), not only a pattern, but also a political advantage in what they themselves perceive as a disaster: “Germany will take on special responsibility in terms of building up artillery and air defense potential of Ukraine.” At *social* level: “Germany is the backbone of the Western world;” “we have regained our strength;” “we accept the challenge;” Germany has undergone fundamental changes in its attitude to military issues, the war on Ukraine “breathed new life into the solidarity” of Europe.

Some signs of the formation in Germany of a new “language of the historical turn” (*Wendesprache*), which took place in the 1990s in the period of reunification are noteworthy. Among these signs is the emergence of *Schlagwort* (slogan words), sharp political formulas that are strategic in nature, which in a concise form reflect one’s point of view.⁴⁰ Stalisha Kataeva shows that according to the semantic classification of F. Hermanns, “words-slogans” are divided into positive “words-banners” and negative “words-stigmas,” they pursue the achievement of promot-

⁴⁰ Stalisha Kataeva, “German Political Language: Main Directions and Trends of Development (Based on Political Vocabulary)” (PhD diss., Moscow State Pedagogical University, 2009); Fritz Hermanns, *Schlüssel, Schlag- und Fahnenwörter* (Heidelberg and Mannheim: University of Mannheim, 1994).

ed goals and can, among other tasks, conceptually express the “spirit of the time.” It can be assumed that such words as “Wertepartner,” “Zeitenwende,” “Putinverstehet,” “Russlandverstehet” are “slogan words.”

c. Explanation (reproduction practice) of reproduction in social effects, of what politicians state. At the *individual* level, they position themselves as peaceful, tolerant people, they tend “to trust the government,” try to avoid conflicts in world politics. At the *institutional* level, they present their initiatives and their political institutions as peaceful, but capable of defending themselves. War in general is illegitimate, but a just war makes an exception: “We help those who have been attacked, we supply them with weapons, ensuring the security of at least the EU.” Europe owes its prosperity to trade, not war, but: “European rules can be changed – in a very short time, if necessary, by means of a new European peacekeeping mission.” The border between good and evil runs between the EU, which is “open to all European peoples who share our values,” where “more than 500 million free citizens enjoy equal rights.” It makes it different to authoritarian regimes with “totalitarian arrangements,” of which Russia is the current incarnation. Germany is not fighting against Russians, but against political regimes such as “Putin’s,” for “correct European standpoints.” Germany, like Europe, “demonstrated its great heart and great solidarity” to the victim of aggression. At *social* level, politicians reproduce the official image of Germany as a peace-loving country, remembering its past and responsible for the security of the EU. “This turning point should force European politics to build bridges, not dig trenches,” however, “abstract reasoning will not help us. Germany must keep up with the times.” Germany will assume defense responsibility when we lead the rapid countermeasures in 2025, “we, in Germany, will invest heavily in our air defense.” The picture drawn by politicians is that the support for military actions and participation in them is not a specific German response to the challenges of the time, but is caused by an emergency situation from which Germany cannot stay away and a fair resolution of which is only possible by military means.

Discourses at the micro and meso levels are complemented by discourses at the macro level and are directly correlated with social practice, where words are followed by deeds. In our case, this is manifested in a series of events with interviewed politicians meetings citizens, for example at the so called, *Bürgerdialog* (“Civil Dialogue” by O. Scholz, etc.). Actions may also reach institutional and social level, for example, decisions on concluding contracts with *Rheinmetall*, concern with resuming production of the additional amounts of ammunition, general reform of *Bundeswehr*, etc. We believe that the just war thinking of the

ruling political elite of Germany develops in the framework of the human rights paradigm of the just war theory, mentioned above. Germany insists on the protection of human rights around the world as the true justice of the war. It is interesting to admit that from *Sonderweg* traditional perspective it is not just war, but realism (*realpolitik*) (merging with militarism), which is more embedded in the intellectual tradition of Germany. Just to note the line of succession from Clausewitz to Nietzsche, from Nietzsche to Weber and Sombart and from Sombart to paradigmatic realism of Hans Morgenthau (although Morgenthau is an American scientist, he was born in Germany and was influenced by the German intellectual tradition). On the contrary, the just war theory has no noticeable roots in the German intellectual tradition and is mainly Anglo-American ethical theory. This circumstance may play a vital role, reconsidering the essence and possible evolution of *Sonderweg*. Given the general trend of the development of the just war theory from universalism to cultural relativism and bordering at times with the idea of liberal crusade, as noted above, it can be assumed that *Sonderweg* in its *specific German* context can constitute itself as a kind of special concept of the just war theory, which will be much closer to traditional German realism than to the universalistic Anglo-American just war theory. Widely applying the language of just war in constructing social reality and not sufficiently considering the waning postwar maxim, that there can be no military solution to the contemporary political problems, can lead to dangerous consequences. Safransky rightfully holds, that Germany on its path to adolescence needs to move from the “ethics of convictions” to the “ethics of responsibility.”⁴¹

VIII. Conclusion

The announcement of *Zeitenwende* as a German response to the challenge of the time, in our opinion, was triggered by structural factors determining Germany’s foreign policy – the return to the status of a European “semi-hegemon.” The political and ideological factors accompanying this status – a stable plebiscite democracy, a developed parliamentary culture, supplemented by the mentality of occupied power, propelled a new version of Germany’s “special way.” We have to consider G. Rohrmoser’s idea that “the national interest of Germany consists [...]

⁴¹ Rüdiger Safranski, “The Germans Have not Matured yet,” interview by Martin Helg, *NZZ magazin*, November 8, 2015, <https://magazin.nzz.ch/gesellschaft/ruediger-safranski-deutschen-sind-in-pubertaet-ld.151820?reduced=true>.

in self-affirmation.”⁴² In fact, this is a *resentiment*, a reaction to endless moralism of Western countries towards the Germans. Today, Germany’s ruling elite seems to be sincerely pursuing its value-based hope that a German role model can really encourage other countries to “overcome the era of *Zeitenwende*.”⁴³ The ideology of German special way is to project moral fundamentalism into world politics, in a way that excludes neutrality towards everything that confronts conservative-traditionalist thinking. This can be understood as an attempt to once again create a “German Europe,” but in such a way as to identify the national interests with the supranational interests of the EU, avoiding any conflict with the Union and considering the prospects of becoming the recognized leader of the “European Germany.” To achieve this goal, in addition to what Germany already has, it is *also* necessary to change its military policy and strategic culture, while mooring it to the principles of Western democracy and even surpassing them in a number of parameters. The instrument of such a change for Germany is the implementation of the idea of building up its military power, targeted at forceful, but morally justified solution of military conflicts – a *just* war of sorts. It is important that the just war theory is becoming a major foundation for the modern normative concept of security, not only in Germany, but all over Europe. In this role, the concept of just war has already substituted political realism, which previously reigned supreme as a normative conception of warfare. The remaining problem, left to be settled, is to what extent Germany will not be lured into the traps related to two major tendencies of the just war theory, mentioned above, in its current development. Namely, will it be able to stick to global protection of human rights without falling into human rights militarism and will it be able to follow its own cultural tradition of normative conceptualization of warfare without falling into traditional realism and militarism? These are the two major challenges for the future developments in terms of new *Sonderweg*.

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⁴² Günter Rormozer, and Anatolii A. Frenkin, *New Conservatism: Challenge for Russia* (Moscow: RAN Institute of Philosophy, 1996), 83.

⁴³ Ulrich Reitz, “Scholz und Baerbock erleiden mit ihrer Moralpolitik die dritte Pleite,” *Focus Online*, April 18, 2023, https://www.focus.de/politik/meinung/kommentar-von-ulrich-reitz-scholz-und-baerbock-erleiden-mit-ihrer-moralpolitik-die-dritte-pleite_id_191449631.html.

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