To Procure or Not Procure: The German Parliamentary Debates on Armed Military Drone Policy

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List of Abbreviations

AfD	Alternative for Germany
AFRICOM	United States Africa Command
AMALE	Armed medium altitude long endurance
AMISON	African Union Mission in Somalia
BIJ	Bureau of Investigative Journalism
CA	Content analysis
CDA	Critical discourse analysis
CDU	Christian Democratic Union
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CSU	Christian Social Union
CWC	Chemical Weapons Convention
EU	European Union
EUTM	EU Training Mission
FCAS	Future Combat Air System
FDP	Free Democratic Party
FGG	Federal Government of Germany
GDP	Gross domestic product
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GWOT	Global War on Terror
IED	Improvised explosive device
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IR	International Relations
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISIL	The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISR	Intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance
ISTAR	Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, and target acquisition
LAWS	Lethal autonomous weapon system
MALE	Medium altitude long endurance
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MOD	Ministry of Defense
MP	Member of Parliament
MTCR	Missile Technology Control Regime
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PG	Parliamentary group
R&D	Research and development
SED	Socialist Unity Party of Germany
SPD	Social Democratic Party
Sub-RQ	Sub-research question
UAV	Unmanned aerial vehicle
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations Organization
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
US	United States
WW	World War

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1 Introducing the German Drone Controversy

Armed military drones are continuously diffusing worldwide. Their vast proliferation has been described as "the most important weapons development since the atomic bomb".[1] Russia and Ukraine are now fighting "the first full-scale drone war" with an unprecedented scale and significance of this technology.[2] Having emerged in the 2000s, many Western countries had already decided to procure these systems by the mid-2010s. In Germany, however, this did not happen. Instead, the armament of military drones has been one of the most controversial and disputed security policy decisions of the past decade. In 2012, the Defense Minister and the Bundeswehr publicly stated that they wanted to arm German military drones. But this request was met with strong opposition inside and outside of parliament. The policy-process was stuck. For no less than an entire decade, there was no evident progress. Eventually, in 2018, about ten years after leasing the first unarmed systems, the result was to lease five "armable" drones. The press spoke of nothing less than the "fall of a taboo".[3] How do we make sense of this? *How did the acquisition and use of armed military drones by Germany emerge as a political option in the German parliamentary debates from January 2009 to December 2018*? To answer this research question, this dissertation takes a discourse-analytical approach to examine the parliamentary drone debates, drawing on over 500 text documents from the German Bundestag. It shows that incremental changes occurred in the policy discourse over time.

As a research procedure, I traced how the German parliamentary debate on military drones developed over time by conducting a qualitative in-depth analysis of the debate content, examining the represented meanings-in-use of drone warfare, the articulated policy options, and the discursive constructions of Germany's role in the world. In an epilogue, I briefly describe the developments after the main observation period; from January 2019 until the fall of 2021, when the newly elected government decided to allow drone armament and strikes under certain conditions. The paper argues that in the parliamentary debate, armed drones, though complex and politicized, gradually became a viable political option as their meanings evolved through a shifting discourse, the normalization of drone technology, and changing political dynamics.

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1 Peter W. Singer, *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 10.

2 Isabelle Khurshudyan, Mary Ilyushina, and Kostiantyn Khudov, "Russia and Ukraine Are Fighting the First Full-Scale Drone War," *The Washington Post*, December 2, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/12/02/drones-russia-ukraine-air-war/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

3 Werner Sonne, "Kampfdrohnen aus Israel - Tabubruch durch die Hintertür," *Cicero*, June 5, 2018, https://www.cicero.de/aussenpolitik/kampfdrohne-israel-deutschland-militaer-bundestag.

Drones are "aircraft that are remotely piloted via communication links with a distant command station," carrying "cameras and other surveillance equipment that allow their controllers to monitor targets in real time," and possibly armament for attacking "targets such as a specific vehicle or a room within a building."[4] The dissertation focuses on military platforms of the so-called MALE (medium altitude long endurance) category, such as the Israeli Heron or the American Predator models. They are large enough to be heavily armed (AMALE-drones), for example with missiles or laser-guided bombs. This is the type at issue in the German debate.

Given the increasing availability of remotely piloted weapon systems and the widespread belief in their operational utility, their proliferation has been steadily advancing.[5] Since the early 2000s, a handful of states have used large, armed military drones against non-state actors in counterinsurgency missions, particularly in the Global War on Terror (GWOT). For about two decades, this was their main scenario both in practice and in debates. Currently, we are witnessing an even wider range of lethal drone use, also including smaller and commercial platforms, in interstate wars (e.g., between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Russia and Ukraine, Iran and Israel) and by non-state actors (e.g., Houthi rebels).[6] These trends further increase their importance.

Since their emergence in the 2000s, policymakers, military officials, civil society agents, and academics have vividly discussed the legality of United States (US) drones strikes for targeted killing of terrorist suspects, the security implications of a potential arms race, and the diminishing role of humans in combat.[7] Not all states have responded enthusiastically to the rise of armed military drones. One of these states was Germany. In October 2009, Germany first leased large, unarmed Heron 1 military drones.[8] As a result, public interest in the issue of military drones increased.[9] One could have expected Germany to get armed drones in the mid-2010s, when they became more widely available.[10] After all, armed drones continued to diffuse worldwide

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4 James I. Walsh, "The Rise of Targeted Killing," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41, no. 1-2 (2018): 4.

5 The number of states with armed military drones rose from four in 2010 to thirty-eight in 2020 (New America Foundation, "Introduction: How We Became a World of Drones," *New America Foundation*, 2023, https://www.newamerica.org/future-security/reports/world-drones/introduction-how-we-became-a-world-of-drones/.).

6 Ariel Cohen, "Are Drones Putting Global Peace In Danger?," *Forbes*, February 29, 2024, https://www.forbes.com/sites/arielcohen/2024/02/29/are-drones-putting-global-peace-in-danger/.

7 See among others, Sarah E. Kreps, *Drones: What Everyone Needs to Know*, 1st ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). Michael J. Boyle, "The Legal and Ethical Implications of Drone Warfare," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 19, no. 2 (2015). John Kaag and Sarah Kreps, *Drone Warfare: War and Conflict in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014).

8 Christian Dewitz, "Aufklärungsdrohne Heron 1 länger im Bundeswehreinsatz?," *Bundeswehr-Journal*, September 26, 2014, https://www.bundeswehr-journal.de/2014/aufklaerungsdrohne-heron-1-laenger-im-bundeswehreinsatz/.

9 Indicated for example by the rising number of German Google searches (see Appendix 1, Figure A)

10 Pieter D. Wezeman et al., "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2018," in *SIPRI Fact Sheet* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2019), 10.

and among German allies. The US has been conducting drone strikes since 2001. The United Kingdom (UK) armed their drones in 2008, Italy requested armament in 2011, and in 2017, France announced that it would be arming its systems.[11] German defense ministers and the armed forces also wanted armed drones.[12] Moreover, despite the inefficiencies in the German procurement of major military systems, the state still had the economic and organizational means to acquire AMALE-drones.[13] There were also events which could have acted as triggers for acquisition. In September 2009, German Colonel Klein mistakenly ordered an aerial attack on trucks ("Kunduz bombing"), due to an error in reconnaissance of the manned airplanes. Causing approximately one hundred civilian casualties, it was the deadliest single attack in Bundeswehr history at that point. In April 2010, three German soldiers died during a patrol in Afghanistan ("Good Friday Battle"), surprised by an ambush attack. Both events could have been reasons for getting armed drones; to improve armed aerial surveillance and avoid such tragedies in the future (see Appendix 2, "Chronology of Drone-Related Events", Table 16).

Despite all these factors, resistance to drone armament remained incredibly strong in Germany. Years passed, but the acquisition did not happen. The political debate provides insights into why. There were numerous heated discussions at the highest political levels, such as in the national parliament, the German Bundestag, due to clashing views. The Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the Christian Social Union (CSU), and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) supported an armament, as did the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and the armed forces. In contrast, the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Alliance 90/The Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen), and the Left Party (Die Linke), as well as civil society, strongly opposed it. Concerns about the incompatibility of drone strikes with international law, a US-style drone use for targeted killing, an unfair remote operation of strikes on human targets, and the potential radicalization of the local population prevailed. These concerns posed high discursive obstacles. They long dominated the debate and left little room for pro-armament arguments. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), such as Amnesty International, the European Forum on Armed Drones, and the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, which campaigned against the proliferation and use of armed drones, supported these concerns. The daunting prospect of emerging lethal autonomous

11 Interview with Peter Singer in: Patrick Ticker, "Every Country Will Have Armed Drones Within 10 Years," *Defense One*, May 6, 2014, http://www.defenseone.com/technology/2014/05/every-country-will-have-armed-drones-within-ten-years/83878/; Johanna Polle, "MALE-Drone Proliferation in Europe: Assessing the Status Quo Regarding Acquisition, Research and Development, and Employment," in *IFAR Working Paper* (Hamburg: The Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy, 2018).

12 For a list of German Ministers of Defense and Ministers of Foreign Affairs 2009–2018 see Appendix 2, Table 17.

13 On these inefficiencies see Michael Brzoska, "Sources of Inefficiency in the Procurement of Major Weapon Systems. Estimates for the German Case," *The Economics of Peace and Security Journal* 19, no. 1 (2024).

weapon systems (LAWS) stressed the urgent need for political action and legal regulation further.[14] For years, it seemed impossible that Germany would acquire armed military drones.

The parliament discussed armed drones extensively for years, but without coming to a clear decision, neither for nor against these systems. What followed was a very long and messy policy-process. Only in the summer of 2018 there was progress, about ten years after leasing the first unarmed MALE-drones in 2009. The CDU/CSU-SPD government compromised on leasing (not buying) five "armable" (not armed) drones.[15] Although this step was not yet as drastic as the 2021 decision to get armed drones and use drone strikes, it presented a significant policy progress at the time. Something had changed in the discourse.

This dissertation conducts a discourse analysis to describe the developments leading up to this policy change in 2018. It seeks to answer how the acquisition and use of armed military drones by Germany emerged as a political option in the German parliamentary debate. By analyzing drone-related parliamentary debates between January 2009 to December 2018, it dissects the drone controversy that lasted over a decade, and discursively traces the development of the German AMALE-drone adoption policy. The debates between 2012 and 2014 were particularly intense, presenting the peak of the controversy. The analysis will illustrate that rigid, divergent positions and emotionally charged language characterized the debates, as was the case among both opponents and advocates of drones. While other projects may have focused solely on this shorter period, my inquiry is interested in how the discourse (potentially) transformed over time. That is why the analysis considers the years before and after this period. It shows that the drone opponents dominated the earlier debates. During the climax of the controversy (2012–2014), both camps were similarly strong. Afterwards, the pro-drone narratives and arguments gained a foothold. Moreover, in the later years of the debate, two previously drone-skeptical parties, the SPD and the Greens, began to gradually de-radicalize their protests.

While the SPD had refused to get "armable" platforms in 2017, after the 2018 election they softened their position.[16] By the end of 2018, the newly formed CDU/CSU-SPD government had compromised to lease armable Heron TP MALE-drones from Israel. However, the final

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14 Elvira Rosert and Frank Sauer, "How (Not) to Stop the Killer Robots: A Comparative Analysis of Humanitarian Disarmament Campaign Strategies," *Contemporary Security Policy* 42, no. 1 (2021).

15 Zeit Online et al., "Bundestag bewilligt bewaffnungsfähige Drohnen," *Zeit Online*, June 13, 2018, https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2018-06/kampfdrohnen-beschaffung-bundestag-herontp. In July 2014, Defense Minister von der Leyen stated she supported the acquisition of armable drones (Spiegel Online, "Von der Leyen spricht sich für bewaffnungsfähige Drohnen aus," *Der Spiegel*, July 1, 2014, https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/von-der-leyen-spricht-sich-fuer-bewaffnungsfaehige-drohnen-aus-a-978628.html.).

16 Thomas Wiegold, "Vorerst keine bewaffnungsfähigen Drohnen für die Bundeswehr (neu: Müllner)," *Augen geradeaus!*, June 27, 2017, https://augengeradeaus.net/2017/06/keine-bewaffnungsfaehigen-drohnen/

decision on armament would only be made after sufficient debate around the legal and ethical issues had taken place, as the government had announced in the coalition agreement.[17] Politicians had used a public debate as a precondition for the decision to arm not just in 2018 but also back in 2013.[18] This fact underscores how politically significant the debate as such was and stresses its value as a research object. In the end, the compromise on "armable" systems was only a preliminary outcome. Germany had yet to fully decide on the issue. This happened in the fall of 2021, when the recently elected government (SPD, Greens, and FDP) agreed to allow drone armament and drone strikes.[19] This decision puzzled many observers. Given their public positioning over the past few years, it was not expected that a government including both the SPD and the Greens would adopt armed drones. In February 2022, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Bundestag ultimately approved the purchase of drone ammunition.[20]

Overall, the acquisition of AMALE-drones was one of the most controversial security policy discussions of the 2000s in Germany. As such, it deserves a closer examination. In order to answer my research question, I used a discourse-analytical approach to study parliamentary debates on military drones with an empirical focus. The data are text documents from the online archive of the German Bundestag. I analyze the content of the debates, examine the meanings-in-use and discursive framings of drone warfare, showcase articulated drone policy options, and reveal overarching constructions of Germany's role in the world. The theoretical framework builds on 1) the parliamentary speakers (agents), interacting through 2) language practices, within 3) a dynamic socio-political context conceptualized as a "discursive ecosystem" (structure). The concept of a "discursive ecosystem" sheds light on the dynamic interaction of a discourse with its context, including both ideational and material structural conditions in theorizing. Thus, rather than just looking at the decision to arm drones as such, as rationalist studies would, my study generates knowledge about the previous steps in the policymaking process, which are discursive agenda setting and presenting options for action.[21]

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17 CDU, CSU, and SPD, "Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD - Ein neuer Aufbruch für Europa: Eine neue Dynamik für Deutschland Ein neuer Zusammenhalt für unser Land", 2018.

18 CDU, CSU, and SPD, "Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD - Deutschlands Zukunft gestalten", 2013.

19 SPD, the Greens, and FDP, "Koalitionsvertrag zwischen SPD, Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen und FDP - Mehr Fortschritt Wagen: Bündnis für Freiheit, Gerechtigkeit und Nachhaltigkeit", November 24, 2021.

20 Staff Writer with AFP, "Germany to Get Weaponized Drones for the First Time," *The Defense Post*, April 6, 2022, https://thedefensepost.com/2022/04/06/germany-weaponized-drones/.

21 John W. Kingdon defined policy making as "a set of processes, including at least (1) the setting of the agenda, (2) the specification of alternatives from which a choice is to be made, (3) an authoritative choice among those specific alternatives, as in a legislative vote or a presidential decision, and (4) the implementation of the decision."(John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (New York: Longman, 2003), 2-3.)

The analysis shows that the parliamentary drone debate was highly complex, emotional, and politicized. However, armed drones slowly emerged as a political option due to the gradual normalization of drone technology, a lack of new arguments, shifting discursive dominance, a new constellation of parliamentary agents, revised party positions, and influential trends and events within the discursive context.

1.1 Literature Review: Armed Drones and Foreign Policy Change

Armed drones have received considerable scholarly attention due to their far-reaching implications for international security, international law, and conflict dynamics.[22] Due to their multi-faceted nature – touching on issues of law, ethics, security, technology, military, industry, and domestic policy – they appeal across disciplinary boundaries. A growing body of literature in Political Science, Philosophy, and Legal Studies has examined the proliferation and use of armed drones since the early 2000s. Apart from assessments of Just War Theory and Democratic Peace Theory, academic work on drone warfare has tended to be highly empirical and less theoretically oriented. Scholars have sought to catch up with different empirical events and practices in order to make sense of them collectively as part of one large phenomenon.

The first section of this subchapter reviews the existing literature on drones and identifies themes that will be relevant to my analysis of the German parliamentary drone debate between January 2009 and December 2018 (1.1.1). It also identifies two gaps in the literature: Studies on states other than the US and analyses of the political processes. So far, much of the knowledge production has rested on a single case, which is the US as the first mover in drone strikes. My dissertation complements, extends, and ultimately enriches this existing knowledge by studying Germany. The second subchapter section gives an overview of seminal literature on policy change, specifically on foreign policy shifts and military innovation since these topics are the most relevant to my project (1.1.2). In particular, it sheds light on previous works by scholars who studied (potential) drivers and constraints of policy change on the domestic level, examining the role of agents in multi-party contexts. Most of these studies focused, however, on the executive and not on parliamentary debates, which are at the center of this dissertation.

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[22] Although combat drones present many new aspects, the basic technology is not new. Earlier versions of today's systems and respective doctrines were developed and implemented to some extent during World Wars I and II. For example, Nazi Germany used the V-1 flying bomb and remotely controlled mini-tanks. Britain used the DH82B Queen Bee and tested the Larynx and Ram drones. There were also American drone projects, especially during the 1980s. Technological advances in satellite communication, sensors, data analysis, and robotics further improved the operational capabilities of drones, and allowed large military drones to conduct precision-strikes. (Katharine Hall Kindervater, "The Emergence of Lethal Surveillance: Watching and Killing in the History of Drone Technology," *Security Dialogue* 47, no. 3 (2016): 225; 28; Kreps, *Drones*, 10-11.)

1.1.1 Literature on the Proliferation and Implications of Armed Drones

Due to the fact-creating nature of the US program, there is a burgeoning literature on the proliferation and the effects of drone warfare, as scholars have scrambled to make sense of and catch up with the empirical events. In 2000, the Clinton administration decided to arm US Predator drones.[23] As meticulously researched by Christopher J. Fuller, this was a joint project between the Air Force and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).[24] Due to the involvement of the CIA and the highly sensitive nature of this program, there was not much public information on the drone armament. Little time passed between the first live-fire test in February 2001 and the first lethal action in October 2001, following the 9/11 attacks. Besides the initial secret development, the shock of 9/11, fast-paced events, and a "pressure for retribution" left little room for political, social or academic debates in the US before the introduction of AMALE-drones strikes.[25] Thus, the US was in a unique situation dissimilar to other states, who had the opportunity for public discussions and political deliberation *ex ante*, such as Germany. Despite this difference, literature on the American case is still relevant to this dissertation, because the US set a precedent in drone use, and played a significant role in the German political discourse.

The American case also illustrates the need for research on the political discourses of drone warfare to better understand the decision-making process; and the potential developments or changes in it. After all, the political decision to adopt armed drones (or not) is a crucial intermediate step between the causes and consequences of drone proliferation. However, the domestic politics surrounding this decision have been vastly understudied. Given that policy debates take place in parliament, contemporary political science has paid surprisingly little attention to parliamentary speeches.[26] This is the gap I seek to fill. The following sections provide an overview of the seminar literature on the legal, ethical, and security implications of drone warfare, the causes and conditions of drone adoption, and the political responses to as well as policy debates on armed military drones.

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23 The US armed forces had already used smaller unarmed drones for surveillance and reconnaissance during the Cold War, as well as larger ones in the wars in Bosnia (1992–1995) and Kosovo (1999).

24 Christopher J. Fuller, *See It/Shoot It the Secret History of the CIA's Lethal Drone Program* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 114-20.

25 Ibid., 119-20.

26 Andre Bächtiger, "Debate and Deliberation in Legislatures," in *The Oxford Handbook of Legislative Studies*, ed. Shane Martin, Thomas Saalfeld, and Kaare W. Strøm (Oxford University Press, 2014), 145; compare Hanna Bäck, Marc Debus, and Jorge M. Fernandes, "The Politics of Legislative Debates: An Introduction," in *The Politics of Legislative Debates*, ed. Hanna Bäck, Marc Debus, and Jorge M. Fernandes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

1.1.1.1 Legal, Ethical, and Security Implications of Drone Warfare

The literature has assessed (potential) violations of international law, discussed the moral complexities of drone warfare, and addressed relevant implications for the nature of warfare and the dynamics of armed conflict. These topics were particularly present during the 2010s. The rise of drones challenged conventional thinking about the law and ethics of warfare. Legal assessments asked whether drone strikes outside of officially declared war zones, for example in Pakistan, Yemen, or Somalia, would challenge international law, and critically discussed the legal grounds for controversial targeted killings of suspected terrorists.[27] These debates presented conflicting claims. One group of legal scholars argued that drone strikes are lawful and do not violate state sovereignty when the local government co-authorizes them.[28] Another group claimed that drone strikes taking place in foreign states would violate international law if they occurred outside of officially declared war zones and targeted suspected terrorists.[29] Others contended that they temporarily circumvent the targeted state's control over its territory, thereby transforming its state sovereignty.[30]

There has also been a lively discussion on the ethics of drone strikes. Just War theorists have explored how traditional principles of *Jus ad Bellum* (for resorting to war) and *Jus in Bello* (for the acceptable use of force in a war) apply to modern drone warfare.[31] There is a broad consensus in this literature that drone strikes would disproportionately and unfairly transfer the risks and destruction of warfare to the targeted country and people.[32] In drone warfare, there would

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27 Sarah E. Kreps and Geoffrey P.R. Wallace, "International Law, Military Effectiveness, and Public Support for Drone Strikes," *Journal of Peace Research* 53, no. 6 (2016); Michael J. Boyle, "The Legal and Ethical Implications of Drone Warfare," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 19, no. 2 (2015); Michael Coleman and David H. Gray, "The Legality behind Targeted Killings and the Use of Drones in the War on Terror," *Global Security Studies* 5, no. 1 (2014); Armin Krishnan, *Killer Robots: Legality and Ethicality of Autonomous Weapons* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009).

28 Jamie Shea, "Precision Strike Capabilities: Political and Strategic Consequences," in *Precision Strike Warfare and International Intervention: Strategic, Ethico-Legal and Decisional Implications*, ed. Mike Aaronson, et al. (London; New York: Routledge, 2015), xxi.

29 Kreps and Wallace, "International Law, Military Effectiveness, and Public Support for Drone Strikes."; Boyle, "The Legal and Ethical Implications of Drone Warfare."; Coleman and Gray, "The Legality behind Targeted Killings and the Use of Drones in the War on Terror."; Krishnan, *Killer Robots: Legality and Ethicality of Autonomous Weapons*.

30 Katharine Hall Kindervater, "Drone Strikes, Ephemeral Sovereignty, and Changing Conceptions of Territory," *Territory, Politics, Governance* 5, no. 2 (2017).

31 Paul Schulte, "Morality and War," in *The Oxford Handbook of War*, ed. Julian Lindley-French and Yves Boyer (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 101-08.

32 On the ethical debate in general see John Kaag and Sarah Kreps, *Drone Warfare: War and Conflict in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014); Boyle, "The Legal and Ethical Implications of Drone Warfare."; Mark Coeckelbergh, "Drones, Information Technology, and Distance: Mapping the Moral Epistemology of Remote Fighting," *Ethics and Information Technology* 15, no. 2 (2013). On risk-transfer see Kreps, *Drones*, ii; Martin Shaw, "Risk-Transfer Militarism, Small Massacres and the Historic Legitimacy of War," *International Relations* 16, no. 3 (2002): 349.

be no "symmetric situation of mutual threat" as in classical combat scenarios.[33] Because in the Just War framework "all combatants are equally entitled to defend themselves ('the moral equivalence of soldiers')", some argued that drone strikes were more akin to assassinations.[34] Another stance on Just War Theory evaluates the justness of a kill based on whether the target is fighting for a just or unjust cause.[35] Other strands of Just War literature focus on the combat experiences of the soldiers behind the drones. Precision targeting with drones in asymmetric scenarios would undermine the warrior ethos, which emphasizes values such as courage, honor, and sacrifice.[36] Some authors even suggest that drones would facilitate a distanced "computerized" view of the battle, gradually leading to the "dehumanization" of war.[37]

Another perspective on the issue emphasizes the benefits of using military drones, which allow governments to protect their own soldiers by not sending them into risky battle zones. In 2010, Bradley Strawser proposed a moral imperative for the employment of drones or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) as he calls them. He argued that "as a technology that better protects (presumably) justified warriors, UAV use is ethically obligatory, not suspicious."[38] Rather than introducing an entirely new quality, drones would simply continue the "historical trajectory of removing a warrior ever farther from his foe for the warrior's better protection".[39] The sheer act of killing somebody via drone strike would not differ greatly from killing by other means, for example with a gun. The outcome would be the same.[40]

Another subject of contestation is whether drone strikes cause less collateral damage than other forms of combat. Strawser and others stressed that drone operations were more ethical because their precision-strikes could select targets better.[41] John Kaag and Sarah Kreps challenged this claim. They argued that there is a significant gap between this technical precision-strike capa-

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33 Matthew W. Hallgarth, "Just War Theory and Remote Military Technology: A Primer," in *Killing by Remote Control: The Ethics of an Unmanned Military*, ed. Bradley J. Strawser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

34 Schulte, "Morality and War," 106-07.

35 See Hallgarth, "Just War Theory."

36 Neil C. Renic, *Asymmetric Killing: Risk Avoidance, Just War, and the Warrior Ethos* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

37 Christopher Coker, *The Future of War: The Re-enchantment of War in the Twenty-First Century* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), vii-viii.

38 Bradley J. Strawser, "Moral Predators: The Duty to Employ Uninhabited Aerial Vehicles," *Journal of Military Ethics* 9, no. 4 (2010): 343.

39 Ibid.

40 See Bradley J. Strawser, *Killing by Remote Control: The Ethics of an Unmanned Military* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

41 Strawser, "Moral Predators," 352; James I. Walsh and Marcus Schulzke, *Drones and Support for the Use of Force* (University of Michigan Press, 2018), 111-12; Marcus Schulzke, "The Morality of Remote Warfare: Against the Asymmetry Objection to Remote Weaponry," *Political Studies* 64, no. 1 (2016).

bility and the selection of legitimate military targets according to strategic parameters and evidence.[42] Scholars have repeatedly emphasized the difficulty of correctly distinguishing between civilian and military targets in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency scenarios. Michael J. Boyle noted that the key actors involved – the US government, the CIA, as well as the targeted states, and Islamist extremist groups – could spin the numbers and claim those killed were "militants" or "civilians". Due to military secrecy, evidence to disprove their claims would be rare. As a result, the true extent of civilian casualties has been difficult to verify.[43]

Regarding the security implications, much work focuses on the military value of using armed drones in counterterrorism or counterinsurgency operations. This discussion continues today as there remain further cases for study of countries who possess armed drones and have used drone strikes in counterterrorism operations.[44] Judgments of their effectiveness, however, vary. On the one hand, authors suggest that targeting terrorist groups and decapitating their leadership would successfully disrupt their ability to plan and carry out attacks.[45] For example, Daniel Byman said: "The drones have done their job remarkably well: by killing key leaders and denying terrorists sanctuaries in Pakistan, Yemen, and, to a lesser degree, Somalia, drones have devastated al Qaeda and associated anti-American militant groups."[46] Recent quantitative work examining eighteen cases of countries with armed drones also found that possession and use of armed drones reduces terrorist attacks.[47] However, it is challenging to isolate the coercive effects of drone strikes from other military endeavors and security measures, especially in these kinds of aggregated examinations.

On the other hand, Micah Zenko warned that it remained unclear whether drone strikes were sustainably effective. They would still kill many civilians and potentially create a "blow-back" that could make the responsible state disliked and even boost support for the insurgents.[48] Although drone strikes could limit terrorist attacks geographically by exercising force, the remote and anonymous operation would hinder the intervening state from credibly communicating with

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42 See Kaag and Kreps, *Drone Warfare*.

43 Michael J. Boyle, "The Costs and Consequences of Drone Warfare," *International Affairs* 89, no. 1 (2013): 6.

44 For a comprehensive analysis see Joshua A. Schwartz, Matthew Fuhrmann, and Michael C. Horowitz, "Do Armed Drones Counter Terrorism, or Are They Counterproductive? Evidence from Eighteen Countries," *International Studies Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (2022).

45 Javier Jordan, "The Effectiveness of the Drone Campaign against Al Qaeda Central: A Case Study," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 1 (2014); Jacqueline L. Hazelton, "Drone Strikes and Grand Strategy: Toward a Political Understanding of the Uses of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Attacks in US Security Policy," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40, no. 1-2 (2017).

46 Daniel Byman, "Why Drones Work," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 4 (2013): 32.

47 Schwartz, Fuhrmann, and Horowitz, "Do Armed Drones Counter Terrorism."

48 Micah Zenko, "Reforming U.S. Drone Strike Policies," in *Council Special Report* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2013), 10-11. Similarly, see Boyle, "Costs and Consequences," 3.

and assuring terrorist groups, ultimately failing to dissuade them from attacking.[49] The US drone program would be an example of tactics that become strategy, without having a long-term approach.[50]

In addition to these studies focusing on large drones in asymmetric scenarios, the recent use of drones in contemporary wars has also opened a new chapter in the academic literature on drones in the 2020s. Authors are expanding their research to include the strategic role and security implications of drones in symmetric conflicts, operated by state agents such as Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. Especially for Ukraine, AMALE-drones are a low-cost way to effectively fight back against the massive Russian forces, for example by attacking tanks.[51] However, these battle scenarios also demonstrate the limits of armed military drones when facing air defense systems, and the necessity of supportive force structures.[52] Moreover, the effects of robotic technologies on winning wars should not be overestimated, given the significance of a suitable strategy and tight military organization.[53] Another new development is the increasing use of small and tactical drone systems in wars, including easily accessible commercial ones.[54] According to Dominika Kunertova, the Russian-Ukrainian war has emphasized the combined impact of the thousands of "low-tech" drones, such as "scouts, loitering grenades, drone bomblets, and suicide drones", which operate in lower airspace and are altering battlefield dynamics.[55] While all these studies elaborately analyzed and evaluated the implications of drone warfare, they tend to take the presence of this weapon system for granted. This dissertation is, however, particularly interested in why governments would adopt drones in the first place.

1.1.1.2 Causes and Conditions of Drone Adoption

Studies that ask why and under what conditions states adopt armed drones typically assume that, within the competitive context of a security dilemma, agents will seek new technologies

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49 Kelly A. Grieco and J. Wesley Hutto, "Can Drones Coerce? The Effects of Remote Aerial Coercion in Counterterrorism," *International Politics* 60, no. 4 (2023).

50 Audrey Kurth Cronin, "The 'War on Terrorism': What Does it Mean to Win?," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 2 (2014).

51 Sarah Kreps and Paul Lushenko, "Drones in Modern War: Evolutionary, Revolutionary, or Both?," *Defense & Security Analysis* 39, no. 2 (2023).

52 Antonio Calcara et al., "Why Drones Have Not Revolutionized War: The Enduring Hider-Finder Competition in Air Warfare," *International Security* 46, no. 4 (2022).

53 Vicken Cheterian, "Technological Determinism or Strategic Advantage? Comparing the Two Karabakh Wars Between Armenia and Azerbaijan," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 47, no. 2 (2024).

54 Dominika Kunertova, "The War in Ukraine Shows the Game-Changing Effect of Drones Depends on the Game," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 79, no. 2 (2023); Kerry Chávez and Ori Swed, "Emulating Underdogs: Tactical Drones in the Russia-Ukraine War," *Contemporary Security Policy* 44, no. 4 (2023); Dominika Kunertova, "Drones Have Boots: Learning from Russia's War in Ukraine," *Contemporary Security Policy* 44, no. 4 (2023).

55 Kunertova, "Drones Have Boots," 576.

for their national military (availability and use) and domestic industry (development and maintenance). Scholars who study technological innovation widely recognize that armed drones are highly effective for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), and target acquisition (ISTAR) in undefended airspace. Due to their ability to loiter and fly for hours, they can collect large amounts of information, communicate close to real-time, and strike precisely.[56] Part of their appeal is that pilots can operate them remotely and that automated functions increase, thus "compress[ing] the time between target acquisition and the strike itself".[57] Still, greater automation comes with risks, such as hacking, spoofing, jamming, and technical failure. For James Igoe Walsh, however, this new technology is a product, not a driver, of military innovation. It is the result of political leaders seeking to avoid "long-term military commitments in unstable countries" and of a military dissatisfied with old tactics.[58] A "lighter footprint" in conflicted countries lends itself particularly well to covert operations.[59] Other studies have highlighted the significance of external shocks. For example, Fuhrmann and Horowitz found that states were more likely to adopt drone programs after experiencing terrorist attacks.[60]

When examining the adoption of new military technologies from a systemic perspective, analysts often use the concept of arms races. The idea is that there is a competitive international arena in which one actor seeks to improve its security by arming itself. This triggers a sense of threat in other actors, who respond by counter-arming; creating a security dilemma.[61] The intense competition between two or more actors, each seeking for a qualitative or a quantitative (or both) military advantage over the other, leads to heightened tensions and – potentially – war.[62] But is the pursuit of armed drones really an arms race? For Barry Buzan and Eric Herring arms racing is only one possible scenario of arms dynamics. When states build up armament, they may simply hope to improve their status quo without expecting to gain a decisive advantage. States could also just seek to maintain the military status quo, which presents the "normal" function of an arms dynamic and not an arms race.[63] Still, for many security analysts, the vastly expanding adoption of armed drones is, in fact, a classic arms race. Robert Sparrow

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56 An undefended airspace means the conflict opponent does not have the necessary defensive air capability to prevent aircraft from penetrating and operating in the controlled airspace. This is one of the main reasons why armed drones were successfully employed against non-state actors, who do not have the necessary airspace defense structure, which most states do.

57 Shashank Joshi and Aaron Stein, "Emerging Drone Nations," *Survival* 55, no. 5 (2013): 60.

58 Walsh, "Targeted Killing," 146.

59 Grieco and Hutto, "Can Drones Coerce?," 930.

60 Matthew Fuhrmann and Michael C. Horowitz, "Droning On: Explaining the Proliferation of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles," *International Organization* 71, no. 2 (2017): 399.

61 Peter W. Singer, interview by Sean Illing, September 13,, 2017.

62 Samuel P. Huntington, "Arms Races: Prerequisites and Results," *Public Policy* 8, no. 1 (1958).

63 Barry Buzan and Eric Herring, *The Arms Dynamic in World Politics* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 80.

stressed drones were necessary to stay competitive in the battlefield. Since they would drastically increase the speed of battle, rival militaries would be forced to level up to be able to keep up the operational pace.[64]

As captured by the term "military-industrial complex", the arms race includes both expanding the use of armed drones on the battlefield and building an industrial drone base at home. States in Europe and Asia (especially China) are increasingly producing their own drone capabilities.[65] Some observers have predicted that belligerents who failed to develop drone capabilities would be destroyed.[66] In contrast, Boyle criticized that embracing drones would encourage an arms race that would reinforce existing rivalries, erode norms on the use of force, and lay "the foundations for an international system that is increasingly violent, destabilized and polarized between those who have drones and those who are victims of them."[67] Evidently, several scholars have recognized an armed drone arms race, but few have made it a research priority.

Regarding regulatory policy responses at the international political level, some scholars have argued that existing agreements, most notably the Missile Control Treaty Regime (MTCR), would suffice but needed clarification.[68] Others recognize that drones contribute to overriding and weakening them and have plead for more binding and comprehensive agreements (China, Israel, Pakistan and other states are not members of the MTCR) to effectively control drone exports.[69] Schulzke, for his part, highlighted the security dilemma incentivized states to develop drones quickly and would disincentivize agents to unilaterally restrict drone production.[70]

If drone systems are truly this technologically innovative, and states feel pressured to procure them, why have not all states immediately followed the example of the US drone strike program? This is particularly surprising for European states such as the UK, France, or Germany who are important allies of the US and have the necessary resources. Studies on the structural economic aspects address this question. For years the conventional wisdom had been that drone

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64 Robert Sparrow, "War without Virtue?," in *Killing by Remote Control: The Ethics of an Unmanned Military*, ed. Bradley Jay Strawser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 87; Thomas K. Adams, "Future Warfare and the Decline in Human Decisionmaking," *Parameters* 31, no. 4 (2001).

65 Marcus Schulzke, *The Morality of Drone Warfare and the Politics of Regulation* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 72-3; Andrea Gilli and Mauro Gilli, "Emerging Technologies: UAVs," in *The Handbook of European Defence Policies and Armed Forces* ed. Hugo Meijer and Marco Wyss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 752-4.

66 Schulzke, *The Morality of Drone Warfare*, 71.

67 Boyle, "Costs and Consequences," 3; 72.

68 Micah Zenko and Sarah E. Kreps, "Limiting Armed Drone Proliferation," in *Council Special Report* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2014), 23.

69 Jürgen Altmann, "Der Kriegsmaschine Grenzen setzen," in *Kriegsmaschinen - Roboter im Militäreinsatz*, ed. Hans-Arthur Marsiske (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2012), 219; 23.

70 Schulzke, *The Morality of Drone Warfare*, 72.

operations were cheaper than manned ones, allowing states to do more while spending less.[71] Others argue that drone-seeking states still face obstacles, i.e., various economic, structural, and organizational platform and adoption challenges.[72] On adoption and platform challenges Andrea Gilli and Mauro Gilli found that armed drones are not as easy to produce and cheap to acquire as scholars and policymakers assume, even for countries such as Germany and the UK.[73] Still, the UK may not be the best choice to make a point about platform and adoption challenges. While it has been a costly effort for the UK to adopt drones, they still managed to do so, for example by cooperating with allies in the deployment of (US) and research and development (R&D) projects for armed drones (France) to reduce costs. In addition, the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are assisting countries to overcome these challenges.[74] Structural factors are indeed enabling conditions, but no sole drivers of state behavior. They do not explain why a country like Germany would (not) invest in overcoming the platform and adoption challenges of drones.

Then again, the drone sector constitutes a promising venture for the national defense and for the civilian industry, especially because of its dual-use capacity and the expectation of a growing market for unmanned systems. Research on the political economy of drone warfare in the US has found that interests of defense contractors and economic competition in the drone industry would influence government policies, defense strategies, and international relations on drone development and use of drones.[75] Then again, German military procurement displays "non-competitive pricing, cost overruns and time delays, and low utilization rates", as Michael Brzoska pointed out.[76] On an international scale, Kreps argued that the indigenous production of military drones is difficult. Not every actor is well prepared for it. Constraining factors such as the difficulty of domestic production, public opposition, negative cost-benefit estimations, and the limited supply due to export control regimes, especially the MTCR, would keep a drone arms race from developing.[77]

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71 Fuhrmann and Horowitz, "Droning On," 405; see also Michael C. Horowitz, Sarah E. Kreps, and Matthew Fuhrmann, "Separating Fact from Fiction in the Debate over Drones," *International Security* 41, no. 2 (2016).

72 See Fuhrmann and Horowitz, "Droning On."; Andrea Gilli and Mauro Gilli, "The Diffusion of Drone Warfare? Industrial, Organizational, and Infrastructural Constraints," *Security Studies* 25, no. 1 (2016); Dominika Kunertova, "Europe's Military Drone Problem," in *De Gruyter Handbook of Drone Warfare*, ed. James Patton Rogers (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024).

73 Gilli and Gilli, "The Diffusion of Drone Warfare?," 50.

74 Kunertova, "Europe's Military Drone Problem."

75 Abigail R. Hall and Christopher J. Coyne, "The Political Economy of Drones," *Defence & Peace Economics* 25, no. 5 (2014).

76 Brzoska, "Sources of Inefficiency," 6.

77 As Kreps remarked: "Indeed, while the international institutional mechanisms under the MTCR are not perfect, they do impact the availability of supply, decreasing access to armed drones" (Kreps, *Drones*, 65.)

Thus far, scholars have focused on the causes and consequences of military drone proliferation, and the conditions for their adoption. Few have examined the national political perspectives on drone procurement policy itself. This is puzzling because the latter issue represents a pivotal step in between causes and consequences; the political debates and policies of states that have considered adopting this new weapon system. There are many intriguing facets left to explore, especially when seeking to understand how and why certain national armed drone policies developed. This is what this dissertation seeks to do.

1.1.1.3 Political Responses and Policy Debates

The literature on national drone policy and governance often focuses on decision-making in democracies, public opinion, and, more recently, official drone discourses. The first group draws on Democratic Peace Theory, which argues that democracies are less likely to wage war, especially against each other. How do armed drones fit into this? Armed drones may make states more inclined to fight when they really should, countering risk aversion.[78] By contrast, armed drones could also lower the bar for state officials to intervene in countries by force rather than by non-violent means.[79] Remote drone strikes would allow states to engage in warfare without having to bear the full costs and pains of combat.[80] Drone programs would suffer from a lack of transparency, insufficient oversight, accountability, and public scrutiny.[81] All in all, a seemingly riskless drone war may reduce the public interest in military operations, diminish public pressure on the government, and lower the threshold for the use of force.[82]

The controversy has been assessed not in terms of the procurement of armed drones, but rather in terms of their use, particularly the US practice of "targeted killing." The dominance of the American case in the drone literature may explain this focus on employment. As the first country to launch drone strikes, the US was not only a "first-mover" but also a "norm entrepreneur".[83] Still, in the early years, it released little information about the drone program, which could have caused public outrage.[84] Today, in (potential) second-mover states, there is much more public knowledge about how armed drones are and could be used. This can foster strong

78 Strawser, *Killing by Remote Control*, 14.
79 Immanuel Kant, *Zum ewigen Frieden*, ed. Otfried Höffe, vol. 3 (Berlin: Akademischer Verlag, 2011).
80 Kaag and Kreps, *Drone Warfare*; Grégorie Chamayou, *A Theory of the Drone* (New York: The New Press, 2015).
81 Kreps, *Drones*; Allen Buchanan and Robert O. Keohane, "Toward a Drone Accountability Regime: A Rejoinder," *Ethics & International Affairs* 29, no. 1 (2015).
82 Kant, *Zum ewigen Frieden*, 3; Frank Sauer and Niklas Schörnig, "Killer Drones: The 'Silver Bullet' of Democratic Warfare?," *Security Dialogue* 43, no. 4 (2012).
83 Andrea Birdsall, "Drone Warfare in Counterterrorism and Normative Change: US Policy and the Politics of International Law," *Global Society* 32, no. 3 (2018).
84 This changed under the Obama administration. As a result, there was a large domestic debate on the American drone employment oversees, peaking in 2013-2014.

opposition even before the actual acquisition, making it more urgent for democratic governments to justify the adoption of armed drones *ex-ante*. Thus, in order to better understand the current stage of their proliferation among democratic states, we need to examine the discourse and debates of relevant political agents.

But what does the public really think about armed drones? A sociological survey conducted in Germany in 2020 found that general attitudes toward the armed forces (e.g., support or skepticism) and security policy baselines (e.g., militarism or pacifism) were the main determinants of national public opinion on armed drones. Threat perceptions also played a role. Fears of conflict in Europe and an escalating arms race increased the likelihood of opposition to armed drones, while concerns about terrorism and Russia often coincided with support.[85] Financial considerations appeared to play a lesser role. By comparison, these were very prominent in the US where extensive military engagements in the GWOT had strained the national budget and the Americans had grown weary of the financial burden. Even more so, thousands of US soldiers had died in battlefields abroad. Both factors were important in the American debate on armed drones but not in the same way as in Germany. It is helpful to keep these insights on German public opinion in mind for the discourse analysis that follows.

My dissertation seeks to contribute to the literature on political drone discourses. Most studies on this topic have focused on the United States. Kenneth Anderson and Benjamin Wittes analyzed speeches by the Obama administration, seeking to understand and evaluate its legal view of counterterrorism operations.[86] Even though they did not label their work as a discourse analysis, it closely resembles one. They described what was being said about the international legal framework governing the use of armed drones, targeted killings, and the nature of the war on terrorism, among other issues. By offering a combined analysis of sixteen individual speeches, they were able to infer legal and policy positions on the GWOT that the administration had not explicitly stated.[87]

Although this dissertation does not seek to contribute to critical studies, the critical literature has made important contributions. Wali Aslam, for example, examined how a Pakistani political

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85 Markus Steinbrecher, "Nun sag, wie hast du's mit bewaffneten Drohnen? Die Haltung zu bewaffneten Drohnen in Deutschland und ihre Erklärungsfaktoren," *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* 15, no. 2-3 (2022).

86 Kenneth Anderson and Benjamin Wittes, *Speaking the Law: The Obama Administration's Addresses on National Security Law* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2015).

87 Ibid., 5.

party leader and Obama administration officials discursively framed US drone strikes in Pakistan, constructing threats, and politically appropriating casualties.[88] Other authors argued that the Obama administration sought to normalize and legally legitimize its drone strikes by dehumanizing those killed through the use of assertive, bureaucratic language.[89] Marouf Hasian Jr. combined a critical perspective with an argumentative approach, challenging key themes of the US elite discourse on drones, including surgical strikes, the honor of soldiers, preventive self-defense, and a detached style of killing foes.[90] For the future he expected a spillover from US rhetoric to other countries.[91] Indeed, there were similar arguments in the German drone debate, not least because many politicians assumed that a German deployment of AMALE-drones would resemble the American one. Although there were also national particularities, this assumption prevailed in the discourse, as my analysis shows. Apart from Hasian Jr., the above discourse analyses were based on a small number of texts. In contrast, I examined hundreds, which allows for a more systematic assessment.

Armed drones were highly controversial when it was mainly the US who used them for targeted killings in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and elsewhere as part of the GWOT. Germany was entangled in the US drone program, because US drone strikes killed three German citizens in Pakistan.[92] Moreover, the US operated drone strikes through Germany.[93] Reviewing the literature shows that academic debates were not immune to this controversy. Some authors explicitly expressed normative reflections on drone warfare, especially critical scholars, while others did not. In any case, this apparent scholarly dissent foreshadows some of the main controversies within the German debate. Many of these themes and arguments will appear in the analysis. At the same time, this project seeks to broaden existing perspectives on the social phenomenon of armed drone proliferation by studying parliamentary debates on armed drone policy.

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88 Wali Aslam, "The Political Appropriation of Casualties in Threat Construction: The Case of US Drone Strikes in Pakistan," in *Precision Strike Warfare and International Intervention: Strategic, Ethico-Legal and Decisional Implications*, ed. Mike Aaronson, et al. (London: Routledge, 2015).

89 Jeffrey S. Bachman and Jack Holland, "Lethal Sterility: Innovative Dehumanisation in Legal Justifications of Obama's Drone Policy," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 23, no. 6 (2019).

90 Marouf Arif Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2016), 6 (first quote); 9 (second quote).

91 Ibid., 18.

92 Wolfgang S. Heinz, "Wann hat der Staat das Recht zu töten? Gezielte Tötungen und der Schutz der Menschenrechte," (Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2014), 9.

93 Christian Fuchs, John Goetz, and Hans Leyendecker, "US-Streitkräfte steuern Drohnen von Deutschland aus," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, May 30, 2013, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/luftangriffe-in-afrika-us-streitkraefte-steuern-drohnen-von-deutschland-aus-1.1684414.

1.1.2 Literature on Foreign Policy Change and Military Innovation

The German armed drone adoption was a case of incremental policy change, and this research seeks to understand the different reasonings and meanings that informed policy-making on AMALE-drones throughout the years. It does so by studying how the discourse developed within the German parliament. A substantial body of qualitative research offers valuable insights into the dynamics of policy change in the realms of foreign policy and military innovation. These studies typically employ single or comparative case study designs, often utilizing methodologies such as process tracing, or path analysis. Scholars have examined various institutional, diplomatic, organizational, temporal, and ideational factors that (may) have served – either as drivers or constraints – in shaping particular policy outcomes.[94]

In the seminal literature on policy change, foreign policy shifts and the adoption or rejection of military innovation are two central topics. Explanations range across and sometimes combine different levels of analysis, including international, domestic, and individual.[95] Regarding the international level, the literature on norms offers insights into the international dynamics of policy change. In the late 1990s, Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink presented a theoretical framework for understanding how norms evolve, spread, and influence state behavior in the international system. States would do so in response to pressure from other states or transnational advocacy networks.[96] Weapons taboos empirically illustrate how international norms can drive substantial policy change by transforming the legitimacy of certain weapons and constraining their use. For example, Richard M. Price examined the international rejection of chemical weapons through the development of a normative framework after World War I (WWI) that constructed these weapons as indiscriminate and inhumane. Price detailed the history of the taboo including key events, tracing it from the Hague Peace Conferences of 1899, the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in 1993, which reinforced this norm.[97] Similarly, Nina Tannenwald illustrated how a moral and legal norm has constrained the use of nuclear weapons since World War II (WWII) and how it emerged as a powerful force

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94 Joly and Richter, however, also used regression analysis to examine how the size of aid administration interacted with alterations in foreign aid allotment or institutional friction (Jeroen Joly and Friederike Richter, "Punctuated Equilibrium Theory and Foreign Policy," in *Foreign Policy as Public Policy? Promises and Pitfalls*, ed. Klaus Brummer, et al. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).

95 Tim Haesebrouck and Jeroen Joly, "Foreign Policy Change: From Policy Adjustments to Fundamental Reorientations," *Political Studies Review* 19, no. 3 (2021): 486.

96 Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," in *Exploration and Contestation in the Study of World Politics*, ed. Peter Katzenstein, Robert Keohane, and Stephen Krasner (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).

97 Richard M. Price, *The Chemical Weapons Taboo* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

in shaping state behavior.[98] While these studies focus on the international realm, this research seeks to analyze a specific country case – Germany. Although the German debate included tabooing drone armament, this research does not specifically examine international norms, but rather approaches the debate from a domestic politics perspective.

The domestic level, specifically studies on policy change in relation to multi-party politics, offers the most insights for my project and shall be discussed in most detail. Examining the domestic level allows to identify the drivers and constraints of change, such as institutional structures (e.g., bureaucracies) as well as political agents (e.g., government, parties, interest groups). The literature on military innovation often focused on the military alone, or on civil-military relations, through the lens of an organization or bureaucracy. One can identify three explanatory approaches that examine the military as a bureaucratic entity, specifically "inter-service politics", "intraservice politics", and "organizational culture".[99] The first assumes that resource scarcity drives different military services (e.g., navy, air force, army) to compete over military innovations.[100] For example, in the 1950s and 1960s the US Army would have developed attack helicopters, due to its rivalry with the US Air force, whose close air support it had envied.[101] Other studies have posited that intraservice rivalry would drive innovation, as evident in cases ranging from aircraft carriers to air assault.[102] Both approaches center on competition, often informed by neorealism. A different approach emerged in the 1990s due to works by Elisabeth Kier, Theo Farrell, and others. It focused on how cultural aspects shape the perception of and reaction to military innovations within military organizations.[103]

Bureaucracies tend to resist innovation and change. For example, European armies held on to horse cavalry in the twentieth century although modern weapons, such as machine guns, tanks, helicopters, and so forth, surged. As Stephen Rosen remarked, the cavalry persisted because of tradition, sentimentality, and social exclusivity.[104] In his study of military innovation in the US and Britain, he concluded, however, that civilian political leaders did not have had "a major

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98 Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

99 Adam Grissom, "The Future of Military Innovation Studies," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 5 (2007); see also Michael Raska, *Military Innovation in Small States: Creating a Reverse Asymmetry* (London: Routledge, 2016).

100 Grissom, "Military Innovation Studies," 911-12.

101 James W. Bradin, *From Hot Air to Hellfire: The History of Army Attack Aviation* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1994).

102 Stephen P. Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

103 Theo Farrell, "Culture and Military Power," *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 3 (1998); Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

104 Rosen, *Winning the Next War*, 2-3.

role in deciding which new military capabilities to develop".[105] The German AMALE-drone procurement would challenge this conclusion. Politicians, or political parties for that matter, did play a key role. Still, the military innovation literature does generally not prioritize national politics or political agents alone, although they are central decision-makers in democracies. After all, political discourses, foreign and security policy proposals, and defense budgets greatly shape courses of action.

By contrast, the literature on foreign policy change pays thorough attention to political agents, such as governments and the constellation of parties within them. Here, one needs to differentiate between foreign policy modifications stemming from a change in government and those driven by "self-correcting" adjustments within an incumbent government.[106] For example, James I. Walsh argued that a change in government can be a significant driver for policy shifts. Specifically, he suggests that the election of the Labour Party was pivotal in the UK's decision for the EU to take a more proactive role in military crisis management, rather than continuing to rely solely on NATO, after this policy had failed in the 1990s Balkan Wars. While this alternative policy idea had existed and enjoyed support, the institutional context hindered its implementation: The government, constrained by its narrow and fractious parliamentary majority, lacked the ability to enact this policy. Only the newly elected Labour government, which enjoyed a large and more pro-European parliamentary majority, could realize the new policy.[107] A lacking majority might also explain the German abstention of drone armament, at least between 2013–2021, when the CDU/CSU governed with the more drone-skeptical SPD. Still, it does not explain why the more drone friendly conservative-liberal government (2009–2013) did not pass a drone armament bill. Addressing the level of analysis of individuals, Paul Lushenko argued that the US drone strike policy decisions resulted from the respective "strategic and legal-normative cognitive frames" of different presidents.[108] However, as Angela Merkel was the chancellor for my entire studied time period, the German case does not offer variation on this variable.

Regarding incumbent governments, many authors studied the effects of specific catalytic events, both large and small, which could create opportunities to undertake a sudden policy

105 Ibid., 225.
106 Charles F. Hermann, "Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy," *International Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (1990): 5.
107 James I. Walsh, "Policy Failure and Policy Change: British Security Policy After the Cold War," *Comparative Political Studies* 39, no. 4 (2006): 515.
108 Paul Lushenko, "U.S. Presidents' Use of Drone Warfare," *Defense & Security Analysis* 38, no. 1 (2022): 33.

change.[109] Using a rather radical concept, Charles Hermann speaks of "external shocks"; meaning "large events in terms of visibility and immediate impact on the recipient".[110] Wars are classic examples of large-scale events or crises. Many of the authors discussed here based their works on wars as significant events, even if they did not use the concept of "external shocks". However, the sheer anticipation of a crises can also drive change, as Farrell added.[111] Less drastically, Walsh sees "policy failure" as indicative of reorientation, and Kingdon simply recognizes a "policy window" as setting the right time for change.[112] Indeed, the casualties and deaths of the "Kunduz bombing" (2009) and the "Good Friday Battle" (2010) in Afghanistan could have presented such policy failures for Germany. At the same time, Hermann does recognize that external shocks are only one out of four drivers of foreign policy change, along with leadership action, bureaucratic advocacy, and domestic restructuring.[113] Barry Posen had already developed a first model on this in the 1980s, based on the analysis of interwar innovation in the UK, France, and Germany. A high level of (perceived) external threats would make politicians more likely to intervene and push for changes in military decision-making and doctrine.[114] An example of this dynamic was when the Eisenhower administration urged the US Air Force to adopt strategic missiles.[115] In the case of the German drone debate, the threat level may have been higher in the mid-2010s due to an increase in Islamic fundamentalist terror attacks on German soil and a massive influx of refugees from conflict-torn countries.

But the transformative potential of shocks and impulses also depends on whether policy entrepreneurs effectively frame events and build consensus.[116] According to Walsh, change is more likely to occur after a policy has failed, if politicians have "alternative policies that can both explain the failure that has just occurred and offer new policy prescriptions that promise to avoid such failure in the future", and have high political support from key constituents.[117] Similarly, Michael Mazarr examined how US policy entrepreneurs seized the moment after the 9/11 attacks to redefine US policy towards Iraq. Using interviews and public sources, he traced how

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109 Theo Farrell, *The Norms of War: Cultural Beliefs and Modern Conflict* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005); Kingdon, *Agendas*; Hermann, "Changing Course."
110 Hermann, "Changing Course," 12.
111 Farrell, *The Norms of War*.
112 Walsh, "Policy Failure and Policy Change."; Kingdon, *Agendas*.
113 Hermann, "Changing Course," 12.
114 Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).
115 Edmund Beard, *Developing the ICBM: A Study in Bureaucratic Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976).
116 Farrell, *The Norms of War*, 14.
117 Walsh, "Policy Failure and Policy Change," 491.

various factors led the Bush Jr. administration to buy into the long-simmering idea of disempowering Saddam Hussein, resulting in the American invasion of Iraq.[118]

Yi Edward Yang compared the Bush Sr. and Clinton administrations in how they each undertook major changes their China-related foreign policies. Similar to this dissertation, he analyzed public statements but did so with an automated coding scheme, while my project is qualitative in style. Regarding the level of analysis, he examined individuals, that is foreign policy decision makers, and assessed through a "leadership trait analysis"-framework how personality characteristics influenced their policy adjustments.[119] Focusing on individual decision-makers fits to contexts like the US or UK, where a single party with a parliamentary majority can implement policies independently. However, it might be less effective in settings like Germany, where political power is diffuse and distributed among several coalition partners or different bureaucratic bodies, such as ministries and governmental agencies.

That is why the policy change literature on multi-party politics offers valuable insights for this dissertation. After all, what makes the case of German armed drone adoption so puzzling is that drone-skeptical politicians successfully blocked this innovation for years. Indeed, literature on policy change in multi-party systems suggests that more political agents generally lead to more disagreement and a lower likelihood of policy change. In a comparative case study, Juliet Kaarbo asserted that both external and internal factors shape foreign policy, but their impact is crucially mediated through decision-making bodies, such as the coalition cabinet. Using various primary and secondary sources, Kaarbo traced decision-making processes leading to policy changes in Japan and Turkey.[120] She argued that dissent within government coalitions can hinder and slow down policy change.[121] Indeed, the CDU/CSU and SPD governed together for many years during the drone debate, but disagreed in their positions on armed drones.

Similarly, George Tsebelis theorized about the agents who must agree to a policy proposal and who can therefore block it with a veto. He posits that the more veto players involved in the policymaking process, and the larger the ideological differences between them, the less likely

118 Michael J. Mazarr, "The Iraq War and Agenda Setting," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 3, no. 1 (2007).
119 Yi Edward Yang, "Leaders' Conceptual Complexity and Foreign Policy Change: Comparing the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush Foreign Policies toward China," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3, no. 4 (2010): 415; 20.
120 Juliet Kaarbo, "Coalition Politics, International Norms, and Foreign Policy: Multiparty Decision-Making Dynamics in Comparative Perspective," *International Politics* 54, no. 6 (2017): 671.
121 Ibid., 669-70.

significant policy changes are to occur.[122] Jeroen Joly and Friederike Richter examined countermobilization in multi-party contexts, where one agent's mobilization triggers a response. This would result in an "equilibrium", that allows only minor adjustments, thereby contributing to policy stability.[123] Using regression analysis, they tested their hypotheses and identified two mechanisms that allow for significant change: First, "a change in the issue's policy image", or its meaning. Second, "venue shopping", where policy entrepreneurs advocate for their issue across various policy fora, such as institutions, groups, or committees.[124] Although the approaches of Tsebelis, and Joly and Richter differ from mine, one can expect similar dynamics in the case of the German drone debate. The controversy consisted of competing representations of drones as a good or bad, useful or ineffective, together with their normalization or scandalization. Thus, the discursive dominance of the opposition may have been a constraint.

Most policy change studies focus on successful, radical cases as outcomes. Few inquiries also examined cases where a policy change was only incremental or failed. For example, Anne Peltner studied an incremental change; how the UK adjusted its humanitarian intervention policy in the 1990s. Using content analysis (CA), Peltner examined speech acts regarding four events in which grave violations of human rights occurred (the Angolan Civil War, the Rwandan genocide, the Kosovo War, and the Darfur War in Sudan).[125] She argued that at the national level the change in government and on the international level the emergence of the new Responsibility to Protect norm shifted the state sovereignty norm domestically and lowered the threshold for humanitarian intervention.[126]

Marijke Breuning studied a deviant case, assessing how a Belgian State Secretary failed to undertake a major change in Belgian development policy to fit the international norm in the 1990s, although the conditions were favorable.[127] By examining international and domestic environment, and the role of the individual state-leader, she combined different levels of analysis and highlighted the importance of domestic political dynamics. She concluded that policy change will be more likely when advocates "(i) craft their message in such a way as to gain broad public

122 George Tsebelis, *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002), 11.

123 Joly and Richter, "Punctuated Equilibrium Theory," 44; in reference to Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*, ed. Bryan D. Jones, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

124 Joly and Richter, "Punctuated Equilibrium Theory," 44.

125 Anne Peltner, "Competing Norms and Foreign Policy Change: Humanitarian Intervention and British Foreign Policy," *International Politics* 54, no. 6 (2017): 746.

126 Ibid.

127 Marijke Breuning, "Roles and Realities: When and Why Gatekeepers Fail to Change Foreign Policy," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 9, no. 3 (2013).

support and (ii) navigate the peculiarities of the political institutions within which they function."[128] Whether agents need to craft messages, as Breuning put it, or change the policy image of an issue, as Joly and Richter suggested, discourse and framing matter for political processes. As Henrik Larsen noted, political discourse provides "a framework for the general foreign policy line".[129] However, while all these authors primarily examined the executive branch, this project looks at the heart of political discourse in democratic systems: parliamentary debates.

1.2 Why Study Parliamentary Discourse for Understanding Policy Change

The intense and seemingly unfaltering German controversy about armed drones, the sheer length of the political discussion, and the persistent non-decision had initially sparked my research interest. That is why I chose a discourse-analytical approach to analyze the parliamentary debates on drones. Importantly, the case of the German drone debate was not selected on the dependent variable. Then, during my research, in the fall of 2021, the new government decided to support drone armament. Ignoring this outcome would have left a gap in our understanding. Still, my focus remained on closely analyzing the parliamentary debate, also in the light of the socio-political context. It allowed to trace the subtle discursive developments that led to minimal progress in armed drone policy for years, while still acknowledging the eventual decision in favor of armament.[130] This sub-chapter outlines the reasons for choosing discourse analysis for studying policy change and introduces the German Bundestag as the discursive setting.

1.2.1 Understanding Discourse through Parliamentary Debates

As Iver Neumann put it, discourse analytical approaches have a high relevance for studies of policy because "a fuller understanding of where we are and how we landed here is helpful in getting us somewhere else".[131] Discourse analyses of policy change often look at a group of decisionmakers such as politicians or state officials. As Anna Holzscheiter put it, "we need to know more about the role of the discourses of the political elites in society, particularly because their legislative or policy-making positions place them in the crucible of discursive power and influence".[132] While they consider conditions provided by bureaucratic politics, institutional

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128 Ibid., 322.

129 Henrik Larsen, *Foreign Policy and Discourse Analysis: France, Britain and Europe* (London: Routledge, 1997), 22.

130 Jennifer Milliken, "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods," *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 2 (1999): 240.

131 Iver B. Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," in *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*, ed. Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 76.

132 Teun A. van Dijk, "Theoretical Background," in *Racism at the Top: Parliamentary Discourses on Ethnic Issues in Six European States*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Teun A. van Dijk (Klagenfurt: Drava-Verlag, 2000), 17.

environments, and organizational settings for the sake of contextualization, "the public defence of the decisions that arise from these" is at the center of attention, as Lene Hansen has noted.[133]

Of course, it is also possible to reconstruct foreign policy narratives, framings of drone systems, and arguments about drone strikes by studying other settings, such as the media or debates among governmental agencies. However, as research areas the media or parliament differ in their ends (public opinion or policy making), the interaction between speakers (little or much), and how much they reflect the political discourse (selective or comprehensive). That is why my focus is on the immediate political setting. Here, discourse analysts examine one or more sub-genres such as governmental discourse, political speeches held outside of parliament, political propaganda, campaigns, and parliamentary debates.[134] However, the MOD's position had been clear for years. The controversial discussions took place in the parliament, which is my main focus. Therefore, this dissertation primarily examines parliamentary debates, albeit government officials also frequently speak in the Bundestag, which allows to include the governmental discourse to some extent.

In the setting of parliamentary debates, politicians engage in agenda-setting. They frame issues and define situations for their colleagues and the general public. Politicians are assumed to reflect – or at least relate to – the ideas and discourse of the people they represent.[135] In order to account for the public opinion on drone-related issues more directly, this dissertation consults a number of surveys conducted throughout the years of the observation period January 2009 to December 2018. How politicians represent ideas does not always have to be a positive. For example, previous studies analyzed the extent to which Western European ministers and members of parliament (MPs) formulated ethnic or racial biases.[136] Through specific political practices, certain representations of ethnic groups were "prepared, promulgated, and legitimized" within the discourse, while others were countered, criticized, and delegitimized.[137] These studies drew heavily on textual data from parliamentary debates. However, their primary aim was to show how top political elites throughout Western Europe reproduced ethnic opinions and decision-making, not to demonstrate how parliamentary debates intersected with legislative outcomes – with policy development and policy change.

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133 Lene Hansen, "Discourse Analysis, Post-Structuralism, and Foreign Policy," in *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*, ed. Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, and Timothy Dunne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 106-7.

134 van Dijk, "Parliamentary Debates," 46.

135 Hansen, "Discourse Analysis," 107.

136 Ruth Wodak and Teun A. van Dijk, *Racism at the Top: Parliamentary Discourses on Ethnic Issues in Six European States*, ed. Elisabeth Menasse-Wiesbauer (Klagenfurt: Drava-Verlag, 2000).

137 Ibid., 32.

As Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones remarked, "the process by which issues get defined for policy action" is the "key" to "understanding this alteration between stability and change".[138] By framing issues and defining situations, speakers select some social issues while neglecting others and prioritize which need to be addressed immediately over those that can wait.[139] Then, parliamentarians discuss possible solutions, arguing over which one is the best fit. They formulate and legitimate policies; all while being under public scrutiny. As the authors noted, conflict may occur:

> "In some cases, there is virtually no disagreement about the social or political implications of a given policy, while in other cases there may be considerable conflict over the proper way to describe or understand it. Often, proponents of a policy focus on one set of images, while opponents refer more often to another set of images."[140]

Indeed, the German AMALE-drone policy debate was highly contested and polarized for years without bringing about a clear policy outcome. Baumgartner and Jones found that policy "monopolies" "are often supported by the acceptance of a positive policy image and the rejection of possible competing images".[141] Competition figures prominently in their stance. Students of rhetorical coercion in discourse also assume a struggle for dominance and marginalization in foreign policy debates. In their view, political elites frame foreign policy in a way that not only resonates with the public, but also dominates the discourse and effectively limits opposition. This involves rhetorical tactics that prevent opponents from forming a socially sustainable rebuttal, essentially narrowing the discursive space available to them.[142] For example, Jack Holland and Mike Aaronson argued that the US primarily justified the intervention in Afghanistan as means of preventing another 9/11. Secondary justifications, such as addressing human rights abuses by the Taliban, served to quell dissent. This strategy shifted the debate to focus on what constitutes the national interest, rather than questioning the underlying policy itself.[143] These studies neither exclusively build on parliamentary debates as data, nor do I agree with all their theoretical assumptions (see Chapter 2). Yet, they usefully illustrate how the interplay between political discourse and legislative outcomes.

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138 Baumgartner and Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*, 25.
139 Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (London: Routledge, 2006).
140 Baumgartner and Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*, 26.
141 Ibid.
142 Jack Holland and Mike Aaronson, "Dominance through Coercion: Strategic Rhetorical Balancing and the Tactics of Justification in Afghanistan and Libya," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 8, no. 1 (2014); Ronald R. Krebs and Patrick T. Jackson, "Twisting Tongues and Twisting Arms: The Power of Political Rhetoric," *European Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 1 (2007).
143 Holland and Aaronson, "Dominance through Coercion."

At some point, the parliamentary discourse may transcend communication and culminate in regulations, namely when it is time for decision-making and the making of legislation.[144] This is when the parliamentary discourse evolves into "the direct force of law".[145] So parliamentary discourse may not only reflect and influence public opinion, but in some ways, it will eventually direct public behavior, making it a highly relevant object of analysis. This project analyzes how German politicians constructed the meaning of drone warfare in parliamentary debates. Examining how governments (de-)scandalize the adoption of AMALE-drones can further our understanding of how they attempt to shape policy according to their preference, evening the ground for either joining or resisting the armed drones arms race.

Previous studies of German parliamentary debates and other political texts uncovered several themes shaping German foreign and security policy discourses, which will also emerge throughout my dissertation. Anna Geis, Harald Müller, and Niklas Schörnig analyzed how political elites publicly justified and legitimized the use of military force. Using quantitative methods, they conducted a computer-aided CA of parliamentary debates in seven states. Referencing Democratic Peace Theory, they inquired why some liberal western democracies go to war while others do not.[146] The authors found German policymakers mostly used arguments about International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the national role or identity to support or oppose a military mission. References to NATO and the United Nations Organization (UN) often served to create legitimacy. Power-related arguments, which, by contrast, were extremely prominent in the US, played a minor role in Germany; if anything, they appeared in arguments against military engagement. Discursive constructions of the enemy were similarly rare.[147]

Frank Sauer provided a first impression of military drone debates in German media and the national parliament. According to him, the debates centered on the use of force, the minimization of civilian casualties, a lessened political reluctance to employ military force, a rapidly advancing proliferation without oversight from arms control policies, and concerns about the automation of warfare.[148] However, his article focused on mapping arguments not tracing discursive dynamics and tensions of drone policy options as this project seeks to. Moreover, Sauer

144 van Dijk, "Theoretical Background," 17.
145 Ibid.
146 Anna Geis, Harald Müller, and Niklas Schörnig, "Liberale Demokratien und Krieg: Warum manche kämpfen und andere nicht. Ergebnisse einer vergleichenden Inhaltsanalyse von Parlamentsdebatten," *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 17, no. 2 (2010).
147 Ibid., 193-94.
148 Frank Sauer, "Einstiegsdrohnen: Zur deutschen Diskussion um bewaffnete unbemannte Luftfahrzeuge," *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* 7, no. 3 (2014): 345.

only cited two plenary protocols from the Bundestag, and his examination ended 2014, whereas mine extends until the end of 2018 (and even until 2021 in the epilogue).

1.2.2 Introducing the Discursive Arena: The German Bundestag

Centering the analysis on the German parliament went along with focusing on particular actors and the implications of the institutional framework on the discourse, which shall be briefly introduced.[149] In the German parliamentary governmental system, government coalitions between two or more parties are the norm. On the one hand, a coalition provides political stability by restricting the power of one single party. On the other hand, it can pose the risk of political stagnation. During the observation period of this study (2009–2018), the conservative party-union, consisting of the CDU and CSU, has held the most seats. Thus, over time, the Conservatives consistently provided the government, led by Chancellor Angela Merkel, though with different coalition partners. From 2005–2009 and from 2013–2021, the CDU/CSU governed with the SPD. From 2009–2013 their coalition partner was the liberal FDP (see Table 1).

Legislation period	Time frame	Government	Seats per party
16th	2005–2009	CDU/CSU & SPD	CDU/CSU: 222 SPD: 221 FDP: 61 Left: 53 Greens: 51 independent: 3. AfD: n/a
17th	2009–2013	CDU/CSU & FDP	CDU/CSU: 237 SPD: 146 FDP: 93 Left: 75 Greens: 68 independent: 1 AfD: n/a
18th	2013–2017	CDU/CSU & SPD	CDU/CSU: 309 SPD: 193 Left: 64 Greens: 63 independent: 1 FDP: n/a AfD: n/a
19th	2017–2021	CDU/CSU & SPD	CDU/CSU: 246 SPD: 152 AfD: 89 FDP: 80 Left: 69 Greens: 67 independent: 6

Table 1: Composition of the German Parliament 2005–2021
Source: Author's own work

[149] Anna Holzscheiter, "Discourse as Capability: Non-State Actors' Capital in Global Governance," *Millennium* 33, no. 3 (2005): 745.

Within the Bundestag, MPs of the same party commonly organize as a parliamentary group ("Fraktion") (PG).[150] They hold regular meetings, consult on policy items, and coordinate decisions on policy proposals.[151] Over the past fifteen years, the CDU/CSU, the SPD, the Greens, and the Left Party were steadily represented in the Bundestag. The FDP did not make it into parliament in the 2013 election, as it received less than five percent of the votes, but then returned in 2017. The 2017 election also brought the right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD) into the national parliament for the first time (see Table 1).

The analysis will show that arguments and positions were highly politicized, leading to contradictions and intense discussions. Regarding general drone-policy positions, the parliamentary group of the CDU/CSU was the most supportive of acquiring armed drones, followed by the FDP and, later, the AfD. The SPD was somewhere in the middle on the support-opposition spectrum, open to discussing armament but still highly skeptical of German drone strikes. As a coalition partner of the CDU/CSU, they eventually settled for agreeing to unarmed but armable platforms. The Greens and the Left, both opposition parties throughout 2009–2018, were more certain about where they stood. The Greens generally supported the acquisition and employment of unarmed ISR drones for the German forces but were against the procurement of armed military drones. The Left strongly disapproved the acquisition of armed drones for the German forces throughout the entire time (see Figure 1).

Strong opponent				**Strong advocate**	
Left	Greens	SPD	FDP	CDU/CSU	AfD

Figure 1: Party Positions towards Armed Drones 2009–2018
Source: Author's own work

Over the years, parties have contributed to the drone debate to varying extents, indicating the shifting priorities of the issue. Across all parties, 2013 was the year with the most speech instances mentioning combat drones. The Left was the only party who consistently brought up military drones over the entire time. By comparison, the Greens started off similarly enthusiastically as the Left but gradually decreased their amount of military drone mentions in the Bundestag debates after 2013. Social Democrats have frequently spoken up on military drones in the early debates. Still, considering how many MPs belonged to their parliamentary group, they

150 A parliamentary group can also consist of two parties as long as they largely have the same political objectives and do not compete against each other in any of the Federal States. This is currently only the case for the CDU and the Bavarian CSU. The CDU does not run in Bavaria; the CSU does exclusively run in Bavaria.

151 Nik Milosevic, *Politische Entscheidungsprozesse und multinationale Militäreinsätze Deutschland im internationalen Vergleich*, vol. 6 (Leverkusen: Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2018), 128.

remained relatively quiet. The Conservatives spoke up far more often, constituting about a quarter of all speech instances during the observed time. The engagement of the FDP in the drone debate was rather moderate. Joining the Bundestag in fall 2017 for the first time, the right-wing party AfD did rarely contribute to the debate over the course of the observation period (January 2009–December 2018) and will play a minor role in the main analysis.

In the 2010s, the most likely military scenarios for using armed or unarmed combat drones were counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. The German armed forces have used unarmed military drones for ISR in two international operations: three drones in Afghanistan from 2009 to 2021, and three drones in Mali since 2016. These two countries were the most discussed cases of drone deployment in the Bundestag. Afghanistan was the largest and longest one out of all the international missions of Germany. The US continued to use drone strikes as part of its counterinsurgency strategy to weaken the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The targeted killing of suspected terrorists has sparked intense controversy in the Bundestag over the years. From an international legal perspective, US drone strikes in Pakistan and Somalia were more controversial than in Afghanistan because these countries were not officially declared war zones. Pakistan and Somalia were less prominent in the debates because Germany had no troops stationed there.

1.3 Research Framework for Analyzing Parliamentary Debates

To tackle the main research question of how the acquisition and use of armed military drones by Germany emerged as a political option in the German parliamentary debate 2009–2018, I formulated three sub research questions (Sub-RQs). Each sub-question roughly represents the focus of one analytical chapter. The first sub-question for my discourse analysis connects to the *meaningful representations and concepts about a specific object or practice* entailed in a discourse. In the past, discourse scholars have generated novel insights by analyzing political concepts such as Europe, security, and nation.[152] They also studied representations of practices such as strategic bombing and ethical/racial discrimination.[153] This project analyzes how German politicians have discursively represented the meanings and framed the practices of drone warfare:

> Sub-RQ1: "How did policymakers discursively represent the military uses of combat drones?"

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152 Larsen, *Foreign Policy and Discourse Analysis*.

153 Tami D. Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare: The Evolution of British and American Ideas about Strategic Bombing, 1914-1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002); Wodak and van Dijk, *Racism at the Top*, 16.

For the second sub-question, I turn to the various *possibilities for action*; an array of options for how policymakers could and should respond to the given phenomenon. The tableau of policy options is broad, including – of course – arming drones or not, supporting industrial research and development, supporting international arms control, or pushing for an international drone ban. I analyzed how policymakers framed certain courses for action as possible or not possible, as appropriate or inappropriate, as beneficial or costly. This part will connect to the findings of the first sub-question, since meaning is "*constitutive* of political actions, governing institutions, and public policies", as Hendrik Wagenaar rightly noted.[154] Furthermore, the second sub-question directly links to my main research question about the use of armed military drones emerging as a political option by asking:

Sub-RQ2: "How were possible courses for action represented?"

The third sub-question considers the broader *ideational structures within a social context*; the socio-political context of the German parliamentary debate on military drone policy. A discourse shapes the social context and sets up the preconditions for a certain action. At the same time, the specific political, economic, historical, and cultural context, in turn, shapes the discourse.[155] These ideational structures outline possible lines of thought or courses for action.[156] Policymakers interpret reality based on the previously existing meanings-in-use and sense-making practices entailed in the structures surrounding them. In Constructivist International Relations (IR), scholars have repeatedly argued for the role of a state's identity in this process.[157] An identity can serve as a reference object for an appropriate course of action.[158] However, identity is a very broad concept, which requires much space in a research design. That is why I focus on the narrower concept "international role" referring to the vision political decision-makers have of "their" state's role in the world. I apply this concept to Germany's foreign policy role; specifically, to how Bundestag speakers presented the German involvement in international armed conflicts in the drone debate.[159]

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154 Emphasis in original, Hendrik Wagenaar, *Meaning in Action: Interpretation and Dialogue in Policy Analysis* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2011), 4.

155 Compare Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 62-3.

156 Roxanne L. Doty, "Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of US Counter-Insurgency Policy in the Philippines," *International Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (1993): 298.

157 Hansen, *Security as Practice*, X.

158 Anna Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights in International Politics. The Transformative Power of Discourse* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2010), 36; referring to Neta Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics. Ethics, Decolonialization, and Humanitarian Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

159 Marijke Breuning, "Role Theory Research in International Relations," in *Role Theory in International Relations*, ed. Sebastian Harnisch, Cornelia Frank, and Hanns W. Maull (Oxford: Routledge, 2011), 28; Geis, Müller, and Schörnig, "Liberale Demokratien und Krieg," 176.

In the international role concept state identity, interests, purpose, and relationships come together, making it useful for analyzing foreign policy discourses and policy formation. That is why my third sub-question is:

> Sub-RQ3 "How did the German military drone discourse interact with ideas about Germany's (new) role in the world?"

Sebastian Harnisch, Cornelia Frank, and Hanns W. Maull define roles as "notions of actors about who they are, what they would like to be with regard to others, and how they therefore should interact in (international) social relationships".[160] Thus, the concept also encompasses how an agent relates to other actors in the social environment. International roles often refer to a specific foreign policy mission, which allows more analytical precision than the concept of "identity".[161] For example, the global leadership role of the US stood for the American responsibility to promote peace, democracy, and liberal markets in countries that supposedly needed it, while encouraging likeminded states to follow the American lead in this mission.

1.3.1 Theoretical and Methodological Approach

The discourse analysis thus examines the meanings-in-use of drone operations for warfare, German drone policy options, and Germany's international role in the German parliamentary discourse. In addition to reconstructing meanings, I interpret representations and spot dynamics and tensions in the discourse. Three pillars jointly constitute the discourse-theoretical framework: 1) the agents, in my case parliamentary speakers, 2) their language practices, which (re)create meanings through rhetorical strategies like framing and grafting, and 3) the context, or "discursive ecosystem" as I call it, in which these practices occur.

Unlike more open discursive settings, such as media discourses, the Bundestag is a rather restricted forum. What results party agents achieve in national elections shapes the formal structure of the debate. Hence, election results set parameters for the discourse: The constellation of different parties, the distribution of seats and speaking time, among others. That is why agents play such a pivotal role in the empirical analysis. Nevertheless, structures underpin the other two theoretical pillars. Language drives the productivity of discourses. By analyzing the language practices of German policymakers, I examine the data material through the lenses of

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160 Sebastian Harnisch, Cornelia Frank, and Hanns W. Maull, "Introduction," in *Role Theory in International Relations*, ed. Sebastian Harnisch, Cornelia Frank, and Hanns W. Maull (Oxford; New York: Routledge, 2011), 1.

161 Knut Kirste and Hanns W. Maull, "Zivilmacht und Rollentheorie," *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 3, no. 2 (1996); Hanns Maull, "Germany and the Use of Force: Still a 'Civilian Power'?," *Survival* 42, no. 2 (2000).

three discursive units or "properties", namely representations, frames, and narratives.[162] Together, they form an ideational structure. Frames are a particularly useful tool for conducting a discourse analysis.[163] They link together specific ideas "into packages of meaning".[164] They define an issue or problem and suggest a solution or strategy.[165] As any discursive element, frames are not fixed. They transform over time, for example because they are reinterpreted. Hence, they provide a suitably "open" tool for exploring different aspects in the discourse. The "discursive ecosystem" concept explains how I conceptualize the relationship between a discourse and its context, highlighting the dynamic interplay between ideational and material components.

The method of this inquiry is a qualitative discourse analysis with a longitudinal perspective (emergence of armed drone use as a political option over time), underpinned by an interpretivist research philosophy. An interpretative discourse analysis seeks to broaden and deepen our understanding of a subject rather than aiming to do causal inferences, as positivist studies tend to do. I chose discourse analysis because this approach goes further than CA, for example. It goes beyond restating what has been said and assuming word frequency equals discursive significance. Interpreting and understanding a discourse requires socio-political or historical contextualization. Since this dissertation has an empirical focus, it aims for high methodological quality. Thus, the chosen method, the research process, the data selection procedure, analytical steps, and codes should be depicted more meticulously than most theory-oriented discourse studies tend to do. Searching the Bundestag online archive yielded over a thousand hits for the German parliamentary debate from 2009–2018. Drones were not only a debate topic on their own, but also appeared in discussions on other foreign and security policy issues. I ultimately selected over five hundred texts for the discourse analysis, including plenary debate protocols, interpellations with government responses, policy proposals, and reports.

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162 On "frames" and "framing" see Elvira Rosert, *Die Nicht-Entstehung internationaler Normen: Permissive Effekte in der humanitären Rüstungskontrolle* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019), 134.

163 For a more elaborate discussion of "frames" see Chapter 3.

164 W.E. Douglas Creed, Jeffrey A. Langstraat, and Maureen A. Scully, "A Picture of the Frame: Frame Analysis as Technique and as Politics," *Organizational Research Methods* 5, no. 1 (2002): 37. Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 75.

165 Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 52; see also Ariel Zellman, "Framing Consensus: Evaluating the Narrative Specificity of Territorial Indivisibility," *Journal of Peace Research* 52, no. 4 (2015); Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2004); Michael Barnett, "Culture, Strategy and Foreign Policy Change: Israel's Road to Oslo," *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 1 (1999): 25.

1.3.2 Limitations of the Research

Despite the comprehensive nature of this study, there are some limitations, which should be briefly acknowledged in order to understand the scope of its content and the extent of generated knowledge. Its pragmatic theoretical and methodological perspective might not align with more traditional structure-centric discourse theorists or purely agent-centric foreign policy scholars. The approach, which pragmatically balances structural and agent-centric dimensions, might be seen as too broad. An analysis with a "pure" style might yield different insights. Still, the chosen pragmatic approach allows for a balanced analysis and fosters a comprehensive understanding. It offers a well-rounded view that can serve as a basis for more specialized future studies. Since the drone literature ranges across various scholarly traditions and disciplines (see 1.1), approaching the subject from a broad perspective enhances its relevance across this spectrum.

Regarding the subject of study, the main limitation of this research lies in its restricted focus on parliamentary debates and on armed drones. Thus, it does not explicitly examine the broader discourse on armed drones happening outside of the Bundestag, with government agents, NGOs, think tanks and intellectuals participating, even though the parliamentary debate is, of course, embedded in this larger discourse. Analyses of media coverage or discussions on social media platforms do reflect and shape public sentiment and policy discussions. They also contribute to the political discourse on armed drones. Nevertheless, they were omitted because they are different social fora. This study selected the parliament, as it is where formal policy-making processes happen. It allows to map the official positions of political parties, which are crucial for understanding legislative outcomes. Similarly, some discourse theorists might wish for more intertextuality since the study primarily relies on Bundestag documents without linking them to other texts such as media articles, expert interviews, or speeches from non-parliamentary actors. Indeed, incorporating these additional sources could provide a richer understanding of the drone discourse but the time and resources available here were limited. Future research could broaden the assessment to incorporate these voices and texts.

The other main limitation is the restricted explanatory power given the decision of the newly elected government coalition to allow arming drones in the fall of 2021. By 2021, much of the data coding analysis for this project had already been finished. Moreover, the original research interest was in the debate rather than the outcome. Thus, a discourse analysis was still more suitable than a case study or process-tracing of the resulting foreign policy change. In retrospect, it would also have been a similarly intriguing research project to take a foreign policy change approach instead of a discourse-analytical one. One could have assessed which drivers and constraints have plausibly led to the decision for armed drones in 2021. Still, as representations in

the political discourse would have been only one factor among many, their analysis would have remained superficial. Now, due to my in-depth analysis, future research with a broader, outcome-oriented policy change approach can build on my findings.

Similarly, the scope of generated knowledge is always limited in a single case study. This study did not compare the German armed drone debate to any other country or weapons system. Focusing on a single case allowed for an in-depth assessment, a nuanced examination, and (hopefully) an insightful read about the puzzling German drama about drones. The way Germany handled and debated armed drones was quite unique compared to other countries. While defense procurement processes tend to be slow in Germany, debating a weapon system for over a decade without any significant process was, indeed, remarkable, even in Germany. Due to its uniqueness, the potential for producing generalizable knowledge from this case might be restricted anyways. Drones are not necessarily representative for all German defense procurement debates and yet it still reflected many key tensions of German foreign and security policy, as the following chapters will reveal. Moreover, generalization is not the main research objective of interpretivist research. Future comparative analyses could draw on my work to then identify commonalities and differences in parliamentary discourse on other weapon systems, military technologies or defense policy in general.

1.4 Structure of the Dissertation

The structure of this dissertation is as follows. **Chapter 2** establishes the theoretical framework, presenting a definition of discourse and focusing on the discourse-theoretical approach to policy processes. By asking "what-means" and "how-possible" questions, a discourse-theoretical approach allows to better understand drone policy formation, the emergence of certain drone policy alternatives, and the unfolding of particular drone-related events. **Chapter 3** introduces the methodology. It sheds light on the qualitative discourse analytical research design grounded in an interpretivist research philosophy, which has "understanding" as a research objective and primarily draws on inductive reasoning. Chapter 4 to 6 present the discourse analysis, each focusing on a different research sub-question and topic. In harmony with the discourse analytical approach depicted above, they examine the different meanings in use, representations, concepts, and discursive framings. They trace the development of the discourse over time and assess discursive dynamics. Also, they sketch out and contrast different positions of both critics and supporters armed drones.

Chapter 4 analyzes how speakers articulated and presented the potential military uses of combat drones. It sheds light on the agenda-setting process of combat drone policy. Two overarching narratives emerged: the narrative of "military capability" as represented by drone supporters (CDU/CSU, FDP, and government representatives), and the narrative of "targeted killing" as constructed by drone skeptics (Left, Greens, and SPD). The first narrative emphasized German soldiers as central. It presented armed drones as a technological capability and highlighting the benefits of drone strikes for defense purposes. In contrast, the second narrative focused on the practice of targeted killing. It stressed the broader legal and strategic context, with the local population, particularly the targeted individuals, as the main actors, who would suffer. Readers familiar with the drone literature will recognize many controversial issues discussed. Still, this chapter uniquely pinpoints the stark lines between the two stances on armed drones that clashed to the extent of two worlds of meanings. While these deep-seated divisions are the most pronounced here, they keep resonating in the following chapters.

Chapter 5 examines parliamentary discussions on procurement and proliferation policy options in a way that broadened the view from the restricted military use debate towards the surrounding conditions of armed drone diffusion. It portrays the array of possible policy responses for armament options, procurement finances, the defense industry, proliferation dynamics, and arms control as presented in Bundestag speech instances. Studies with a narrower focus on the military implications of armed drones often overlook these aspects, although they appeared in Bundestag debates. Moreover, they matter from a theoretical standpoint since issues such as the state of the defense industry and proliferation dynamics can contribute to the context. The analysis again identifies two narratives. The drone-skeptical "perilous procurement"-narrative pessimistically criticized the flawed procurement processes, and warned of the dangerous consequences, such as arms races and robotized warfare. By contrast, the drone-supportive "necessary capability-building"-narrative was more optimistic about the potential and progress of drone technology for Germany. Simultaneously it highlighted the need to remain competitive.

Chapter 6 dives even deeper into the context and contextualization by analyzing how speakers (re)constructed a German foreign and security policy, which also provided a policy baseline for armed drone policy. The key subject hereby is the debate about Germany's (new) international role, especially in terms of dealing with armed conflicts and military engagements abroad. At the same time, due to the emphasis on context, this chapter expands to consider German sociopolitical dispositions towards the military, as well as historical US-German relations. In an effort to interpretatively explain shifts in the discourse, it presents important impulses that occurred within the discursive ecosystem. By contextualizing the findings, the analysis revisits

aspects from earlier chapters in greater detail and from a new perspective, specifically a broader foreign policy viewpoint. It constitutes the final chapter of my main discourse analysis of the period January 2009 to December 2018.

Chapter 7 is a bonus chapter. This additional chapter accounts for the developments that took place when this dissertation was already in progress. Hence it is not part of the discourse-analytical main analysis, but an epilogue, which briefly traces the events after the end of the observation period. In the fall of 2021, the newly elected German government coalition decided to approve armed military drones. The epilogue briefly considers relevant impulses within the discursive ecosystem leading up to this decision, including an expanded use and acquisition of armed drones by states and attacks on Bundeswehr staff stationed in Afghanistan and Mali as well as inner-party developments in the SPD and the Greens in the wake of the 2021 national election. Over the course of 2021, the positions of both the Green Party and the Social Democrats flipped; they became more open to AMALE-drones. Including the epilogue required adjustments but ultimately complemented the dissertation. Not considering these developments would have left a significant gap in our understanding of the German drone debate. However, since time and resources of this project were limited, the analysis of the time leading up to this decision is much more succinct than the main analysis of Chapters 4 to 6, only assessing twelve Bundestag documents. The examination found that the debate had a harsher style, but remained similar in content.

The conclusion in **Chapter 8** summarizes the dissertation, showcases major findings, and presents policy recommendations for German foreign and security policy in the age of the "Zeitenwende". It reflects on the research process, potential limitations of my work, and the contribution to the literature. The chapter concludes the discursive dominance shifted over time. Initially, drone skeptics dominated the debate, by effectively framing arguments, countering pro-drone claims, and creating a rich causal story. They forced pro-drone advocates, especially government representatives, into the defensive. However, over time, proponents of drone strikes gained strength and eventually prevailed in the debate. After the peak controversy (2013–2014), the focus of the opposition shifted to other issues like the scandals about US drone strikes going through bases at Ramstein and the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) in Stuttgart, as well as the rising concerns about the emergence of LAWS. AMALE-drones were less scandalous than before. The tone of the debate became less dramatic, and from 2016, government communication improved. These shifts, along with broader discussions on Germany's international role, gradually paved the way for considering armed drones a viable political option.

This dissertation sheds a new light on the significance of the German drone debate. It finds that the debate was not simply about the introduction of a new military technology, but it was charged with proxy discussions, meta-narratives, and complex assumptions. This complexity illustrates that the drone controversy was about much more than just this mere technology – it was a proxy debate for deeper and broader conversations about the future direction of the country's foreign and security policy. As such, it captured several implicit ideas and significant issues related to violence, military operations, the geography of warfare, technological progress, law, and democratic institutions. It was charged with underlying assumptions about the nature and limits of force, touching on the scope of military operations, the potential for mission creep, and the geographic implications of remote warfare. Speakers also discussed the neutrality of technologies and the emergence of future technologies such as LAWS. Drone debates even touched on the role of democratic state institutions, particularly public trust in the armed forces, MPs, and the government.

Metaphorically speaking, the drone debate also served as a cauldron for long-simmering tensions in German foreign and security policy. It reflected larger issues such as the post-9/11 style of US-led military interventions within the GWOT, including preventive defense, targeted killings, night raids, and controversial detainment practices. There was also considerable discourse on the international legal issues involved. Additionally, it brought into question Germany's role in (future) out-of-area military operations and its defense cooperation with the US. These broader issues were distilled into the drone debate, making it a microcosm of Germany's strategic dilemmas and policy choices. As such it was emblematic of a nation grappling with its foreign policy and military role on the global stage.

2 Discourse-Theoretical Approach: Debates, Agents, and Ecosystems

Discourse analysis can refer to multiple things. Some scholars consider it a distinct method for analyzing textual data, others view it as a broad "approach" or a "field of research".[166] One reason for seeing it as an approach is the widely held view of discourse analysis as a theory-method nexus, but for the sake of clarity I treat theory and method in two chapters. This chapter introduces my qualitative-interpretative research perspective, engages with different scholarly approaches for studying discourses, and discusses my theoretical assumptions about how discourses "work". The methods chapter then focuses on the practical steps of the research process, including how I operationalized concepts and treated the textual data (Chapter 3).

A discourse analysis is useful for tackling my research question: How did the acquisition and use of armed military drones by Germany emerge as a political option in the German parliamentary debates from January 2009 to December 2018? Examining foreign policy through the lens of discourse allows us to explore the dynamics at play in the transformation of issues, interactions, and processes. Specifically, it helps to understand what is or can be done with language, the "coming-into-being" of meanings,[167] the development of "possibilities of action",[168] and the attendant consequences of the discourse within society and politics.[169] Analyzing discourse may contribute to "a fuller understanding of where we are and how we landed here", as Neumann observed.[170]

Other scholars have previously studied security policy outcomes using a rationalist approach. Rationalist approaches are useful for crafting an explanation for why variable "X" impacted outcome "Y", or why an actor – such as a parliamentary group – made a particular decision (rather than another). These approaches highlight the importance of interests for producing a certain policy outcome. Interests could be, for instance, the maximization of resources or organizational autonomy.[171] In the drone literature, studies focusing on the security dilemma and arms races as a drivers of drone proliferation often build on a rationalist perspective (compare 1.1.1).[172] For example, Schulzke emphasized the security dilemma provides incentives for

166 van Dijk, "Theoretical Background," 28.
167 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 28.
168 Kevin C. Dunn, "Historical Representations," in *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*, ed. Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 78.
169 Charles Antaki, "Discourse Analysis and Conversation Analysis," in *The Sage Handbook of Social Research Methods*, ed. Alasuutari Pertti, Leonard Bickman, and Julia Brannen (London: Sage Publications, 2008), bold in original, 432; Larsen, *Foreign Policy and Discourse Analysis*, 18.
170 Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 76.
171 Farrell, *The Norms of War*, 16.
172 Singer, "The Rise of AI Is Sparking an International Arms Race."

states to develop drones rapidly in order to not fall behind.[173] Sparrow highlighted that militaries would acquire armed drones in order to stay competitive in the battlefield.[174] Rationalist accounts draw on utilitarian rationales, such as gain-maximizing behavior or material incentives. By contrast, my own research does not seek to test how independent variables produced this outcome, but it seeks to understand the discursive dynamics, ideas, and meanings behind the decade-long process. That is why I chose to examine the discourse.

My focus is on the flow of socially constructed meanings within a specific socio-political and historical context; not fixed interests, which rationalists assume to be naturally given. At the same time, my research does not entirely dismiss factors relevant to rationalist perspectives. It opts for a pragmatic approach. For example, a "pure" discourse analysis would typically overlook – unless explicitly addressed in the Bundestag – party-political interests and calculations, internal party dynamics, national elections, changes in government, the international proliferation of armed drones, and other significant events. These sorts of events outside of the discourse were not as impactful during my main observation period (2009–2018) as they were afterward, as the epilogue (Chapter 7) will show. Still, they should be considered in order to gain a comprehensive understanding. They are part of the socio-political context, which matters greatly in discourse theory. After all, issues are never isolated and fixed but constantly interact with their surroundings (see 2.3.2).

Discourse theoretical approaches lend themselves to analyzing the meanings of a social object, concept, or phenomenon and how these meanings have been constituted through communicative interactions over time.[175] Discourse scholars often ask "what means"-[176] and "how possible"-questions.[177] They commonly address the "longer lines" of political life, just as this research does by studying a decade of debates.[178] Foreign policy research has worked with the concept of discourse to inquire how the formulation of a policy came about, how it became possible, and how a particular event could happen whereas others did not. Neumann recommended to analyze discourse for depicting why something or someone was seen in a certain way, for how a specific reaction "emerged as a political option", and "how other options were

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173 Schulzke, *The Morality of Drone Warfare*, 72.

174 Sparrow, "Killing by Remote Control," 87; Adams, "Future Warfare."

175 Wagenaar, *Meaning in Action*, 53; Colin Wight, "Philosophy of Social Science and International Relations," in *Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2013), X; Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 78.

176 Compare Wagenaar, *Meaning in Action*, 53.

177 Jutta Weldes, "Constructing National Interests," *European Journal of International Relations* 2, no. 3 (1996): 283-4; Doty, "Foreign Policy as Social Construction," 298; Dunn, "Historical Representations," 78.

178 Christopher S. Browning, *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis: A Case Study of Finland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 69.

shunted aside".[179] This is precisely my research interest as indicated by the terms "how" (not why), "emergence" (not outcome), and "political option" (not decision) in my research question. All of this happened in and through discourse, which is why it is my approach.

Discourses can relate to one each other by overlapping, interacting, and competing, creating a complex network of interconnected debates. As the analysis chapters will show, this was also true for the parliamentary drone debate (Chapters 4–6). Concerns over US targeted killings within the GWOT shaped the discourse on drones early on. The issue of machine autonomy linked the drone debate to discourses on LAWS and robotic warfare. The failure of the unarmed Euro Hawk drone project also fed into the discourse, with opponents using it to criticize future armed drone initiatives. US-German relations played a significant role as well, as the use of German air bases for US drone strikes complicated the domestic drone debate.

Both agents and structures matter in my theoretical framework. However, because Bundestag debates provide the corpus of this study, it leans more towards agents than a conventional discourse analysis would. Parliamentary speakers are the ones who debate in parliament, who engage in the language practices that constitute meanings. All of this takes place within a dynamic environment – the "discursive ecosystem" as I call it. An "actor-centric"[180] view emphasizes the agency of politicians, parliamentary groups, and government officials in shaping the discourse, while also recognizing that structures condition what is discursively possible. My discourse analysis of parliamentary debates also touches on agents other than MPs, such as the government or the military. Since government officials often speak in the Bundestag, one can study the interaction, contrasts, and similarities between them and parliamentarian speech contributions.[181] The military did not directly participate in the parliamentary debates on drones, but its ideas were indirectly represented by MOD speakers and the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces. However, focusing solely on the military or civil-military relations would constitute a different perspective and including it was beyond the scope of this project. It would have required to reduce the time frame and number of documents, which would, in turn, have contradicted my interest in a longitudinal perspective.

I define discourse as *a productive, patterned ensemble of meaningful representations and concepts about a specific object or practice, that frame it in a certain way and lay out possibilities for action in relation to it – all while interacting with surrounding ideational and contextual*

179 Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 62.

180 The categorization of "structure-centric" and "actor-centric" stems from Anna Holzscheiter's work, as discussed in subchapter 2.2. (Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*; Holzscheiter, "Discourse as Capability.")

181 Subchapter 3.2 describes how my discourse analysis relates to document types such as governmental records.

structures. This conception builds primarily on Charlotte Epstein's definition of discourse.[182] The definition serves to theoretically conceptualize discourse, pointing out the elements that I deem important, and to reflect and guide my three research sub-questions about the discursive representations of the military uses of combat drones, representations of possible courses for action regarding armament, and ideas about Germany's (new) role in the world in a changing international security context (see 1.3).

The research motivation for this dissertation is to gain a rich understanding of what occurred, even if that means needing to opt for pragmatism and not having a "pure" discourse-analytical approach, for example in the sense of poststructuralist perspectives (see 2.2.1). A pure discourse analysis, assuming that only discourse, arguments, ideas, and words mattered but nothing else, would limit our understanding in the case of the drone debate. That is why my analysis explores both the dynamics of the debate and the context in which discursive agents engage in, enabling certain policy options to emerge at a specific moment. After all, policymakers do not speak or act in a vacuum; they are part of a "discursive ecosystem" involving structural conditions, both ideational and material ones (see 2.3.3). Considering not only the realm of ideas, but also recognizing the role of structural parameters and the "non-discursive dimension" means acknowledging meaning and materiality together.[183]

The first part of this chapter introduces my theoretical framework in three steps. It begins by presenting the interpretivist philosophy underlying this qualitative research, which seeks "understanding" and relies on inductive reasoning (2.1). After briefly describing discourse as "language-sensitive", I outline quality standards for interpretivist studies. Second, I contrast "structure-centric" with "actor-centric" or "agent-centric" approaches and explain why I chose the latter (2.2).[184] The third part sheds light on discourse theory in general and my pragmatic perspective in particular. It portrays the dynamics of discourse as a productive and interactive process and introduces the "discursive ecosystem"; where policy ideas emerge from contextual structures interacting with the discourse (2.3).

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182 Epstein's original definition characterizes discourse as "a cohesive ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations about a specific object that frame that object in a certain way and, therefore, delimit the possibilities for action in relation to it." (Charlotte Epstein, *The Power of Words in International Relations: Birth of an Anti-Whaling Discourse* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 2.)

183 Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 74; see also Epstein, *The Power of Words*.

184 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*; Holzscheiter, "Discourse as Capability."

2.1 Interpretative Discourse Analysis

As Andrew Bennett observed, discourse analysis approaches are "almost exclusively qualitative"; and so is mine.[185] Qualitative studies often draw on an interpretivist research "philosophy" or "tradition", as opposed to a positivist philosophy often used in quantitive research designs. Both epistemologies entail "distinctive claims about what we should value as knowledge" and preferences about what kind of methods researchers should use to study social phenomena.[186] Unlike positivism which holds that scholars can observe reality objectively, interpretivism assumes that the subjective perspective of the scholar and social contexts shape knowledge. While positivism favors natural science methods, such as experiments, interpretivism argues these kinds of methods do not fit the nature of social research.[187] Rather than testing existing theories as deductive reasoning would, I approach the data openly and let it guide my propositions. By using inductive reasoning, I move from specific observations from text data to general inferences about the debate, such as framings, rhetorical strategies, and larger narratives. This open approach suits my exploratory research better (see Chapter 3 on research methods and analysis procedures).

Philosophy:	Interpretivist
Objective:	Understanding
Research:	Qualitative
Reasoning:	Inductive
Method:	Discourse Analysis

Each epistemological stance sees the disposition and role of the researcher differently. Positivism views social science researchers similar to those in the natural sciences. For example, chemists mix two substances or variables, observe the reaction, and study the outcome in a neutral and detached manner. The goals of positivist research are to test and generate causal claims in order to explain social phenomena.[188] For interpretivism, by contrast, the researcher is a unique individual whose subjective knowledge and individual experiences impacts how he or she studies social reality. This influences our analysis. That is why social scientists could neither be entirely objective nor completely neutral. Instead, we need to be aware of how we interpret our observations about the world.

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185 Andrew Bennett, "Found in Translation: Combining Discourse Analysis with Computer Assisted Content Analysis," *Millennium* 43, no. 3 (2015): 986.

186 C. Lamont and M.P. Boduszynski, "Methodology and Methods in Politics and International Relations," in *Research Methods in Politics and International Relations* (SAGE Publications, 2020), 23.

187 Ibid.

188 Compare Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

Interpretivism seeks to further our understanding of social reality.[189] Under the interpretivist "umbrella", constructivism shares the idea of intersubjectivity. In contrast to positivist approaches, which tend to focus above all on material elements, constructivism assumes reality is socially constructed through social processes as well as through cultural, normative, and institutional structures. Another important structure is language and discourse, on which discourse theories focus.[190] They acknowledge the complexity of political life and the centrality of ideational aspects, such as ideas, meanings, and identities, (re)produced in the discourse through language practices. Overall, discourse approaches propose a circular view of political dynamics, in which these social practices, in turn, then modify the discourse again.[191] The first section of this subchapter begins by giving a brief overview of the "language-sensitiveness" of discourse approaches (2.1.1).[192] The second one elaborates on how interpretivist and positivist epistemologies differ by discussing criteria for evaluating interpretivist research, such as discourse analysis (2.1.2).

2.1.1 Discourse Approaches as "Language-Sensitive"

An interest in language is the unifying element within the universe of discourse theories and discourse analyses. Studies focusing on discourse commonly assume the use of language, rhetoric and communication is an important element of political life.[193] Discourse approaches are and have been "language-sensitive".[194] With roots in philosophy and linguistics over 2,000 years ago, Greek thinkers of classical rhetoric like Aristotle were concerned with how speakers could effectively deliver their message to the audience and ensure the persuasiveness of their arguments.[195] In the early twentieth century, the focus gradually moved from rhetoric to more structural accounts of language in the humanities, inspired by influential French scholars like Claude Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes. Indebted to the philosophical work of Martin

189 Compare ibid.

190 Although discourse analysis is typically regarded as an approach within Constructivism, some scholars argue that it differs from this paradigm (For example, Emanuel Adler, "Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics," *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 3 (1997); Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt, and Peter J. Katzenstein, "Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security," in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter Joachim Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).)

191 Theodore R. Schatzki, "Practice Mind-ed Orders," in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed. Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr-Cetina, and Eike von Savigny (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), 44.

192 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 7.

193 Ibid.

194 Ibid.

195 Emphasis in original, Markus Kornprobst, "From Political Judgements to Public Justifications (and Vice Versa): How Communities Generate Reasons Upon Which to Act," *European Journal of International Relations* 20, no. 1 (2014): 196.

Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and others, the so-called "interpretative shift" then drew attention to hermeneutics, the subjective nature of language, and significance of meanings for studying social action.[196] Antonio Gramsci's writings on cultural hegemony and Louis Althusser's work on ideology introduced a Marxist perspective to the growing body of structuralist theories.

In the 1970s, discourse eventually became a central focal point in the Humanities and Social Science as part of the "linguistic turn".[197] The work of J.L. Austin and John Searle on speech acts, Teun van Dijk's sociolinguistic discourse analysis, and the linguistic studies of French philosophers such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault fostered the interest in discourse by disciplines including sociology, psychology, political science, and IR.[198] In the following years, central contributions to discourse scholarship were, among others, Jürgen Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action, the Cambridge School's historical approach to discourse, and the Essex School's combination of post-structuralist and psychoanalytic traditions.[199] In political science and IR, discourse analysis reached a peak in the late 1990s and early 2000s, especially – but not exclusively – in Europe and Canada.

At the present, discourse has been used both as a concept and a research tool in numerous academic disciplines including, among others, linguistics, social psychology, and the social sciences. Despite this disciplinary variety, most discourse studies are based on a set of shared theoretical assumptions. At the same time, due to these wide applications, there is neither "the" discourse theory nor "the" discourse analysis. It is a heterogenous field. Linguists and social psychologists often have a narrow view of discourse. For example, they may consider any language construction bigger than a sentence to be a discourse.[200] In contrast, social scientists tend to use discourse as a macro concept. They study how language constructs and hence enables or constrains objects, such as agents, social actions, and societal processes. My conceptualization aligns with this second conception. The main body of my analysis focuses on what happened

196 Luisa Godinho, "Discourse and International Relations: A Theoretical and Methodological Approach," *JANUS.NET e-journal of International Relations* 7, no. 2 (2016): 3-4.

197 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 10.

198 Ibid.; Boris Traue, Lisa Pfahl, and Lena Schürmann, "Handbuch Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung," ed. Nina Baur and Jörg Blasius (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019), 565-7.

199 Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

200 Caterina Carta and Jean-Frédéric Morin, "Introduction: EU Foreign Policy through the Lens of Discourse Analysis," in *EU Foreign Policy through the Lens of Discourse Analysis: Making Sense of Diversity*, ed. Caterina Carta (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 3.

during the Bundestag debates on military drone policy. It analyzes the rhetorical strategies applied – most notably framing and grafting – and the content, that is, the political positions and policy options emerging within the discourse (on framing and grafting see 3.1.2).

Discourse theorists presume that language is rich in meanings and representations. It is also object to constant interpretation by political agents. In this way, language plays a central role in the construction of social reality.[201] Language develops over time, linking and relating objects and agents but also enabling and constraining ways of thinking. It is through language practices that agents make sense of the world around them. Language practices – "what people say or write"[202] – are the communicative processes that discourse consists of and is constituted by. When scholars describe discourse as "language in use"[203] or "structures of meaning in use",[204] the term "use" refers to language practices. They are also central to Holzscheiter's definition of discourse as "a social space of meaning-negotiation and text-production within which meaning-conventions are both sustained and transformed".[205] It is through language practices that discourse does something in the social world.[206] When discussing policy issues such as drone armament, speakers choose out of "available discursive repertoires, argumentative techniques and modes of speaking".[207] Language practices about a specific policy issue can take on different forms, for example descriptions, categorizations, illustrations, or explanations.[208]

Language practices are also of practical significance to the discourse analyst. In contrast to students of phenomenology or symbolic interactionism, discourse scholars do not regard language as neutral, transparent, or self-evident.[209] We cannot examine ideas or meanings directly.

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201 Notions on the stability of language vary. While Larsen considers language as "inherently unstable, fickle and fluid as meanings are permanently being defined and redefined", John Searle argues language elements are governed by rules, these rules will be known by the respective language community (Henrik Larsen, "Rethinking European Union Foreign Policy," in *Discourse Analysis in the Study of European Foreign Policy* (Manchester University Press, 2004), 66; John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969).)

202 Antaki, "Discourse Analysis and Conversation Analysis," 431.

203 Iver B. Neumann, "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy," *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 31, no. 3 (2002): 627; Ruth Wodak, *Disorders of Discourse*, 1st ed. (London: Longman, 1996), 15.

204 Jutta Weldes and Diana Saco, "Making State Action Possible: The United States and the Discursive Construction of 'The Cuban Problem', 1960–1994," *Millennium* 25, no. 2 (1996): 373. See also Antje Wiener, "Enacting Meaning-In-Use: Qualitative Research on Norms and International Relations," *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 1 (2009): 176.

205 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 5.

206 Antaki, "Discourse Analysis and Conversation Analysis," emphasis in original, 431.

207 Holzscheiter, "Discourse as Capability," 745.

208 Traue, Pfahl, and Schürmann, "Handbuch Methoden," 571; Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

209 Larsen, "Rethinking EU Foreign Policy."

Instead, we investigate their representations as expressed through language practices, the dynamics between them, and the transformation of language more broadly.[210]

2.1.2 Criteria for Evaluating Interpretivist Research

The criteria for evaluating research differ between positivist and interpretative traditions. A criterion for successful positivist research would be if any other person could replicate the same result under the same circumstances. Law-like theories about causality should be able to make predictions or build models. Hypotheses should be set up in a way so they can be "falsified".[211] In order to judge the quality of interpretive studies, such as discourse analysis, one can use the criteria of a) trustworthiness, b) thick description, c) reflexivity, and d) intertextuality.[212]

a) **Trustworthiness**: Interpretative research has far broader boundaries and is somewhat less formalized than positivist inquiries. Given this freedom, it is all the more important for readers to trust the abilities and professionalism of the researcher. Adhering to the other three criteria mentioned above can help achieve this. Putting effort into explicitly depicting the choices made and the methods used – meaning the procedures for collecting and analyzing data – can be highly beneficial. Generally speaking, scholars analyzing discourse seek to describe, interpret, understand and, in some cases, critically question the object of study.[213] When analysts communicate the steps of this process transparently, it increases trust by the readers. Research quality can improve. That is why the chapters on theory and methods seek to communicate my research choices, procedures, and steps in an explicit and transparent manner.

b) **Thick description**: The description of the examined discourse is a pivotal analytical activity, not only but especially within the interpretivist tradition, where "thick description"[214] is a defining component. Describing is not synonymous with reproducing the entire research object.[215] Instead, it means synthesizing, mapping, summarizing, and organizing what is in the text. One can start by looking at the form of the documents to be examined, including the speakers, the structure, and, perhaps, the graphic design.

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210 Ibid., 64.
211 Lamont and Boduszynski, "Methodology and Methods," 25.
212 Ibid. referencing Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, "Judging Quality: Evaluative Criteria and Epistemic Communities," in *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*, ed. Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea (New York, London: M.E.Sharpe, 2015).
213 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 5.
214 Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
215 Howard S. Becker, "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research," in *Ethnography and Human Development: Context and Meaning in Social Inquiry*, ed. Richard Jessor, Anne Colby, and Richard A. Shweder (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 64.

However, most discourse analyses are more interested in exploring the language in action, such as linguistic devises used and modes of speaking, concurring topics, and rhetorical frames (compare 3.1).

Presenting a narrative in rich detail and contextualizing it is essential for a good discourse analysis. At the same time, it is a necessarily selective process. When describing the discourse, the analyst chooses which aspects are relevant, which shall be "abstracted from the totality of details that make it up".[216] Personal preconceptions and beliefs cannot be ruled out entirely when picking aspects to focus the interpretation on. Consequently, interpretative approaches follow a different selection rationale than the standardized methods prevalent in quantitative research. In discourse analysis, interpretation and description intersect. Interpretation is already part of the mapping, organizing, synthesizing, and summarizing when we analyze the discourse data.

c) **Reflexivity**: Interpreting the data is another pivotal activity for conducting a discourse analysis, but this activity is also a highly challenging one. Interpretative scholars must strike a delicate balance. For successfully interpreting meanings or a discourse, they need "cultural competence" regarding the socio-political setting, but not to the extent to get "naturalized" within the "universe studied".[217] They must know the language very well.[218] Only then, they are able to grasp implicit and double meanings, variations in tone, figures of speech, and references.[219] In the interpretative research process the scholar is an active, involved subject.[220] She must be highly familiar with the texts and the conditions of their production.

Overall, analysts require a deep and detailed knowledge of the socio-political setting and culture of the studied community.[221] As a native German speaker I fulfill both the criteria of cultural competence and language skills. At the same time, interpretivist researchers must also uphold a sufficient distance to the object of study to avoid becoming "naturalized", but not to the extent of becoming detached.[222] Naturalization might keep analysts from having an open mind towards the discourse. In my case, having lived abroad several years and having completed a master's degree in the UK helped me to

216 Ibid.
217 Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 64.
218 The author has translated key terms and quotes, but the original German version is always provided.
219 External translation is an alternative, but understanding primary sources firsthand is the better option.
220 Hansen, "Discourse Analysis," 107.
221 Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 63-64.
222 Ibid., 64.

keep a certain distance, as I am accustomed to observing German politics from the outside. In this way, interpretivism is context-oriented. The context of the researcher matters for her rapport with and approach to the social phenomenon under study.

Although complete neutrality is neither possible nor necessarily desirable in interpretative research, interpretative scholars must be aware of potential biases and sympathies towards certain opinions or actors.[223] Keeping this balance right from the start is essential, as during early research phases the analyst is already interpreting what is going on. Based on this preliminary interpretation she goes on to view the data and organize elements of the discourse.[224] This balance is particularly challenging when studying your home country, as I do here. For instance, in 2020 I began working for the Social Democrats at the Bundestag. On the one hand, this position allowed me to gain practical insights into the workings of the German parliament and to gain a perspective of the processes behind closed doors. On the other hand, when I returned to my dissertation, I was aware of potential biases towards the SPD in my research. Due to my interpretivist philosophy, I took extra care in trying to not let personal political experiences shape my academic assessment. In any case, the risk was relatively low since my main analysis ends in December 2018, and my dissertation had already been in the final stage by the time I began the job.

d) **Intertextuality**: As the term suggests, this criterion refers to references and repetitions of concepts and terms among various texts. These connections between text can be direct or indirect. By paying attention to intertextuality one can reveal the ideational contextual structures. Intertextuality can occur between different texts, from various sources or document types, produced at around the same time. It can also occur when speakers pick up positions, arguments, or framings used by other speakers or by themselves in the past. Researchers can thus examine how past discourses influence a current one by finding references to the past in the present.

   Parliamentary discourses display a high level of intertextuality. Since democratic parliaments are institutions for political debates, they consist, essentially, of intertextual dialog. In their speeches, politicians and parties respond to what other agents have previously said on the issue. Speakers frequently draw on established terms, figures of

223 Having spent four years studying and working at institutions outside of Germany, I am adept at observing my home country from a distance.

224 Italics in original, Geertz, "Thick Description," 15.

speech, comparisons, framings, or images and so forth, to enhance their rhetoric. Furthermore, if you want to create recognition and resonance with your audience, it is convenient to frame and graft meanings through intertextuality (compare 3.1). Some parliamentary formats and their respective documents are intertextual by design, for example written questions issued by the opposition and the respective governmental responses. New policy proposals reference the status quo of legislation that has been written down in previous legislative texts. A more detailed discussion on the characteristics of Bundestag documents follows in the next chapter (see 3.2).

2.2 An Agent-Centric Perspective on Parliamentary Debates

The diversity in which ways scholars use and refer to discourse also stems from its multidisciplinary origin and use. While the specific approaches to discourse display a great deal of heterogeneity, this subchapter introduces two groups of perspectives who share some overarching theoretical assumptions and research priorities. It builds on work by Holzscheiter, employing her categorization of "structure-centric" and "actor-centric" approaches to discourse.[225] The former group covers poststructuralist approaches and critical discourse analysis (CDA). While they share a perspective focused on structures of power, knowledge, and ideas, they also differ in their research objectives, normativity, and stances on the stability of knowledge. The latter group centers the role of agents, including approaches interested in strategy, arguing, and persuasion.[226]

My project leans towards the agent-end of the spectrum but acknowledges the role of structures. An agent-centered perspective fits well with the endeavor of mapping the content of the drone debate, including the positions, arguments, and frames speakers advanced. Elected MPs and their parties actively exercise agency on behalf of the citizens, ultimately seeking to influence policy formation on their behalf, also during debates.[227] Yet, this project does not go as far as Strategic Narratives studies which attempt to make inferences about the agents' "true" motives behind certain communicative actions. Unlike, for example, a scientific discourse where scientific objectivity prevails, a plenary session is a forum of political subjectivities. Policymakers advance their agenda by (re)producing certain representations in their speeches and leaving out others.[228] Nevertheless, my project also recognizes the pool of already existing representations

225 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*; Holzscheiter, "Discourse as Capability."
226 Compare Holzscheiter, "Discourse as Capability," 732.
227 However, the meanings they ultimately produce do not have to be consistent with their original intentions.
228 Krebs and Jackson, "Twisting Tongues," 42; Hansen, "Discourse Analysis," 108.

and ideas in the discourse, which speakers reproduce. This pool provides a structure of possibilities that conditions what agents say in a specific socio-political environment. However, while the existing structure of representations is essential for discursive practices, it is not sufficient for shaping the discourse. While a broad analysis examines articulations by German politicians in Bundestag debates as such, an in-depth analysis contextualizes important articulations by reflecting on the surrounding structural conditions.[229]

2.2.1 Structure-Centric Approaches

Rather than zooming in on agents who (re)produce a discourse, structure-centric approaches preferably zoom out and examine the structural dimensions. Agent-centric approaches such as speech act analysis, examine specific utterances of speakers and may even wonder about their intentions. Structure-centric approaches take a broader perspective instead. Agency does not play a central role here. As Jennifer Milliken suggested, speakers would be "restricted to acting out the largely unconscious, taken-for-granted understandings that emerge from the interplay of larger social forces."[230] Structure-oriented discourse approaches assume that large-scale meaning-systems and ideas pre-structure and hence diffusely influence political action.[231] They look at how knowledge circulates in discursive communities.[232] Inquiries would ask which structural conditions such as power relations and social hierarchies prevailed in the discourse and how they have been discursively reproduced and sustained.

Currently, the prevalent structure-centric approaches to discourse are poststructuralism and CDA. Both approaches place great emphasis on linguistics. Theodore Schatzki defined discourses as "abstract webs of linguistically articulated meaning".[233] Hansen claimed a discourse analysis is "[t]he study of structures of signification."[234] Some scholars perceive poststructuralist discourse analysis as a sub-category of CDA; others vice versa.[235] Many influential structuralist discourse studies cannot be clearly attributed to one or the other. For instance, works by Michel Foucault, Norman Fairclough, and Ruth Wodak have occasionally been associated with either group. But even though there are similarities, poststructuralist approaches and CDA also differ in some important ways, which I will now discuss.

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229 Compare Sassan Gholiagha, Anna Holzscheiter, and Andrea Liese, "Activating Norm Collisions: Interface Conflicts in International Drug Control," *Global Constitutionalism* (2020): 4.
230 Wagenaar, *Meaning in Action*, 52.
231 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 4; Holzscheiter, "Discourse as Capability," 732.
232 Traue, Pfahl, and Schürmann, "Handbuch Methoden," 565; Dunn, "Historical Representations," 81.
233 Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory," 4.
234 Milliken, "The Study of Discourse," 231.
235 For example Antaki, "Discourse Analysis and Conversation Analysis," 434.

2.2.1.1 Poststructuralist Discourse Theory

Poststructuralism emerged in the 1960s and 1970s and has carved out many of the now widely held assumptions about discourse as a concept. Before, scholars mainly saw discourses as a way of communication, a stable entity reflecting reality as it is. Poststructuralists advanced the idea of their constitutive power; that discourses could also create or "produce" realities. They recognize dynamic and contestation. Discourses and knowledge are not considered static or stable but in flux, constantly changing. Different groups of actors could struggle over diverging interpretations of narratives, meanings, and truths or even discourses as a whole. In this assumption of constant instability, it differs from CDA (see section below). Furthermore, Poststructuralism highlights the relevance of contextual and historical perspectives for studying discourse. Many discourse theories share these basic assumptions. So does this dissertation (as discussed in section 2.3.1). However, while it aligns with certain foundational conceptual assumptions originally introduced by poststructuralism, it should not be characterized as a poststructuralist study. This distinction is important for the following reasons:

A poststructuralist approach often goes together with a postpositivist epistemological understanding. Broadly speaking, these kinds of works are skeptical if knowing the essence of something is possible; therefore, they reject the idea of scientific objectivity. Post-structuralism holds that social structures are indeterminate.[236] There is no underlying determining logic or organizing principle to how structures operate, which is why the social outcomes they produce are also indeterminate. Scholars would not be able to prescribe a logic to structures or their outcomes, which is why poststructuralist conclusions are closer to description than inferences[237] Moreover, a scholar studying a discourse is also part of discourse(s); there is no distinction. However, that is not a problem for poststructuralists, because they assume there would not be one "truth" as such. Discursive practices would produce what counts as truth in the form of socially constructed knowledge.[238]

Some authors would go as far as claiming that resources, objects or subjects could not be accounted for exogenously of their discursive context.[239] Derrida has been attributed with the quote that there is "nothing outside discourse".[240] Detached from language, nothing would exist.[241] While I agree on the enormous relevance of language for experiencing the outside world,

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236 Wight, "Philosophy of Social Science and International Relations."
237 Ibid.; Roxanne L. Doty, "Aporia: A Critical Exploration of the Agent-Structure Problematique in International Relations Theory," *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 3 (1997).
238 Dunn, "Historical Representations," 79.
239 Ibid., 80.
240 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976).
241 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 5.

I would not go as far as arguing the outside world was "nothing". Similarly, Hansen argued contemporary poststructuralists see discourse as encompassing both ideational and material factors. When one conceptualizes identity as "relational and discursive", it would be impossible to "formulate hypotheses about the (relative) explanatory power of discourse as opposed to material explanations".[242] In the case of an event outside parliament but within the discursive ecosystem (see 2.3.3), MPs can share knowledge about the event without discussing it. However, the event's relevance and meanings may only evolve through the discourse.

An important concept of poststructuralist discourse analysis is intertextuality; the interconnectedness of texts and, consequently, meaning. Hansen described it as follows:

> "[A]ll texts make references, explicitly or implicitly, to previous ones, and in doing so they both establish their own reading and become mediations on the meaning and status of others".[243]

A post-structuralist discourse analyst must know how "current texts are connected to past ones and which representations and terms have become so institutionalized that they no longer need to be explicitly invoked".[244] However, taking intertextuality too far bears the risk of getting lost in the web of texts, since each text draws on a previous one and then another one and so forth. At some point the scholar must decide where to draw the line and justify this decision well.

Discourses can construct and reinforce certain power structures. The notion of power in poststructuralist accounts also pertains to this link between present and past discourses. Milliken noted it is through "relations of power in which unity with the past is artificially conserved and order is created from conditions of disorder."[245] In governance, the structural force of discourse would materialize and institutionalize, as Foucault recognized.[246] Power would be productive.[247] It is intimately tied to the social construction of knowledge and truth, which presents a "discursive struggle".[248] Related to power is another important poststructuralist feature, namely privileged discursive positions. Poststructuralist discourse analyses frequently ask how an elite's "regime of truth" came to be.[249] Since discourse constitutes subjects, they ask how discursive agents were constructed as authoritative speakers and experts on certain issues, enforcing a hierarchical speaking situation.[250]

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242 Hansen, *Security as Practice*, 17.
243 Ibid., 55.
244 Hansen, "Discourse Analysis," 106.
245 Milliken, "The Study of Discourse," 243.
246 Holzscheiter, "Discourse as Capability," 733.
247 Hansen, "Discourse Analysis," 108.
248 Carta and Morin, "EU Foreign Policy through the Lens of Discourse Analysis," 8.
249 Milliken, "The Study of Discourse," 236.
250 Hansen, "Discourse Analysis," 108.

2.2.1.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis is more pragmatic in how it treats aspects outside of discourse than for example a poststructuralist discourse analysis in the tradition of Derrida. This pragmatism of CDA also stems from the fact that power relations are even more central here than in post-structuralist accounts. It assumes power does not only lie within the discourse but power relations from the outside world also shape the discourse, for example who gets to speak. Since these power relations are relatively stable, so is knowledge. CDA criticizes hegemonic power structures and normatively demands change towards more equality. Van Dijk characterized this approach as studying "the relations between discourse, power, dominance, social inequality and the position of the discourse analyst in such relations". As he specified, dominance is understood as "the exercise of power by elites, institutions or groups".[251]

CDA scholars analyze discourses in light of the tensions between dominant elites and dominated agent groups, for instance certain ethnic communities, genders, and socio-economic classes.[252] By contrast, for constructivists a strong position of power is no necessary condition for successful change-making, as studies on norm entrepreneurship by NGOs and activists have illustrated. Power implies hierarchies or hegemony, superiority and inferiority, inclusion, and exclusion. Critical analysts study power from a political perspective, seeking to eliminate inequalities and to end discrimination against minorities. Therefore, while van Dijk acknowledges an "explicit sociopolitical stance" of CDA, I would go even further and say critical scholars engage in a political project.[253] They are more normative than poststructuralists, for example. There are brilliant publications using CDA. Nevertheless, not all scholars agree that it is their duty to reveal inequalities in society or share the political commitments.[254]

Proponents of CDA have critically studied some of the fundamental narratives of international relations, including sovereignty, security, diplomacy or nation, with the aim of fracturing them.[255] Assuming that different subjective "truths" can coexist, critical discourse analysts break apart a dominant discourse, revealing that in some cases the events, situations, and rela-

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251 Emphasis in original, Teun A. van Dijk, "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis," *Discourse & Society* 4, no. 2 (1993): 249.
252 Ibid.
253 Ibid., 252.
254 Antaki, "Discourse Analysis and Conversation Analysis," 436.
255 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*.

tionships have been defined and interpreted differently. In a process Milliken called the "juxtapositional method", scholars can compare the different truths.[256] The precondition is to recognize that the predominant interpretations of state practices, the world, and reality as such are ambiguous, not determinate.[257] Thus, even official state discourses would be ambiguous.[258]

While I broadly agree with CDA's pragmatism of also considering aspects outside of discourse, with the existence of multiple "truths", and the ambiguous nature of interpretations (that is, by extension, official discourse), I do not share the strong focus on hierarchical power relations. Certainly, settings like a democratic parliament with fixed rules and procedures have institutionalized power relations that constrain the interaction between agents to some extent. For example, in the Bundestag speaking time varies between government parties and opposition parties and among parliamentary groups with more or with fewer seats. Nevertheless, one could argue the drone armament decision stalled because the drone-skeptics, led by opposition parties, coined the discourse in a powerful way. The previous opposition of the SPD towards armed drones softened after they re-entered government. Similarly, when looking at the years after 2019, both the SPD and the Greens, former skeptics of drone-armament, cleared the path for this step as part of the coalition agreement with the FDP. Power and interests did play into the drone debate and the policy process. After all, who gets to make which decision in politics is always to some extent a question of power and future CDAs might examine these aspects of the drone debate specifically. But it is not the objective of this inquiry to study and criticize the reproduction of power relations through the parliamentary discourse, nor the construction of speaking authority. My main goal is not to critique and change society, but to understand and, to some extent, interpretatively explain it.

2.2.2 Agent-Centric Approaches

In terms of theory my analysis of the German parliamentary discourse on drones takes a rather agent-centered approach. While it does assume that structures are important for making sense of what we observe in the discourse, agents are crucial because it is their language practices that keep a discourse going. Structuralist discourse approaches acknowledge agency to a varying extent, but it does not play a central role in theorizing. Yet, there would be no debate without agents. They articulate and negotiate representations through which meanings gradually transform. Especially in institutional settings such as parliamentary debates, agency plays an important role. MPs have been tasked with exercising legislative agency on behalf of their voters.

256 Milliken, "The Study of Discourse," 243.
257 Ibid.
258 Ibid.

Indeed, what would be the point of democratic representation if they were not? That is why I chose an agent-centric approach. This approach aligns with my research because it focuses on confined communicative interaction.

2.2.2.1 A Focus on Agency

For parliamentary political debates, agency is very important. Parliamentarians are mandated to represent the interests of their constituents in the policymaking process. In line with their political agenda, politicians select certain modes of interaction, arguments, or representations from the pool of available possibilities, while excluding others.[259] They maintain, shape and, eventually, alter a discourse, all while operating under certain structural constraints.[260] In recent years, agent-centric approaches to discourse have become increasingly prominent, especially among scholars studying argumentation and persuasion.[261]

Agent-centric approaches tend to zoom in on the discourse. They are do not shy away from considering the individual level. On the one hand this could mean limiting the analysis to a small group of actors, such as government representatives in a parliament. On the other hand, these approaches recognize the contributions that individual speakers could make to a discourse, for example party politicians who are the main spokespeople on certain subjects. For many years MP Hans-Christian Ströbele, for instance, was the main speaker on armed drones within the Green Party. These approaches also acknowledge that politicians must fulfill different – sometimes clashing – roles simultaneously: electorate representative, party member, political wing adherent, and government or opposition member.[262]

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259 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 36; Thomas Risse, "Constructivism and the Study of International Institutions: Towards Conversation Across Paradigms," in *Political Science as Discipline? Reconsidering power, Choice, and the State at Century's End*, ed. Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002).

260 Holzscheiter, "Discourse as Capability," 744; Doty, "Aporia."; Neumann, "Returning Practice."; Nicole Deitelhoff, *Überzeugung in der Politik: Grundzüge einer Diskurstheorie internationalen Regierens* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), 67.

261 Holzscheiter calls "arguing-approaches" the "German school of discourse studies in IR", due to its promotion by the Frankfurt School (Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 4.). In particular the "theory of communicative action" as advanced, among others, by Jürgen Habermas and the logic of arguing in IR, introduced by Harald Müller and Thomas Risse should be noted. It assumes that under certain speech situations, the better argument prevails, meaning the one with the best (intersubjective) reasons (Kornprobst, "Political Judgements," 194; Harald Müller, "Internationale Beziehungen als kommunikatives Handeln. Zur Kritik der utilitaristischen Handlungstheorien," *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 1, no. 1 (1994); Thomas Risse, ""Let's Argue!": Communicative Action in World Politics," *International Organization* 54, no. 1 (2000); Nicole Deitelhoff, "The Discursive Process of Legalization: Charting Islands of Persuasion in the ICC Case," *International Organization* 63, no. 1 (2009).)

262 van Dijk, "Theoretical Background," 24-25.

2.2.2.2 Confined Communicative Interaction

Holzscheiter claims agent-centric approaches regard discourse as communicative interaction, which would be a narrower conception than the one used by structure-centric approaches.[263] But does it necessarily have to be a separate scholarly debate? After all, communicative interaction can still be understood as part of a larger discourse. What she is referring to could also be their data-analytical research interest; an interest in the communication between different discursive agents in a specific debate with all its facets, including the discursive content, rhetorical strategies, or apparent objectives of the speakers.[264]

Agent-centric approaches are intrigued by discursive moments that are "largely confined to a clear-cut communicative situation (a conference, a negotiation series, and organizational debate) and, often, also limited to a specific issue-area".[265] In my case the communicative situation is the German parliamentary debates, and the issue is military drone policy. Agent-centric approaches often address situations "with very little knowledge or high degrees of uncertainty", which is an apt description of the military drone policy situation in Germany 2009–2018. Due to the interest in a confined, limited object of study, agent-centric approaches would moreover "not see *all* text and talk as necessarily altering the contexts and situations in which agents interact."[266] In practice, this acknowledgement conveniently translates into being able to scale down the number of text documents analyzed; based on a comprehensible rationale. For the present research this rationale are the public debates which took place in the Bundestag setting.

2.2.2.3 Acknowledging Strategic Aims Without Overstating Intent

This project acknowledges that agents, in my case German politicians, can use these rhetorical strategies to advance certain narratives and, ultimately, seek to influence the discourse hoping to accomplish their objectives. Other scholars who are part of the Strategic Narratives school of thought go even further, but there are several drawbacks. Its proponents are interested in the intentional strategic use of rhetoric and language by state- or party-leaders.[267] Although they work on similar issues, namely how policies developed in and through political discourse, making assumptions about the purposive manipulation of language and hence knowledge in this way is tricky.[268] Rather than language having a restraining quality, Strategic Narrative scholars

263 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 4; 20.
264 Compare ibid., 4.
265 Ibid., 36.
266 Emphasis added, ibid., 37.
267 Michelle Bentley, "Enough is Enough: The UK Prevent Strategy and Normative Invalidation," *European Journal of International Security* 3, no. 3 (2018): 327.
268 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 30.

assume political agents can manipulate language to accomplish specific objectives, policy-promotion for instance.[269]

Their assumption that language can fall prey to manipulation when political agents seek to represent their own stance as "beneficial, good and right and the opponent's as harmful, bad and wrong" is not far from my own theoretical stance.[270] Yet, language is complex. Our ability to draw conclusions about the real intentions of discursive agents is limited. Having been categorized as a "more restricted form of […] interpretivism," intentionalism considers meaning "as deriving from the intentions and reasons of an actor".[271] This creates two problems. First, analysts must look out for potential mismatches between the intentions of speaker and the reception of the audience, since "speakers' intuitions are notoriously fallible".[272] Second, we cannot be entirely certain whether agents intended this exact effect or not, whether they purposely constructed the representations in a specific way, or not.[273] The – admittedly trivial – point is, concurring with Ronald Krebs and Patrick Jackson, that we do not have access to people's minds and can therefore never be certain about someone's "real motives".[274]

Finally, agent-centric approaches reveal the effects of agents' communication. Here I distinguish between a) the effects on a discourse, and, by extension, respective policies, and b) the effects on an audience. Discourse scholars and norm researchers have examined rigorously how political agents act as "frame sponsors",[275] "meaning manager",[276] or "discursive entrepreneurs".[277] Having said that, we should differentiate between first- and second-degree effects. For example, a rightwing party keeps accusing the government of "bad" migration policy. As a first-degree effect the government may respond by elaborately defending their past decisions. Yet, the second-degree effect might be that the government ultimately engages in right wing agenda-setting on migration policy rather than setting its' own agenda-item, for instance by talking about one of their own policy projects.

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269 Bentley, "Enough is Enough," 327.
270 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 30.
271 Wagenaar, *Meaning in Action*, 18.
272 Searle, *Speech Acts*, 14; 17.
273 Michael C. Williams and Iver B. Neumann, "From Alliance to Security Community: NATO," in *Culture and Security: Symbolic Power and the Politics of International Security*, ed. Michael C. Williams (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 90.
274 Krebs and Jackson, "Twisting Tongues," 36; 40; Rodger Payne, "Persuasion, Frames and Norm Construction," *European Journal of International Relations* 7, no. 1 (2001): 39-41.
275 Creed, Langstraat, and Scully, "Picture of the Frame."
276 Sanjeev Khagram, James V. Riker, and Kathryn Sikkink, "From Santiago to Seattle: Transnational Advocacy Groups Restructuring World Politics," in *Restructuring World Politics: Transnational Social Movements, Networks, and Norms*, ed. Sanjeev Khagram, James V. Riker, and Kathryn Sikkink (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).
277 Holzscheiter, "Discourse as Capability." See also Rosert, *Nicht-Entstehung internationaler Normen*, 134.

Assessing the effects on an audience requires making additional assumptions. Discourse theorists must not only assume that actors are willing to listen, even if the advanced arguments are contrary to their own position.[278] They must also assume that the discursive constructs of agents have the potential to affect the audience (for instance fellow politicians or citizens), thus affecting their opinion.[279] Persuasion is one of the most widely theorized mechanisms in this regard. Authors have argued that states reformulate their preferences because of the persuasive power of a discourse.[280] Due to the limited space, I opt for not discussing the potential sources of persuasive power.[281] Suffice to cite Krebs and Jackson: "[C]onclusive proof of persuasion is elusive" and "methodologically intractable".[282] That is why my project does not seek to make detailed assumptions about policymakers "real" objectives behind certain rhetorical moves in the drone debate, even though I do acknowledge their use of rhetorical strategies such as framing and grafting, as discussed in Chapter 3 (see 3.1.2).

2.3 Discourse Theory: A Discursive Ecosystem

This subchapter takes a step back from the level of language and rhetoric. It lays the theoretical foundation for how to make sense of the developments in the debate about armed drone policy at large, including a framework for understanding where certain arguments emerged or even dominated, while others shifted to the margins. My procedure is two-fold. First, I briefly portray how discourses can "behave" and enfold a dynamic with regard to policy. I discuss discourse productivity and how discourses can refer to one another, overlap, interact, or compete (2.3.1). Second, since contextualization is central to discourse analysis, I will explain the relevance of placing discursive findings in its socio-political or historical context (2.3.2). Third, I propose "discursive ecosystems" as a conceptual reference for understanding how the interaction between discourse and context, including ideational and material structures, creates possibility-shifts for policy options (2.3.3).

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278 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 4; in reference to Harald Müller, "Arguing, Bargaining and all that: Communicative Action, Rationalist Theory and the Logic of Appropriateness in International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations* 10, no. 3 (2004); and Risse, ""Let's Argue!"."

279 Pascal König, "Unpopular Policies and the Imperative of Justification: Putting the Monti Government's Reform Communication in a Comparative Perspective," *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice* 18, no. 2 (2016): 178.

280 Richard Price, "Reversing the Gun Sights: Transnational Civil Society Targets Land Mines," *International Organization* 52, no. 3 (1998); Deitelhoff, "Discursive Process of Legalization."

281 See instead Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*; Kornprobst, "Political Judgements."; Margarita H. Petrova, "Rhetorical Entrapment and Normative Enticement: How the United Kingdom Turned From Spoiler Into Champion of the Cluster Munition Ban," *International Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (2016).

282 Krebs and Jackson, "Twisting Tongues," 36; 40; Payne, "Persuasion, Frames," 39-41.

2.3.1 Discursive Dynamics

How does discourse interact with policy? Discourse is more than simply a group of linguistic devices, a collection of metaphors, images, references, or else.[283] It is characterized by a set of distinct conceptual features. Some of these features have already been presented above, language practices, for instance. In this section I draw on existing theoretical work on discourse, presenting two central dynamics, namely productivity of discourse, the ability to "do something" to say it simply, and interaction between discourses, such as overlapping and competing. Poststructuralists were among the pioneers in theorizing on these aspects. Many different schools of discursive thought build on these basic assumptions. This dissertation also shares them; albeit only as confined to the conceptualization of discursive dynamics without prescribing to other characteristics of poststructuralist inquires (see 2.2.1).

2.3.1.1 Productivity

If we imagine language practices as the act of driving, then productivity functions as the engine of discourse – propelling the continual (re)production of representations and structures of meanings. Foucault said these "productive moments" strengthen one representation and action while weakening others. According to him, that is the power of discourse.[284] Agents engaging in discursive practices are constantly "articulating" and "rearticulating" knowledge and identities.[285] Being productive means that a discourse defines an object and "knowledgeable practices" on how to act towards this object. It demarcates situations in a certain way, creates legitimations, constructs social identities, and lays out intelligible (policy) options for action while excluding others.[286] In this way it can create (or exclude) places, form groups, design publics, and even common-sense.[287] Discourse can also define "subjects authorized to speak and to act (e.g. foreign policy officials, defense intellectuals, development experts)",[288] as Milliken pointed out, as well as the relationships between people.[289]

The productivity of discourses is cyclical in nature. Meanings are continuously being "defined and redefined", representations interpreted and reinterpreted.[290] According to Hansen this circular dynamic of discursive productivity implies "that policy discourse is seen as relying upon

283 Antaki, "Discourse Analysis and Conversation Analysis," 431.
284 Traue, Pfahl, and Schürmann, "Handbuch Methoden," 567.
285 Milliken, "The Study of Discourse," 239.
286 Ibid., 229.
287 Ibid.
288 Ibid., 236.
289 Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, "Critical Discourse Analysis: History, Agenda, Theory and Methodology," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London: SAGE, 2009).
290 Larsen, "Rethinking EU Foreign Policy," 66.

particular constructions of problems and subjectivities, but that it is also through discourse that these problems and subjectivities are constructed in the first place."[291] In this way, policy discourses can convey instability and stability at the same time.[292]

As the analysis will demonstrate, German discourse on armed drones as such was particularly productive until 2014 and after that both the controversy and the productivity gradually ebbed off. From 2019 onwards, there were few new discursive developments, yet the policy breakthrough occurred in 2021. Thus, while the time between 2019 and 2021 required to address events outside of the discourse to understand what happened (see the epilogue in Chapter 7), the pragmatic discourse-analytical perspective was useful to address my main puzzle and observation period from the time before.

2.3.1.2 Interaction

Discourses do not exist in isolation, since they are part of a larger system. They are "ordered and scaled in relation to one another", as Neumann pointed out.[293] Therefore, when theorizing or analyzing about discourses, scholars are interested in the relation between discourses, their formation, and transformation regarding social practices.[294] A discourse comprises dynamics between representations, sets of language practices, and the interplay with its social context. Thus, it is not the same as an isolated communicative act (an utterance) even though it can embody them. Discourses cannot result from a single person, drawing on their individual knowledge, but they are always an intersubjective effort; an aggregate of voices.[295]

The same logic applies to meanings. Wagenaar distinguishes between subjective and objective meanings. Whereas the former includes an individual's "reasons, motives, and purposes" the latter constitute "the basic assumptions and conceptualizations," belonging to a specific group.[296] While a rationalist decision analysis tends to focus on the former category, discourse approaches in the social sciences are usually more interested in the latter one: collectively shared meanings. These meanings are neither fixed nor naturally given, but dynamic, contested, and actively (re)constructed by agents with a given identity.[297] Discursive meanings are not

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291 Hansen, *Security as Practice*, 17.
292 This apparent contradiction has been discussed controversially, not only within the discourse analysis literature, but also in Practice Turn debates.
293 Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 66.
294 Reiner Keller, *Wissenssoziologische Diskursanalyse* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2005), 182.
295 Wodak and Meyer, "Critical Discourse Analysis," 25; Traue, Pfahl, and Schürmann, "Handbuch Methoden," 565.
296 Wagenaar, *Meaning in Action*, 18.
297 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 10.

singular, they exist in a structural form, related, and linked to other meanings, as an interconnected, patterned network.[298] Like meanings discourses cannot be limited to a single social situation, even though an agent-centric approach may focus on a confined communicative interaction for the sake of research feasibility. Instead, they are always referential to previous situations, contextual conditions, and social consequences. In this way, discourses are longitudinal. They are not restricted to a single moment but endure over time.[299]

Several structures of meanings form a system.[300] These systems can relate to each other in various ways, for instance they can inform and enrich or marginalize and dominate each other.[301] Discourses can range from an open to a closed character. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, Neumann recognized "[T]he field can be said to be open if there are two or more representations and none of them are dominating".[302]

Discourses can also overlap. In the case of the German armed drone debate in the Bundestag, for example, discourses about unarmed surveillance drones might intersect with debates about armed platforms. Similarly, the military drone discussion in the Bundestag can be considered a discourse overlapping with debates about targeted killing in general or other controversial GWOT practices, about procurement of new military technologies including unarmed drones such as the Euro Hawk, the emergence of machine autonomy, with discourses about arms control, or relations with significant partner nations such as the US. It can also be seen as a debate within the overarching discourse on German foreign and security policy in the 21st century. In this case, the context of the drone debate would be another discourse. The more layered the topic, the more complex the network of interacting discourses. Discourses can also spill into each other. Ideas and narratives from other countries can enter the German debate, for example about the US as the "norm entrepreneur" of armed drone employment practices. Debates taking place in other arenas, such as the government, specific ministries, or the military can equally spill into the parliamentary drone debate, for example by means of government representatives or recent statements by military leadership, which MPs pick up. Discourses are fluid and they

298 Traue, Pfahl, and Schürmann, "Handbuch Methoden," 565.
299 Ibid.
300 Similarly, Jennifer Milliken refers to discourses as "systems of signification", an term that reflects a post-structuralist view, focusing on (linguistic) sign systems and significative construction (Milliken, "The Study of Discourse," 229.)
301 Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 62.
302 Ibid., 70.

overlap. Consequently, it all depends on where the analyst draws the line. My research considers these discursive interactions, but it will not examine any of the other discourses by themselves in detail like a comparative research design would.

2.3.2 Contextualizing Discursive Findings

Context matters greatly for discourse-analytical approaches. Discourse analysis should always place "the production, reception and transformation of texts in their respective (social, historical, political) contexts."[303] Whereas description and interpretation facilitate to uncover the available and acceptable meanings of a specific phenomenon, contextualization is pivotal for explaining what is going on. Rather than relying on the positivist explanatory concept of causality, discourse analysts place their findings in the "proper context" of the research object.[304] The analyst chooses which is the proper context by evaluating which one appears most instructive for understanding specific discursive elements better. For example, one can consult the socio-political context, looking at links between the discourse and other relevant socio-political events at the time, and/or the historical setting. Analysts can examine how the discourse connects or departs from similar debates that have previously taken place in the observed community. Then they trace how the studied words or speeches derived meanings from these contexts.[305] They uncover the enabling and restricting conditions for certain discursive peculiarities, developments, and practices.[306] In this way contextualization helps to explain why the phenomenon came into being, why it became possible in the first place.[307]

Regarding the research practice, the discourse analyst needs to move beyond the bare texts and their immediate communicative situation for contextualizing. Such a macro-perspective envisages the "broad societal nature of the discourse",[308] or the "sociological gaze" as Holzscheiter calls it.[309] During this analytical activity, the researcher creates a dynamic dialogue between the data and its' environment. She systematically adds supplemental information. The procedure then continues, for example, by drawing connections, comparisons, and contrasts.[310]

In order to explain a social phenomenon, IR scholars have frequently explored the role of actors and institutional contexts. There is a rich body of work on the function of specific actors for a

303 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 28.
304 Wagenaar, *Meaning in Action*, 10.
305 Larsen, *Foreign Policy and Discourse Analysis*, 14.
306 See Epstein, *The Power of Words*; Price, *Chemical Weapons Taboo*, 7.
307 Wagenaar, *Meaning in Action*, 53; Browning, *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis*, 69.
308 Larsen, *Foreign Policy and Discourse Analysis*, 29.
309 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 12.
310 One can compare and contrast the examined discourse with other discourses, from other communities or within the same community, on a similar or different issue, with comparative or divergent outcomes.

certain discourse, especially in the literature on norms diffusion and human rights. Margarita Petrova, for instance, argued the UK changed its position on cluster munitions from averse to supportive of banning because of the strategic discursive action by small states and NGOs.[311] Klotz's assessment of why US policymakers cared about race relations in South Africa during Apartheid illuminated how activist groups influenced the discursive framing of the issue.[312] Another strong strand of literature regards the institutional contexts and bureaucratic procedures within which a discourse takes place. Holzscheiter traced the developments of the children's rights discourse regarding UN governance structures, focusing on the participation of NGOs. Having studied the ruptures in the international whaling discourse, Epstein concluded it took a new institutional setting for "alternative ways of knowing and talking about the whales" to emerge.[313] Still, these works are not pure cases of socio-political contextualization, since the authors also used historical contextualization.

Longitudinal discourse analyses which center a historical perspective often apply the genealogical method; famously introduced by Foucault. "Through historical studies of past discursive practices",[314] it examines the "contingency of contemporary discursive practices"[315] and abolishes illusions about the "singularity of events" or the finality of discourses.[316] Some of the best-known discourse studies of the recent years have used the genealogical method. For example, in *The Chemical Weapons Taboo* Richard Price used the genealogical method for inquiring the origins and tracing the development of the moral interpretations of the norm (compare 1.1.2).[317] Other authors prefer to not rely this heavily on history, but still finish a discourse analysis with a "broad historical sweep", as Neumann phrased it.[318] They place a discourse in a historical setting. Adding historical contextualization allows us to show to what extent representations vary in historical depth. Furthermore, a historical contextualization offers the benefit of being able to simultaneously include political, economic, and cultural elements in the analysis. Therefore, contextualizing the interpretative findings from the discourse from a historical perspective might make a study more compelling. A sophisticated discourse analysis carefully

311 Petrova, "Rhetorical Entrapment."
312 Audie Klotz, "Norms Reconstituting Interests: Global Racial Equality and U.S. Sanctions Against South Africa," *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (1995): 452.
313 Epstein, *The Power of Words*, 129.
314 Milliken, "The Study of Discourse," 243.
315 Ibid.
316 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (London: Allen Lane, 1977), 13.
317 Price highlighted the significance of political constructions in history for the emergence and institutionalization of the taboo (Price, *Chemical Weapons Taboo*, 7-10.)
318 Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 75.

links the findings from the contemporary discourse with the historical development and systematically engages with it.[319] This is what Chapter 6 of this dissertation aims to do. The subsequent discussion of the "discourse ecosystem" specifies further how this dissertation perceives of and practices contextualization (2.3.3).

2.3.3 The Discursive Ecosystem

Discourse-theoretical approaches are well suited to questions such as: How was it possible this perspective "came into being"?[320] Discourse scholars – perhaps with the exception of those post-structuralists who assume discourse is everything (see 2.2.1) – then examine the transformation of an idea as embedded in and interacting with its' context. Few theorists would go as far as Tony Hak and define discourse simply as "text in context".[321] Yet, context is a central theoretical feature of discourse. This section theorizes about how contextual structures interact with (transforming) representations in a discourse, and how certain policy options emerge from this process. It also discusses the role impulses inducing enabling conditions for change in a discourse, such as "external shocks".

Context provides agents who construct "their vision of the world" with structural conditions that constrain and enable change, as Bourdieu theorized.[322] Of course, there are many kinds of contexts making up an environment in which the discourse develops. It is up to the analyst to decide which one to focus on.[323] I suggest that a discursive environment, be it a cultural, political, or military, includes both ideational and material contextual structures. Specifically, these structures include ideational elements, such as sets of ideas commonly held by a specific group of people, conservative defense politicians for instance. Ideational aspects play a tangible role in policy development since they inform social practices.[324] They also include material elements. Bourdieu conceives of structures in a similar dual way. However, for me the term "material" does not allude to a materialistic conception.[325] Rather, I understand it as referring rather

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319 Traue, Pfahl, and Schürmann, "Handbuch Methoden," 572-74.

320 Wagenaar, *Meaning in Action*, 53. see also Weldes, "Constructing National Interests," 283-4; Doty, "Foreign Policy as Social Construction," 298; Dunn, "Historical Representations," 78.

321 Tony Hak, ""Text" and "Context": Talk Bias in Studies of Health Care " in *Talk, Work, and Institutional Order: Discourse in Medical, Mediation, and Management Settings*, ed. Srikant Sarangi and Celia Roberts (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999).

322 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 130. see also Michael C. Williams, *Culture and Security: Symbolic Power and the Politics of International Security* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 32.

323 For Wodak and Meyer context is somewhat synonymous to historical context. (Wodak and Meyer, "Critical Discourse Analysis," 20.)

324 Larsen, "Rethinking EU Foreign Policy," 64.

325 Although my conception of contextual structures resembles Bourdieu's theory of "field", it does not share his focus on capital or the assumption of capital operation and distribution as structuring the practices of agents.

generally to elements with matter. For me, material structures include the agents present in an institutional setting, in my case parties and politicians in the Bundestag, or certain security-relevant events. That said, it also matters greatly how agents interpret these material elements.

That is why I instead use "ecosystem" as a metaphorical concept. It acknowledges the space in which ideational and material contextual structures condition and dynamically interact with a discourse, just like the different parts of an ecosystem do. Scholars engaging with political discourses have referenced this metaphor before, albeit only on a small scale. Some of them have emphasized the role of resources, such as Holger Stritzel, who spoke of "communicative ecology" to describe the "communicative/discursive environment that provides securitizing actors with specific resources for conversational strategies".[326] Others focused on the nature of relations between sub-parts in the ecosystem, proposing the "rhetorical ecology" of a public discourse would resemble an ecosystem, "in which various individual subsystems interact in relations of conflict and mutual dependence".[327] For me, the most relevant parts of a discursive ecosystem are the discourse as such, the ideational structures such existing socio-political ideas and historical experiences, and the material structures including the constellation of relevant agents in the discursive setting and significant events, which can create space for change.

This dissertation takes a pragmatic approach instead of conducting a "pure" discourse analysis, which only focuses on the textual data, words, ideas, and arguments. Strict discourse theorists would see tensions with the concept of the "discursive ecosystem". However, recognizing the unique conditions of a parliamentary setting (e.g., national elections, changing constellation of parties in parliament, political majorities, unequal distribution of speaking time) and its modes of operation (e.g., government-opposition dynamics, power relations, partisan interests and internal processes, tactics and strategies), as well as the specific characteristics of elected politicians as the main agents (e.g., belonging to a particular party or party-wing, seeking reelection, aiming to advance agenda) compels to broaden the perspective.

Similarly, international or domestic drone-relevant events, such as surges in drone proliferation or attacks on German troops can act as impulses or even shocks that disrupt and transform the discourse. They can present windows of opportunity for policy change. Suggesting that the characteristics of a specific forum or momentous events do not matter, thus omitting all external

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326 Holger Stritzel, "Securitization, power, intertextuality: Discourse theory and the translations of organized crime," *Security Dialogue* 43, no. 6 (2012): 560. Footnote 11, ibid., 565.

327 Michael Weiler and W. Barnett Pearce, *Reagan and Public Discourse in America* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 14.

factors, would suggest that a discursive context does not matter. For a project that is only interested in language this might be possible, but not for one that studies the emergence of a policy (compare 1.2). In other words, events, interests, and ultimately, politics do matter to some extent, even if one does not give them as much weight as rationalists would. From a pragmatic constructivist perspective, they are simply part of the structuring context, involving ideational and material structures, in which a policy discourse develops.

2.3.3.1 Ideational Structures

Discourse facilitates "individuals, societies, and states [to] make sense of themselves, of their ways of living, and of the world around them", as Epstein put it.[328] The ideational structures outline what is possible or appropriate to think or do in a particular socio-political context and what is not.[329] As Wagenaar pointed out, meaning "is somehow *constitutive* of political actions, governing institutions, and public policies".[330] When discourse theorists reconstruct meanings and trace the processes of their (re)production they can make the ideational structures, at least partially, visible by accessing the juncture of textual and social processes.[331]

Discursive representations are often more successful if they connect – or are being connected – to past ones as the following chapter will elaborate on (see 3.1.2).[332] Some meanings and representations are deeply engrained in societies; in their respective histories and cultures.[333] Studies building on discourse theory have shown how historical references from another discourse feed into the main discourse. Jutta Weldes, for instance, illustrated how the US governments' use of the "Munich analogy", referencing the Munich pact from 1938, shaped the "warranting conditions" and ideas of appropriate action during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.[334]

In parliamentary debates the identity of party – being part of government or opposition, being left or right on the political spectrum and so forth – can set the parameters for discursive contributions. At the same time, it is in and through discourse that agents construct identities, for

328 Epstein, *The Power of Words*, 2.
329 Doty, "Foreign Policy as Social Construction," 298.
330 Emphasis in original, Wagenaar, *Meaning in Action*, 4.
331 Wodak and van Dijk, *Racism at the Top*, 31.
332 Whether this continuity is natural or artificial is a different question. Milliken, "The Study of Discourse," 243; see also Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 73.
333 Hansen, "Discourse Analysis," 108.
334 Weldes, "Constructing National Interests." The "Munich pact" references the 1938 Munich settlement, when the UK, France, and Italy appeased Hitler by permitting Nazi-Germany to annex the Czech Sudetenland.

example, for the state or nation,[335] a group of agents within that state,[336] and even for themselves as authoritative speakers.[337] Agents interactively (re)produce collectively shared "knowledge",[338] "facts"[339] or "common sense,"[340] and attach them "to various social subjects/objects".[341] Structures can also take on an ideational dimension, assuming that we are surrounded by "structures of acceptable and available meanings".[342] At the same time, what counts as acceptable and available in a group of agents also interacts with the material contextual conditions the group is embedded in. Thus, the (re)production of meanings is enfolding through an interplay between the inside (the discourse) and the outside (the world).

2.3.3.2 Material Structures

Broadly speaking, context involves everything that is going on outside of the discourse including the conditions for policy-development as well as the political consequences.[343] I posit that material elements play a role alongside the immaterial, ideational structures outlined above, just like they do in an ecosystem. This category of material elements in the discursive ecosystem includes the constellation of agents, in my case the government and parties represented in the Bundestag. Studies of foreign policy change on the domestic level have repeatedly emphasized the significance of political agents in the process of transforming policy, especially shifts in their constellation (compare 1.1.2).[344] My research also includes the speakers of parliamentary debates on armed drones. Here, a modified parliamentary set-up after elections or even a change-up of key party speakers can alter debate dynamics.[345] Different parties have different positions on armed drones. Thus, the dynamic in the parliamentary discourse may shift if there is one pro-drone party or three, for example. In line with my agent-centric approach to discourse outlined in the previous subchapter, I do not rule out that individuals can matter in the debate. Rather, some German MPs are particularly vocal on drone armament and persistently brought it up during debates as the analysis will show.

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335 Ibid.; Rudolf De Cillia, Martin Reisigl, and Ruth Wodak, "The Discursive Construction of National Identities," *Discourse & Society* 10, no. 2 (1999).
336 Wodak and van Dijk, *Racism at the Top*.
337 Milliken, "The Study of Discourse," 239.
338 Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*.
339 Hansen, *Security as Practice*, 18.
340 Milliken, "The Study of Discourse," 229.
341 Doty, "Foreign Policy as Social Construction," 298.
342 Browning, *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis*, 69.
343 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 9.
344 Walsh, "Policy Failure and Policy Change."; Yang, "Leaders' Conceptual Complexity."; Kaarbo, "Coalition Politics, International Norms, and Foreign Policy."; Tsebelis, *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*.
345 Compare Hansen, *Security as Practice*.

The material elements of the drone discourse ecosystem also involve politically relevant incidents or events, happening on the national or international level. Literature on foreign policy change suggests these events can lead to disruptions and enable conditions for change (compare 1.1.2). They can occur on a smaller or larger scale, be very pinpointed or diffuse. For example, Walsh pointed to government changes and policy failures,[346] Kingdon to political climate,[347] and Farrell to "external shocks", referring to large-scale events such as wars, revolutions, and economic depressions for example.[348] All these incidents or events can provide a window of opportunity for policy change, but there is no guarantee. Legro proposed two elements may facilitate change at these moments: 1) The "[f]it between social expectations (generated by collective ideas) and events" and 2) "whether subsequent experience is socially desirable".[349] Farrell suggested adding anticipation as a third element: 3) "communities may be shocked into changing their ways of thinking and doing in order to prevent or ameliorate an event anticipated to have disastrous effects".[350] A sudden attack on forces abroad with soldiers killed or injured in action could cause such a disruption. Events like these can "undermine the legitimacy of existing norms, shift power within communities".[351]

However, this transformative effect is no automatism. It depends on whether policy entrepreneurs seize the momentary chance to "interpret events, frame the discourse, and construct a new consensus".[352] In the wake of national elections, party agents might alter their speeches according to their campaign's agenda and objectives, for example by hammering certain points home or by trying to avoid certain subjects and stalling the debate. Changes do not always endure. Sometimes, when times passes the immediate disruptive power of an impulse fades, the new idea, norm, or practice does not substantially stick, and agents return to how things were before – unless it has already been manifested in new laws.[353] I will speak of "impulses", since this term captures a dual meaning, not only in the external, physical sense as a force which can

346 Walsh, "Policy Failure and Policy Change."
347 Kingdon, *Agendas*.
348 Farrell, *The Norms of War*, 14. See also Kingdon, *Agendas*.
349 Farrell, *The Norms of War*, 14. Citing from Jeffrey W. Legro, "Whence American Internationalism," *International Organization* 54, no. 2 (2000): 263.
350 Farrell, *The Norms of War*, 14.
351 Ibid.
352 Ibid., 13; 15.
353 Ibid., 15. drawing on Jeffrey W. Legro, "Which Norms Matter? Revisiting the "Failure" of Internationalism," *International Organization* 51, no. 1 (1997). See also Jeffrey W. Legro, "The Transformation of Policy Ideas," *American Journal of Political Science* 44, no. 3 (2000).

provide or change a momentum, but also the internal way as an agents' desire for action. Chapter 6 will consider three specific impulses in the security and foreign policy context of the German drone debate (see 6.2).

2.4 Conclusion

Studying discourses enriches our understanding of political issues because discourse continuously underpins and overarches politics. As a theoretical concept, it allows researchers to understand the "coming-into-being" of meanings,[354] and explore how "possibilities of action"[355] developed. A discourse theoretical lens is useful for addressing how a particular development, such as a policy idea emergence, could happen in the first place whereas others did not. This chapter outlined my theoretical pillars for assessing the development of the German parliamentary debate on armed drone policy 2009–2018. It began by depicting discourse-analytical approaches as "language-sensitive". Discourse theorists argue that language is full of meanings. Agents constantly interpret these meanings through language practices. Through language practices agents (re)construct social reality, interpreting and constituting understandings of agents, actions, and societal processes. The chapter then turned towards epistemology. It noted that positivism advocates for the use of natural science methods, such as experiments, to study social phenomena, viewing the researcher as a neutral observer seeking to generate causal claims. In contrast, interpretivism challenges the applicability of these methods in social research, emphasizing that subjective knowledge and experiences influence how we study social reality, also acknowledging the possibility of inherent personal bias and subjectivity in social science research. It introduced four criteria for assessing the quality of interpretivist work, such as this dissertation: Trustworthiness, thick description, reflexivity, and intertextuality. In the conclusion chapter I will reflect on to what extent I was able to abide by these standards throughout my dissertation as a whole (Chapter 8). In the discussion above, however, an initial reflection has already begun and will continue in the methods chapter (Chapter 3).

Even though I recognize structures provide the context for policy-discourses and laying out possibilities, agents are the main focus of my approach. In contrast to poststructuralist perspectives and critical discourse analysis, this project centers the notion of agency and agents – precisely MPs, parliamentary groups, and government officials (designated in the footnotes as FGG, the Federal Government of Germany). An agent-centric approach fits to the setting of

354 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 28.
355 Dunn, "Historical Representations," 78.

parliamentary debates because these public debates resemble a confined communicative interaction. While these speakers seek to advance their agenda, I do, however, not theorize about their "real" strategic objectives behind their contributions, as the Strategic Narratives literature does. Rather, their identity as democratically elected representatives and party-politicians constitutes general parameters. This agent-centric perspective suits the purpose of the main body of my analysis well, namely mapping the development of the drone debate content, including presented positions, arguments, and frames.

The other pillar of my theoretical framework is – with regard to discourse theory more broadly – the "discursive ecosystem", as I call it. Taking a broader perspective than language practices for example, which address how agents construct the discourse, the discursive ecosystem helps making sense of the larger developments and shifts in the drone discourse. After all, discourses are dynamic processes. They constantly produce and reproduce representations and meanings. At the same time, elements with the discourse, such as arguments or frames, but also discourses as a whole interact with each other. They can feed each other. There can also be overlaps or even entanglements of discourses. There is contestation of meaning; the degree of which determines whether a discourse is open or closed. While an idea was dominant before it can drift to the margins under certain conditions. In line with the concept of "discursive ecosystem", ideational and material contextual structures condition and engage with a discourse. Structures of existing ideas, norms, and collective experiences, such as history or culture, can provide the parameters for what is possible. At the same time, material structures, such as constellations of agents in a specific setting, new developments or events can act as impulses and open up windows of opportunity for change in armed drone policy debates.

3 Methods of Doing Discourse Analysis

This chapter depicts the method and research procedures undertaken in this study. Studies labelled discourse analysis often take very different methodological directions, for instance a metaphorical analysis, linguistic analysis, genealogical method and so forth, each having their own toolsets, and each having been claimed, more or less, by some theoretical sub-school of discourse analysis.[356] However, this dissertation advocates for understanding discourse analysis first and foremost as a mode of analysis. Many frameworks for discourse analyses consist of three analytical activities: A description of the discourses content, an interpretation of literal and, especially, nonliteral meanings and discursive structures, and contextualization facilitating a better understanding of the studied phenomenon. Out of the three activities contextualization is particularly important. It helps to distinguish discourse analysis from other text-based methods. Although this is a longitudinal inquiry, which limits the scope of contextualization to some extent, contextualization is still valued for its analytical benefits.

Due to my interest in the development of the debate over the years, a longitudinal research design was the obvious choice. It allows exploring how the use of armed military drones by Germany emerged as a political option in the German parliamentary debates 2009–2018. That means I studied the parliamentary debate about the same weapons technology (combat drones) in Germany as it has taken place for about a decade. A cross-sector perspective, by contrast, would have compared the German parliamentary discourse on drones with those on different weapons technologies (e.g., cyber weapons, hypersonic missiles), or with armed drone debates in other countries. A cross-sector perspective would fit to a comparative research of a shorter time period, but my interest is in the long-term developments.

My observation period ranges from January 2009 to December 2018. The year 2009 was chosen as the starting point because Germany leased large, unarmed Heron 1 drones for the first time for the military (compare introduction of Chapter 1).[357] Finishing at the end of 2018 allowed to include a preliminary policy outcome; a political compromise. Policymakers wanted to lease

[356] Elsewhere, discourse analysis has been named a "large and confusing family of interpretative approaches" (Wagenaar, *Meaning in Action*, 11.)

[357] In 2009, the 17th legislation period began under Chancellor Angela Merkel's second cabinet. The German military deployment in Afghanistan, the combat zone where Germany would have been most likely to firstly operate armed drones, intensified. In September 2009, the "Kunduz aerial attack" ordered by German Colonel ("Oberst") Georg Klein, sparked widespread criticism, after aerial bombings on two tank trucks harmed a hundred civilians. That year the German public slowly became more interested in the issue of military drones, as indicated by a rise in German Google searches on the topic (see Appendix 1, Figure 4). Additionally, Barack Obama resumed office as US President in 2009. Under Obama, the US expanded its armed drone program and increased transparency about drone strikes, stirring a controversial global debate.

the "armable" Heron TP model. This period is my main analysis. However, in November 2021, when I was well into my research, the new government coalition of the SPD, the Greens, and the FDP decided that Germany should get armed drones. This turn of events did not only conclude the AMALE-drone debate, but also impacted my dissertation, as excluding it would have left a gap in our understanding. Although the substance of my project still focuses on the time before, this significant event also required consideration. Between my main observation period (2009–2018) and this time (2019–2021) the quality of the discourse varied: Having been intense and open between 2009 and 2018 – with a peak in 2013–2014 – the intensity and openness now decreased. After 2018, Bundestag discussions barely demonstrated any new arguments. The positions had hardened. Also, policymakers were tired of debating this topic (Chapter 7). That is why I decided to dedicate an epilogue, a bonus chapter, to the remaining time, from early 2019 to autumn of 2021 in order to round up the analysis. However, this late addition was only supplementary. The centerpiece remains the period 2009–2018, on which this chapter focuses.

Often, discourse scholars extensively engage with the theoretical aspects of the "theory-method"-nexus that is discourse analysis, yet treat the discussion of methodology subsidiary.[358] At the core of this dissertation lies the data; my focus is empirical, not theoretical. That is why it presents the chosen method, handling of data, and applied analytical techniques in a thorough fashion. The first subchapter breaks down the large concept of discourse for the empirical analysis by introducing representations, frames, and narratives as the analytical units for studying the drone debate. Moreover, I present "framing" and "grafting" as rhetorical strategies that agents frequently use for constructing meanings in the discourse and I will discuss preconditions for their success (3.1).

In the second subchapter, I begin by portraying official parliamentary debates, the "analytical point of departure"[359] of this dissertation, illustrating the characteristics and particularities of this kind of public discourse. Subsequently, I describe how I collected the data of the German parliamentary debate on military drones from the Bundestag's online archive using thirteen carefully chosen search terms. Then I describe the data selection criteria for establishing the corpus, as assisted by MAXQDA. This section also shows how the density of the Bundestag drone debate varied over time by plotting the number of documents issued that mention military drones. After cleaning the data and dropping documents that contained mere text duplications, 532 documents remained for the discourse analysis (3.2).

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358 Hendrik Wagenaar made similar observations on interpretative approaches in policy analysis (Wagenaar, *Meaning in Action*, 7-8.)

359 Hansen, *Security as Practice*, 60.

The third subchapter outlines how I analyzed the discourse in the data material. It delineates discourse analysis from content analysis and discusses the significance of contextualization. Then it presents my two complementary steps of coding. In a first step, I used open coding to sketch out a preliminary, descriptive summary of preeminent topics and issues in the discussion to get a general overview. In the second step, and the far more elaborate and relevant one, I used a set of analytical questions, developed from my research sub-questions (3.3). These questions allowed for an extensive and more focused coding procedure, guiding the in-depth discourse analysis (see Chapter 4–6). That is how I reconstructed the military uses of drones, drone policy options, and Germany's role in the world as represented in the parliamentary debates, considering their patterns, dynamics, and contestation. In the conclusion, I briefly summarize the discussion on methods and analytical procedures (3.4).

3.1 Operationalizing Concepts for the Discourse Analysis

By operationalizing discourse, this subchapter bridges the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2 (which focused on the discourse-theoretical approach) with the practical research methodology discussed in the current chapter. This subchapter lays out the concepts used to assess how German policymakers empirically (re)constructed meanings, framings, and narratives about armed drones in Bundestag debates, often using rhetorical strategies. To begin, it introduces the types of language practices that the research focuses on, that is, representations, frames, and narratives (3.1.1). Then, it presents the rhetorical strategies of framing and grafting that agents can use to (re)construct meanings, sometimes successfully (3.1.2).

3.1.1 Types of Language Practices

This section outlines the most relevant conceptual types of language practices for my discourse analysis: Representations, frames, and narratives. It breaks down the large concept of discourse into more manageable analytical units for the practical study of the Bundestag debates. Some of these units have already been mentioned above. As the term "units" indicates, they are all part of a larger discourse, yet they vary in scope. A representation has a narrower scope than a narrative. Yet, there are also similarities and overlaps. For example, they all convey and (re)produce meanings and ideas. In the next subchapter section, I will then present how agents discursively construct these units using rhetorical strategies such as framing and grafting (3.1.2).

3.1.1.1 Representations

Discourse, narratives, and frames all contain, produce, and reproduce representations (see Figure 2). While meanings are located in the (sub)consciousness of agents and are hence implicit in discursive activities, representations are the expressed meanings in the texts that we study.[360] Besides carrying and communicating meaning, representations can also clash with each other.[361] They can serve specific functions, for example constructing normative perspectives, legitimizing behavior, and defining situations.[362] When repeatedly used over time, representations evolve into "a set of statements and practices through which certain language becomes institutionalized and 'normalized'", for example American "dove" and "hawk" representations of the Soviet Union during the Cold War.[363]

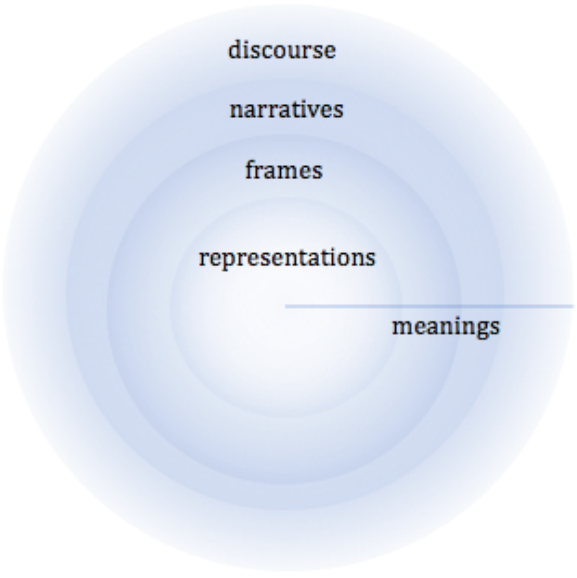

Figure 2: Discursive Units
Source: Author's own work

Furthermore, representations are the dotted line between discursive objects, the connective link established by frames.[364] Frames are the discursive element I will turn to next. Still, while representations are constitutive for communication, they do not simultaneously provide any "built-in guides for action" as frames do.[365] Therefore, representations may be the go-to concept for mapping meanings, but they do not necessarily elucidate the particular processes that eased the way for a certain political decision or action.[366]

360 Compare Wagenaar, *Meaning in Action*, 18.
361 Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 70.
362 Traue, Pfahl, and Schürmann, "Handbuch Methoden," 567.
363 Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 61.
364 Weldes, "Constructing National Interests," 282.
365 Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 76.
366 Ibid.

3.1.1.2 Frames

Frame analysis is widely used in studies of political communication, public opinion, norm diffusion, and social movements. There are two main lines of inquiry regarding frame analysis. One line tackles the link between frames and their effects on policy. Here, frames serve as an analytical tool for studying the political effects of ideas.[367] It proposes that the way an actor presents an issue, for example a policy, impacts how people think about it and, potentially, how they will act on it. When different agents frame the same issue, it can show either a "common ground" if they largely agree, or be "contentious" if they disagree. Specifically, scholars study how the predispositions created by a specific frame of a problem or issue led policymakers to decide on it in a certain way.[368] Another line of inquiry aims to understand how agents, for instance, choose to discursively represent a problem in a particular way and why they choose one frame over another.[369] This project aims to contribute to the former.

Following Elvira Rosert's classification, I distinguish between frames, which I consider as discursive units, and framing, the strategic activity of constructing frames which will be discussed in the next section (3.1.2).[370] Frames have been described as "collections of idea elements tied together by a unifying concept"[371] and as the "'outfit' of an issue".[372] They have a selective, interpretative, and prescriptive quality. Through frames, the agents involved in a discourse define and interpret a situation by attempting to "fix meanings" and "organize experience".[373] The reference point of a frame is something at stake in a situation, such as an issue, a problem, an interest, or an identity.[374] Even more so, by constructing frames, speakers seek to trigger a particular (re)action on a cognitive (perceptions), emotional (feelings) or behavioral (actions)

367 Payne, "Persuasion, Frames," 43.
368 Breuning, "Role Theory Research," 28; see for example Jack S. Levy, "Loss Aversion, Framing, and Bargaining: The Implications of Prospect Theory for International Conflict," *International Political Science Review* 17, no. 2 (1996).
369 Breuning, "Role Theory Research," 28; see for example Donald A. Sylvan and Deborah M. Haddad, "Reasoning and Problem Representation in foreign Policy: Groups, Individuals, and Stories," in *Problem Representation in Foreign Policy Decision Making*, ed. Donald A. Sylvan and James F. Voss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
370 Rosert, *Nicht-Entstehung internationaler Normen*, 134.
371 Creed, Langstraat, and Scully, "Picture of the Frame," 37; David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization," *International Social Movement Research* 1 (1988).
372 Rosert, *Nicht-Entstehung internationaler Normen*, 134.
373 Barnett, "Israel's Road to Oslo," 25.
374 Creed, Langstraat, and Scully, "Picture of the Frame," 37; Barnett, "Israel's Road to Oslo," 25; Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink, "From Santiago to Seattle," 12.

level.[375] That is why some scholars described frames as having a "motivative",[376] "persuasive",[377] or "manipulative"[378] quality. They prescribe – sometimes more, sometimes less directly – what one should do in a situation, what is the appropriate behavior; the "right" strategy or solution.[379] The "right" strategy can be one which appears "'reasonable' 'justified', or 'appropriate' given the desires, beliefs, and expectations of the actors."[380]

Jutta Weldes offered a fitting account of frames in her description of representations. Frequently appearing in the form of quasi-causal arguments, their significance would not lie

> "[I]n their accuracy, but in their provision of 'warranting conditions' which make a particular action or belief more 'reasonable' 'justified', or 'appropriate' given the desires, beliefs, and expectations of the actors".[381]

Based on these insights, I define frames as frameworks of linked representations that describe and interpret a situation for a collective in a particular way, define what is at stake for whom (potentially why), and prescribe what should be done about it.[382]

3.1.1.3 Narratives

Broadly speaking, a narrative tells a story. Like a frame, it helps people to engage in sense-making about what is going on. Still, narratives have a broader scope, because they are more encompassing and can contain several frames, among others. It is a plot about an incident or a series of events, people, objects, locations, interests, feelings, values and so forth, which takes place within a temporally and spatially confined framework. Narratives convey underlying beliefs and ideas about the world. They also indicate relationships between actors, who are part of the narrative, and inform about experiences these actors might have had.[383] A narrative can

375 Rosert, *Nicht-Entstehung internationaler Normen*, 134.
376 Creed, Langstraat, and Scully, "Picture of the Frame," 37; referring to Snow and Benford, "Frame Resonance."
377 Payne, "Persuasion, Frames," 43.
378 Ibid., 47; Robert M. Entman, "Cascading Activation: Contesting the White House's Frame After 9/11," *Political Communication* 20, no. 4 (2003): 422.
379 Barnett, "Israel's Road to Oslo," 25; Payne, "Persuasion, Frames," 39.
380 Weldes, "Constructing National Interests," 282.
381 Ibid.
382 Speech acts are utterances using words, "which have a certain meaning in a given language community […], conduct a specific activity […], and are intentionally directed to achieve a specific effect in the audience […]." (Müller, "Arguing, Bargaining and all that," 397; referring to Searle, *Speech Acts*. Speech acts are a discursive *practice* (performance, activity) not a discursive *element* (substance of discourse). Yet, speech acts are too focused on instances (utterances) and not enough on the process; of the "long lines" of policy or the context as my discourse approach foresees.
383 Compare Traue, Pfahl, and Schürmann, "Handbuch Methoden."

be "carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images", or a combination of the former.[384]

3.1.2 Rhetorical Strategies of Agents

My project assumes that, although structures provide the parameters for what is discursively possible, agents, such as politicians, still choose how to act and what to say. They often do so with a certain objective in mind, for example their political agenda. This is particularly true in parliaments, where speeches and statements are usually heavily scripted and central positions result from a partisan coordination process. When it comes to contributing to the discourse, agents capable of "skillful rhetorical maneuvering" can shape policy formation.[385] In order to build up support for an issue, governments or other political actors mobilize certain representations and link them to foreign policy.[386] In order to do so they can employ different rhetorical strategies such as framing and the related activity of grafting. Both shall be discussed shortly as well as features conditioning the success of framing endeavors.

In my research, I examine to what extent German policymakers used these strategies in the military drone discourse in the Bundestag. The assumption that agents (can) shape policy formation with the aid of rhetorical strategies places this study on the agent-end of the agent-structure spectrum (see 2.1). However, it also recognizes that all strategic discursive action is embedded in the surrounding ideational and contextual structures (compare the "discursive ecosystem" in the previous subchapter, 2.3).[387]

3.1.2.1 Framing

Framing is the strategic activity of constructing a frame in a discourse.[388] There are numerous empirical studies of how political agents frame international issues to specific target communities for triggering changes.[389] The norm diffusion literature in particular referred to framing extensively, mainly for showing how norm advocates (or "norm entrepreneurs") craft cognitive frames by "using language that names, interprets, and dramatizes", aiming to persuasively

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384 Roland Barthes, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative," in *Image, Music, Text*, ed. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill & Wang, 1996), 79.
385 Krebs and Jackson, "Twisting Tongues," 42.
386 Hansen, "Discourse Analysis," 108.
387 Michael C. Williams, "Cultural Strategies," in *Culture and Security: Symbolic Power and the Politics of International Security*, ed. Michael C. Williams (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 36; Larsen, "Rethinking EU Foreign Policy," 65-66.
388 Rosert, *Nicht-Entstehung internationaler Normen*, 134.
389 Payne, "Persuasion, Frames," 39.

"sell" their norms to relevant audiences.[390] Prominent examples include Price's study of how landmine ban advocates framed the effects of landmines as indiscriminate or Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink's study on how norm advocates framed human rights in a new way. Many insights from the norm literature are useful for my inquiry. In the context of the Bundestag military drone discourse, the analysis could show that policymakers sought to reframe drone adoption, away from controversial extralegal interventions and targeted killing, towards a discussion about alliances, technological developments, and state security.[391]

Framing is a challenging political task and a highly competitive process. Robert Payne emphasized, "most advocates who seek to design frames are presumably unable to construct one that resonates with larger audiences."[392] At the same time, the creation of a frame does not guarantee success.[393] It can happen that advocates construct misleading or false frames, whether intentionally or unintentionally.[394] Furthermore, "[n]o frame is an omnipotent persuasive tool that can be decisively wielded […] without serious political wrangling", as Payne observed.[395] The audience might resist and contest the frame, its' content and propositions, or people may opt for alternatives, so-called counter-frames. Counter-frames "make different interpretations of the way things are, and support different courses of action concerning what is to be done, by whom and how to do it".[396] Thus, I expect to find frames and counter-frames on military drones and policy options in the Bundestag debates.

During the activity of framing, agents attribute meaning to an issue or problem. Agents choose to include certain attributes in the frames while rejecting others. Hence, attribution techniques include selection and exclusion, but also association and repetition of certain representations.[397] During framing, agents can also aim to construct agents; in a positive or negative way. In a

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390 Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 897; Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," 268; see also Amitav Acharya, "How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism," *International Organization* 58, no. 2 (2004): 243; Payne, "Persuasion, Frames," 39.

391 Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1998); Price, "Reversing the Gun Sights."; compare Payne, "Persuasion, Frames."

392 Payne, "Persuasion, Frames," 45.

393 Ibid., 44.

394 Ibid., 41; referring to Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, 291.

395 Payne, "Persuasion, Frames," 44.

396 Ibid., citing Martin Rein and Donald Schön, "Reframing Policy Discourse," in *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, ed. Frank Fischer and John Forester (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 147.

397 Rosert, *Nicht-Entstehung internationaler Normen*, 136; Entman, "Framing," 52; Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 60-69; Creed, Langstraat, and Scully, "Picture of the Frame," 39-40.

paragraph dedicated to representations, Weldes notes that frames can assign meanings to agents combined with prescriptions for action:

> "… created by state officials [they] make clear both to those officials themselves and to others who and what 'we' are, who and what 'our enemies' are, in what ways 'we' are threatened by 'them', and how 'we' might best deal with those 'threats'."[398]

These kinds of agent constructions can serve different purposes, for example blaming and shaming. If something goes wrong, you attempt to pin the responsibility on someone else, rather than have it being assigned to yourself.[399] This process usually takes place between at least two parties, the "blame makers" on the one hand and "blame takers" on the other. For instance, in public-private partnerships, intergovernmental projects or governmental coalitions, agents might blame their partner. Similarly, a government could argue that they must get armed drones because their ally recently withdrew all forces and armed drones from an important military operation. In addition to agents, it is also possible to blame structures, for example the organization of an agency or circumstances, such as market forces.[400]

3.1.2.2 Grafting

People are more prone to accepting new ideas if they resemble established ones. That is why discursive agents usually aim to construct policy frames that resonate with a "broader public understanding";[401] with "existing ideas, norms and values prevalent in their audience."[402] They do so through the discursive activity of "grafting". Amitav Acharya described grafting as linking a new norm "with a preexisting norm in the same issue area, which makes a similar prohibition or injunction".[403] Farrell speaks of "nesting" external norms alongside local norms and Price of "normative rooting and branching." [404] In this way, actors can make a norm or idea seem familiar, local, and valuable.[405] But despite the biological wording, grafting is no organic

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398 Weldes, "Constructing National Interests," 283.
399 Christopher Hood, *The Blame Game: Spin, Bureaucracy, and Self-Preservation in Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 6-7.
400 Compare ibid., Table 4.1.
401 Payne, "Persuasion, Frames," 43.
402 König, "Unpopular Policies," 178.
403 Acharya, "How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism," 244.
404 Theo Farrell, "Transnational Norms and Military Development: Constructing Ireland's Professional Army," *European Journal of International Relations* 7, no. 1 (2001): 80; Price, "Reversing the Gun Sights," 628.
405 Acharya, "How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism."

process. It entails a structural (e.g., the norms of warfare) and a strategic dimension (e.g., policymakers use framing and grafting as a tool for realizing political objectives), combining an interpretation of genealogical legacy with a purposeful craft of speech.[406]

In case of the landmine ban, Price demonstrated that advocates successfully used grafting by associating the ban with the principles of avoiding indiscriminate effects and unnecessary suffering.[407] These principles were already well-recognized and established in international law. Moreover, this way of grafting built on and resonated with other initiatives and campaigns countering weapons of mass destruction.[408] The discourse analysis might show that policymakers tried to link military drones with the established principle of minimizing harm to civilians, by emphasizing their precision strike capability.

3.1.2.3 Successful Frames and Framing

What conditions the success of frames and framing? Out of the variety of possible factors, much of the agent-centric literature stresses the characteristics of frames in shaping the perception of an issue. Rosert classified them in two groups: cognition-oriented and emotion-oriented.[409] The aim of cognition-oriented frame characteristics is to make an issue understandable to a specific audience. She identified three factors which can make a framing more effective, namely the comprehensibility of a frame, its' resonance, and the solvability of the respective problem.[410] When presenting an argument about an issue, easy comprehension is key. When the issue is too complicated, the cause-effect relations too complex, or the number of actors involved vast, the audience might not be able to follow and lose interest. Thus, a frame should ideally present a concise problem description combined with a short causal chain and a clear solution.[411] This is particularly important when an audience listens to the speaker, such as during speeches.

The second characteristic of an effective frame is solvability. Frames do not only define an issue or problem, but also propose a solution, an action. These solutions must appear plausible and realizable for being perceived as a viable option. Scholars assume a solution to appear more plausible when it ties into an established system of measures and solutions. Furthermore, solutions are more realizable, when they are not short- or mid-term and when their costs are deemed as reasonable under given circumstances.[412]

406 Price, "Reversing the Gun Sights," 628.
407 Ibid.
408 Payne, "Persuasion, Frames," 39.
409 Rosert, *Nicht-Entstehung internationaler Normen*, 136-39.
410 Ibid., 137.
411 Ibid.
412 Ibid., 137-38.

Resonance is the third factor for constructing a successful frame. Since discursive spaces are constrained by structures, every community encompasses a limited amount of "rhetorical commonplaces" which lay out what is acceptable and feasible.[413] Resonance suggests people are more likely to accept an idea, norm, or frame, when they sense a certain familiarity, for example through "a cultural match" between the old and the new.[414] It hence aligns with cognitive consistence theories and concepts of psychology, such as confirmation bias, arguing people are more likely to adopt new information when it matches their expectations of how things are or should be.[415] The mechanism here is similar to the ones in grafting, as discussed above.

While rhetorical innovation is possible, it also demands investments and may involve costs.[416] That is why speakers usually prefer to "recycle" language, frames, and arguments that are already established in the community they are addressing.[417] As Neumann remarked, "[t]he dominant position will either present itself as being the way things have 'always' been […] or hark back to an idealized beginning".[418] Establishing this connection to the past can work for both positively and negatively charged frames and ideas. Agents link their new idea to "good" practices, while de-normalizing the idea they seek to replace by linking it to existing practices that people generally perceive as "bad".[419] If the new frame differs greatly from the previously dominant one, agents can engage in a gradual grafting process, slowly familiarizing the audience with the new frame to ease into this "radical" change away from the old frame.[420] Likewise, they can "bridge" or "amplify" existing frames by expanding their domain of application as activists have done by framing women's rights as human rights.[421]

Emotion-oriented frame characteristics aim to present an issue in a relatable way, stirring emotions in the audience. Rosert identified "concreteness", "proximity", "drama" as catering to the emotional appeal of frames. An issue becomes more concrete, and hence less abstract, by means of "personification and visualization". Personification entails shedding light on the individual stories of people affected by the issue. Using visual aids such as photos, films and graphics

413 Krebs and Jackson, "Twisting Tongues," 46.
414 Jeffrey T. Checkel, "Norms, Institutions, and National Identity in Contemporary Europe," *International Studies Quaterly* 43, no. 1 (1999): 87; Payne, "Persuasion, Frames," 43; Audie Klotz, *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle Against Apartheid* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).
415 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 36.
416 Krebs and Jackson, "Twisting Tongues," 46.
417 Ibid.
418 Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 71.
419 Rosert, *Nicht-Entstehung internationaler Normen*, 136; Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics*, 101-02.
420 Rosert, *Nicht-Entstehung internationaler Normen*, 137.
421 Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink, "From Santiago to Seattle," 16; referring to Snow and Benford, "Frame Resonance."

would make the issue more imaginable. When an issue is more concrete, it becomes more approachable.[422] Proximity refers to the connection the targeted audience feels with a framed problem, allowing them to identify with it. A geographic, biographical, cultural, or ethnic connection between the people affected by the problem and the audience can induce a feeling of proximity.[423] Rosert refers to drama in two ways. First, frames are dramatic when a significant event becomes a communicative symbol for a greater, complex issue.[424] Second, drama entails language that uses superlatives and "generic" emotionally laden frames, such as humanity, morality, progress, public interest, threat, and crisis to just name a few.[425]

Still, effective framing and grafting does not exclusively determine success or failure. For instance, a representation or frame can also become dominant when others are simply not sufficiently convincing. This could be due to poor frame design or because advocates of counter-frames have invested considerable effort in keeping them down, and have succeeded.[426] Sometimes advocates link ideas with material consequences to push for approval, linking a policy to the prospect of gaining or losing money, trade, or prestige.[427] For example, policymakers could present the investment in drone technology as crucial for maintaining Germany's economic strength and, thus, job security. All these language practices and rhetorical strategies will guide my discourse analysis when examining the selected textual data.

3.2 Researching and Selecting Bundestag Documents

This subchapter takes a closer look at the analyzed texts and data procedures of this dissertation. It explains the reasons for focusing on textual documents from Bundestag debates, rather than opting for a media analysis for example, and depicts which other type of data material supports the parliamentary speech contributions. Due to the strong emphasis on context in discourse analysis, this subchapter begins by characterizing parliamentary debates, which present the setting of the study and the real-life context from which the textual documents were drawn (3.2.1). Subsequently, I summarize the process of collecting text documents from the Bundestag publicly accessible online archive using search terms specific to my research interest. This search resulted in a first collection of 1,091 documents (3.2.2). Finally, I will describe how I narrowed

422 Rosert, *Nicht-Entstehung internationaler Normen*, 137-38; Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, 19-20; Price, "Reversing the Gun Sights," 623.
423 Rosert, *Nicht-Entstehung internationaler Normen*, 137-38; Kingdon, *Agendas*, 96.
424 Rosert, *Nicht-Entstehung internationaler Normen*, 138; Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, 22; Kingdon, *Agendas*, 97.
425 Rosert, *Nicht-Entstehung internationaler Normen*, 138-39.
426 Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 70.
427 Payne, "Persuasion, Frames," 41; referring to Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, 291.

down this pile of "raw data" by selecting texts for a final corpus of 532 documents. In this section, I will briefly introduce the types of selected Bundestag documents, including minor and major interpellations, government responses, and, importantly, plenary protocols (3.2.3).

3.2.1 Characteristics of Parliamentary Debates

The Bundestag is the most important legislative body in the German political system. Its activities include making laws and controlling the government. For instance, the parliament can demand the government to be present during "questioning of the government" sessions ("Befragung der Bundesregierung") and the question period ("Fragestunde").[428] Furthermore, the Bundestag elects the German Chancellor and determines the budget, including the defense and foreign affairs budgets. As part of the parliamentary participation act ("Parlamentsbeteiligungsgesetz"), it also has the last word on whether German military forces ("Bundeswehr") should be deployed in armed missions abroad or not.[429]

As Hansen pointed out, official discourses such as parliamentary debates are an excellent "analytical point of departure" as they constitute "a useful tangent between discourse analysis and more conventional forms of foreign policy analysis".[430] They play a pivotal role in law-making and even democracy at large.[431] For van Dijk, debating in parliament is "doing politics".[432] That is why parliamentary debates are a worthwhile object of analysis. He defines them as "a formal gathering of a group of elected representatives, members of various political parties, engaging in a discussion about what collective action or policy to undertake concerning an issue of public concern",[433] taking place in a specific institutional setting.[434] Parliamentary debates represent parliamentary democracy, decision-making, and power relations.[435] Here, elected representatives publicly justify and legitimize a certain course of action, policies are being proposed, criticized, and defended, and parties formulate and, eventually, pass legislation for the state.[436]

The political fault lines of parliamentary debates are not only partisan. They can also be between parties on the left or right of the ideological spectrum, or between the government and the opposition. Of course, they can also lie between pro-drone and drone-skeptical speakers across

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428 Thomas Jäger et al., "The Salience of Foreign Affairs Issues in the German Bundestag," *Parliamentary Affairs* 62, no. 3 (2009): 419-20.
429 Website of the German Bundestag, "Parliament: Function and Role," 2025, https://www.bundestag.de/en/parliament/function-197608.
430 Hansen, *Security as Practice*, 60.
431 van Dijk, "Parliamentary Debates," 45.
432 van Dijk, "Theoretical Background," 22.
433 van Dijk, "Parliamentary Debates," 53.
434 Emphasis in original, van Dijk, "Theoretical Background," 19.
435 Ibid., 22-23.
436 Ibid., 13.

parties.[437] In any case, all individuals and groups are acting within the larger structures of meaning-in-use that make up the discourse. Various levels of preparation precede parliamentary debates, depending on the specific situation. Many speeches have been entirely prewritten by their staff. Other statements are partly prepared, for instance responses to questions or interruptions by other MPs. Only occasionally, politicians speak spontaneously or even improvise.[438]

As a discursive setting, parliamentary debates involve several conditions. First, since the plenary discussions are public the audience includes visitors and guests sitting on the ranks, journalists, as well as people watching the video livestream in their homes. What is said and how does not only depend on the speaker herself, but also on the occasion, the intended target audience, and their community.[439] Second, MPs are generally assumed to articulate the opinions and interests of their electorate and party on certain issues. Yet, their speech may be restricted by (self-)censorship in light of sanctions such as reputational, professional, or legal consequences when their statements oppose the party lines or predominant social notions of appropriateness.[440] Compared to other states, the UK for example, German politicians convey less rhetorical richness in their speeches. Official political documents often display a diplomatic tone and even an emotionless language.[441] A third, rather formal, condition is the limited speaking time.[442] Parties with fewer seats get less time. This fact may distribute the shares of each party in the drone debate unevenly. Then again one could argue it is even more significant when opposition parties choose spending their speaking time to discuss military drones.

Since neither parliamentary group meetings, nor most committee sessions are open to the public or recorded, some important negotiations might take place behind closed doors. Van Dijk described this fact as a "thorn in the side of all scholars interested in discursive processes, bargaining and reasoning".[443] However, not being able to access all theatres of political discourse is part of scholarly reality. Even more so, the exclusion of speakers and audiences is characteristic of elite communities. Elites have a "special, privileged access to various forms of public discourse."[444] Whether this is a problem depends on the research objective. One can forfeit it, for instance, by explicitly limiting the inquiry to plenary debates, while disregarding unofficial

437 Ibid., 24.
438 van Dijk, "Parliamentary Debates," 53.
439 Margaret G. Hermann, "Content Analysis," in *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*, ed. Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash (Basingstoke u.a.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 153.
440 Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 72.
441 Media discourse has been characterized as more prone to "bluntness, opposition, honesty, simplification and defamation" (Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 95.)
442 van Dijk, "Parliamentary Debates," 52.
443 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 97.
444 van Dijk, "Theoretical Background," 17.

discourses or discourses of parliamentary sub-units like the committees.[445] A strong inquiry aims to consider every source and document that *is* available for data collection.[446]

Parliamentary debates are accessible since their recordings are publicly available. In addition to video-recordings, plenary debates are being transcribed, corrected, and published as an official record, publicly accessible in the (online) archive.[447] Furthermore, what may be said "officially" or "on the record" during these public debates presumably reflects what the represented groups (i.e., parliamentary groups, parties, voter base) may consider acceptable and legitimate.[448] Beliefs about what representations will gain approval and mobilize support may inspire what politicians say in public.[449] Hence, they show what positions, values, and interests politicians want to communicate and to be identified with. Parliamentary debates mirror the basic consensus of the groups they represent on a particular issue at the that time.[450]

Alternatively, one could have analyzed media coverage for studying the narratives, framings, and arguments of the political discourse. However, debates in the media and in parliament have different ends. Media articles primarily shape public opinion, while parliamentary debates also directly shape political processes, decisions, and, ultimately, policies. Parliamentary speeches provide a full and immediate account of political discourse, with a high degree of interaction between partisan speakers, while media coverage is more selective, often highlighting provocative statements to grab the attention of their readers. In Germany, the politicians quoted usually get to approve their statements before publication, which allows for *ex post* corrections. Moreover, compared to media discourse, parliamentary debates have a higher degree of interaction and represent more voices at the same time, because speakers from different parties can contribute, react to what has been said before, and request to ask questions during the debate. This research aims to reconstruct the full range of political discourse in parliament, including emerging issues and overlaps with other discourses, which disagrees with the media's selective focus on pushing high-profile issues and provocative statements.

Drawing on additional sources from outside of the Bundestag contributes intertextuality, cross-references, and contextualization for the parliamentary debates. For example, this inquiry also considers noteworthy contributions from ministers and other high-level politicians from press interviews, speeches at events, and publications in journals or web blogs. However, focusing

445 Ibid., 26.
446 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 97.
447 van Dijk, "Parliamentary Debates," 52.
448 van Dijk, "Theoretical Background," 13; 18.
449 Hermann, "Content Analysis," 153.
450 Ibid.

exclusively on official documents, reports, strategies, and speeches by the MOD, the Foreign Office, and the Chancellery, for example, would not have addressed the controversy of the debate. The same applies to the German military, the Bundeswehr. After all, both the MOD and the Bundeswehr have supported armed drones since the early 2010s. The main stage for controversy was among the different parties within the Bundestag. Surveys conducted between 2009 and 2018 by research centers of the Bundeswehr, the Körber Foundation, and Statista on how Germans view foreign and security policy and military operations were also consulted. They provide important context on how the public opinion on armed drones developed over time. Due to the general scope of these topics, these surveys mainly appear in Chapter 6, which depicts the broader foreign and security policy context. Elite interviews with politicians would have been a useful option for contextualizing and contrasting the speech contributions made during parliamentary debates. However, due to the sheer mass of textual documents (see 3.2.2) under analysis, doing this time-intensive additional step was not within the scope of this project.

3.2.2 Collecting Documents from the Bundestag Online Archive

Until the 1990s, discourse analysis considered almost exclusively words and texts as data. Even today most discourse analyses primarily focus on written texts, though some scholars prefer to also include visual data. I mainly work with texts – written and spoken in the original version. My main source during the data collection was the online archive of the Bundestag, where parliamentary documents are publicly accessible. Collecting data by searching through analog or digital archives and databanks for public texts is a common practice. Other approaches rely on intertextuality, the interconnection between texts, for example created by references. While viewing the universe of available texts, some will stand out, because they constitute a special "anchor point" within the network of texts. Neumann calls these texts "canonical".[451]

The majority of the searched terms stem from the drone literature. In addition, I consulted the experts for the Bundestag web archive (www.bundestag.de) at the Parliamentary Documentation Office and the Information and Research Service department. The final list consisted the following thirteen search terms in German: "Drohne" ("drone"), "Kampfdrohne" ("combat drone"), "gezielte Tötung" ("targeted killing"), "Killer Roboter" ("killer robot"), "Militärroboter" ("military robot"), "Militärdrohne" ("military drone"), "unbemanntes Flugzeug" ("unmanned airplane"), "unbemanntes Fluggerät" ("unmanned air vehicle"),[452] "Heron" ("heron"),[453] "Predator" ("Predator"), "Reaper" ("Reaper"), "Eurohawk" ("Eurohawk"), and

451 Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 67.
452 The term "unbemanntes Flugfahrzeug" ("unmanned aerial vehicle") had zero hits and was dropped.
453 When searching for "Heron", search results include both models "Heron 1" and "Heron TP".

"autonome Waffensysteme" ("autonomous weapon systems"). Putting the search terms consisting of two or more words in quotation marks allowed to search for these precise word combinations only. Out of these search terms, "drone" had the most individual hits (Table 2). To avoid multiple appearances of the same document, I used the "OR"-function, searching for several terms at once. The data collection took place in 2019. Since then, the Bundestag has changed the document search platform and the search parameters. This is why I have made the 1,091 downloaded documents available digitally via a Google Drive folder.[454]

Search term	**Hits**	**Document category (hits)**	
"Drohne" ("drone")	899	Drucksache (716)	Pl.protokoll (183)
out of which "bewaffnete Drohne" ("armed drone")	111	Drucksache (79)	Pl.protokoll (32)
"Kampfdrohne" ("combat drone")	183	Drucksache (133)	Pl.protokoll (50)
"gezielte Tötung" ("targeted killing")	198	Drucksache (148)	Pl.protokoll (50)
"Killer Roboter" ("killer robot")	7	Drucksache (7)	Pl.protokoll (0)
"Militärroboter" ("military robot")	2	Drucksache (2)	Pl.protokoll (0)
"Militärdrohne" ("military drone")	8	Drucksache (8)	Pl.protokoll (0)
"unbemanntes Flugzeug" ("unmanned airplane")	34	Drucksache (25)	Pl.protokoll (9)
"unbemanntes Fluggerät" ("unmanned air vehicle")	32	Drucksache (31)	Pl.protokoll (1)
"Heron" ("Heron")	221	Drucksache (183)	Pl.protokoll (38)
"Predator" ("Predator")	95	Drucksache (87)	Pl.protokoll (8)
"Reaper" ("Reaper")	70	Drucksache (66)	Pl.protokoll (4)
"Eurohawk" ("Eurohawk")	46	Drucksache (42)	Pl.protokoll (4)
"autonome Waffensysteme" ("autonomous weapon systems")	150	Drucksache (107)	Pl.protokoll (43)
All of the above	2056	Drucksache (1634)	Pl.protokoll (422)
All of the above, but with "OR"-function	1091	Drucksache (888)	Pl.protokoll (203)

Table 2: Bundestag Online Archive Document Search
Source: Author's own work

454 Stored at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sdRyOyeE798ZII2-nIlRLQYEmoSS_aPX?usp=sharing

To not miss out on any documents, the first search was a broad one. The terms "targeted killing" and "autonomous weapon systems" were included to become aware to what extent the drone discourse connects to these thematically related discourses.

3.2.3 Building a Corpus of Documents

Out of the universe of "raw data" collected, the researcher must select relevant data to form a corpus for the analysis and interpretation.[455] The researchers' knowledge about the context and background of the examined social situation provides important guidance during this step. Moreover, the text selection can be justified by the extent to which chosen texts demonstrate the discursive structures and significant meanings as of this point of the research.[456]

3.2.3.1 Selecting Text Documents

Out of the 1,091 text documents I sorted out the irrelevant ones. MAXQDA software, a tool for qualitative and mixed-method data analysis, assisted with this procedure. MAXQDA automatically searched and marked all 1,091 documents for the fourteen search terms that I used in the Bundestag web archive. I then viewed the data in chronological order, starting with the first document (January 16, 2009) and ending with the last document within the timeframe (December 28, 2018). Since MAXQDA automatically marked my search words, it was possible to jump from one relevant text section to the next. While reading these text sections, I marked terms by hand which the algorithm did not recognize, such as words divided by a hyphen.

For a rough data-clean up, I dropped any documents which were not suitable for answering my research question or lacked any quality content for a discourse analysis. Out of the documents which matched one or more of the searched terms, I dropped four groups of documents when they were not relevant for my research question. First, I dropped random hits resulting from double meanings of searched words, for example biological "drones" (e.g., bees) and "Heron" as a name for anything else than the military drone model (e.g., a publishing house). Second, I excluded drone-related topics which do not precisely match my research interest in military drones. Thus, I sorted out any documents that exclusively dealt with the civilian and private use of unmanned aerial vehicles (e.g., scientific research drones) and commercial applications (e.g., logistics, package-delivery robots) or the domestic regulation of non-military drones.[457] Third, I dropped the texts which mentioned "targeted killing" of suspected terrorists, but were not at

455 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 94.
456 Browning, *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis*, 65-6.
457 Documents were only dropped if there did not contain a single reference to military drones, the German Ministry of Defense or the defense industry. For example, I kept documents mentioning the involvement of the arms industry in the civilian drone sector or drone research at German universities.

related to drone-warfare. Fourth, due to my interest in foreign policy, I also excluded documents exclusively concerned with the use of drones for security purposes on domestic territory, for instance by police forces.[458]

Subsequently, I sorted out any documents, whose form was suboptimal for a discourse analysis of the German parliamentary debate on military drone policy. Hence, I deleted documents, where the text section on drones lacked an interactional character (e.g., tables, lists) or merely recorded statements by non-German speakers in international contexts (e.g., reports from inter-parliamentary union summits) without any further engagement. After this first data clean-up, the collection of documents still contained considerable duplication due to reprinting. Specifically, texts from minor interpellations ("Kleine Anfragen"), major interpellations ("Große Anfragen"), and questions for the question times ("Fragen für die Fragestunde"), were reprinted in the respective responses. To avoid this duplication, I dropped the interpellation and question documents, keeping only the responses, resulting in a final data corpus of 532 documents (see Figure 3).

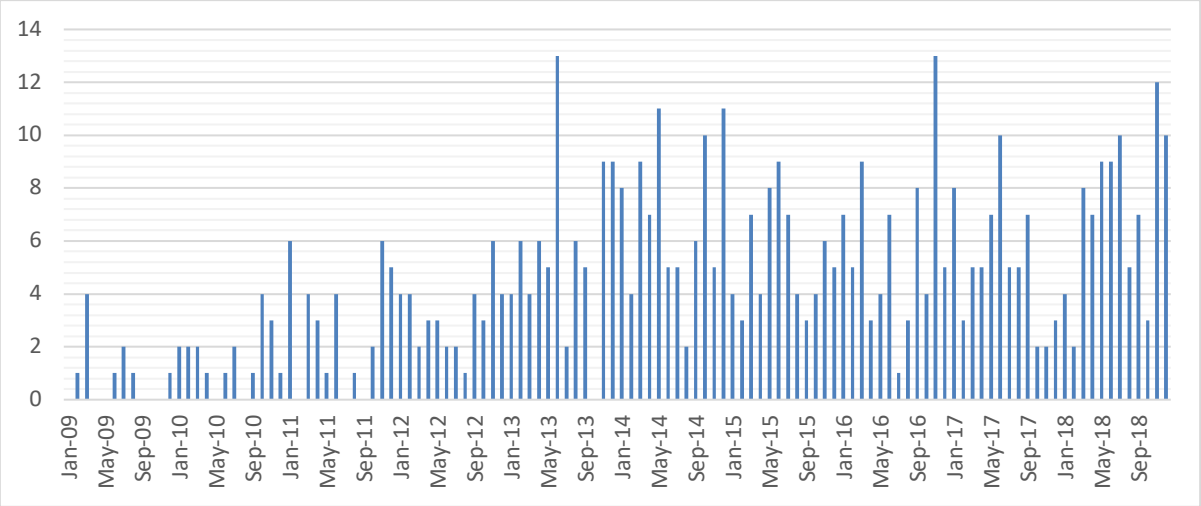

Figure 3: Amount of Analyzed Drone-Related Bundestag Documents 2009–2018
Source: Author's own work

However, the density of drone related Bundestag documents fluctuated over time. An increased frequency of documents emerges when MPs, or their PGs respectively, discuss pressing drone issues repeatedly over short periods of time. The debate intensity increases. Often this occurs when new information is available, raising new questions and illuminating new aspects. From this perspective, debate intensity functions as a marker for controversy. As Figure 3 shows, the

[458] In this step, I kept documents discussing police engagements abroad (e.g., in OSCE missions and in European maritime surveillance), although they are not the focus of this project. I also kept texts mentioning military drone flights over domestic territory.

average number of documents approximately doubled after mid-2013. The amount of Bundestag documents that mentioned military drones reached a first peak in June 2013, a second in November 2016, and a third one in the summer-months of 2018. However, these documents vary in content, type, character, and scope. The 2013 peak results from controversial debates, across the party spectrum, about US drone strikes within the GWOT, targeted killing, and potential German AMALE-drone use. Hence, it is highly relevant to my research. In terms of the historical context, it is sufficient to note that, in 2013, the German government pressed parliament to decide on armed drones before the national elections that fall. Additionally, US President Obama had launched a new transparency policy in 2012, releasing previously classified information on the US drone program, including on strikes in international counterterrorism operations. This release fueled policy debates in other countries, just as it did in Germany.

By comparison, in November of 2016 two events coincided, resulting in a rise of drone-related Bundestag discussions. The Resolute Support Mandate had to be extended. Therefore, the parliament took stock of the counterterrorism and counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan. At the same time, the national budget 2017 had to be passed. The 2018 peak largely stemmed from three factors. First, in 2018 there was a pivotal moment in the policy cycle, when the CDU/CSU pressed their coalition partner, the SPD, to decide on armed drones, which led to the compromise of leasing "armable" systems. The following debates on the national budget 2018 stirred up another round of debates on armament for German drones, which the analysis will address. Yet, the 2018 peak phase also resulted from the wide document selection at this stage of building a corpus. Many of these texts engage with unarmed drones used for maritime surveillance as well as search and rescue in the Mediterranean sea. This is not a focus on my research and will be largely omitted in the next chapters. Third, the Left Party overwhelmingly initiated the drone debates on this issue and others, while other parties or the government were significantly less active. That is why, instead of merely looking at the number of documents, we must study the themes, positions, dynamics, patterns, and overall development of the debate as I will do in the following chapters.

An epilogue, necessitated by the turn of events, adds to the main analysis of this dissertation. While I was writing, the new government (SPD, Greens, and FDP) announced in their November 2021 coalition agreement that they would allow the Bundeswehr to possess and employ armed drones, under certain conditions. The epilogue acknowledges this significant new development. It briefly summarizes what occurred between end of my main analysis in December 2018, and the final plenary meeting before the national election in fall 2021. Searching for the same terms as before for the period of January 1, 2019, to November 24, 2021, resulted in over

500 hits. Due to temporal and spatial constraints, I chose twelve Bundestag documents for a detailed assessment which ranked prominently according to the "relevance" sorting mechanism on the Bundestag archive website. Those twelve documents included: Four plenary discussions and four policy proposals from each opposition party complemented by a defense committee report and recommended resolution. The remains of this chapter omit this "bonus" text material since the epilogue is not part of my main analysis.

3.2.3.2 Types of Selected Bundestag Documents

A response by the Federal Government ("Antwort der Bundesregierung") replies to a minor interpellation or major interpellation. In both forms of requests MPs ask the government for information, but plenary sessions only publicly debate major interpellations if a PG demands it. Interpellations and questions are a key instrument for the opposition to demand justifications from the government and draw attention to issues their party deems important.[459] Out of all the Bundestag documents types they are the most numerous, followed by plenary protocols ("Plenarprotokoll"). These are stenographic reports which record hours of parliamentary debates, including comments and other verbal interruptions. During question periods, MPs can submit questions, each including two sub questions. Follow-up questions are allowed. Usually, parliamentary secretaries or ministers of state provide the responses. Ministers rarely do so, even though one might expect that they have been cleared by ministers or their senior staff. Their responses are written only if the MPs who asked the questions are absent.[460] For the reasons stated in the previous paragraph, I did not consider these questions as individual documents, but took their content as reprinted in the plenary protocols. Those protocols provide rich textual material for a discourse analysis due to the interaction and spontaneous statements. Nevertheless, parliamentary speeches are largely pre-scripted and, in parts, (self)censored.

On a weekly basis, the written questions with the issued responses by the Federal Government ("Schriftliche Fragen mit den … eingegangen Antworten der Bundesregierung") publish brief written questions posed by parliamentarians together with the respective replies from the government. Each German MP can ask up to four written questions a month.[461] The responses by the, the plenary protocols, and the written responses by the government stand out, because they

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459 Glossary of the German Bundestag, "Kleine Anfrage," https://www.bundestag.de/services/glossar/glossar/K/kleine_anfrage-245476; Glossary of the German Bundestag, "Große Anfrage," https://www.bundestag.de/services/glossar/glossar/G/grosse_anfrage-245452.

460 German Bundestag, "Fragestunde," https://www.bundestag.de/services/glossar/glossar/F/fragestunde-245420.

461 Glossary of the German Bundestag, "Schriftliche Anfrage," https://www.bundestag.de/services/glossar/glossar/S/schriftl_frag-245534.

include and cite questions posed by parliamentarians as well as responding to them. Due to this dialogical character, they promise valuable analytical insights. That is why they will be the focus for analyzing the parliamentary discourse overall. The reporting by the government ("Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung") presents the government's perspective in a written report, for example on the annual disarmament report or the arms export report. The government can present this report to parliament either when requested by the Bundestag or on its own initiative.[462]

Other document types lend themselves to researching more specific issues. For example, in a resolution ("Antrag") or a motion for a resolution ("Entschließungsantrag"), the parliament expresses its' position on a particular issue, usually related to a legislative proposal. They have to be issued by a PG or at least five percent of all MPs. These legally non-binding motions also frequently demand the government to act in a certain way.[463] From a discourse analysis perspective they are useful as a concise summary of an individual party's position on a proposed law. Parliamentary committees, for instance the budget committee, produce documents as well. After the first round of parliamentary debate on a certain legislative proposal or motion, this proposal goes into the respective committee for a more elaborate discussion. The committee then crafts a report ("Bericht") or report and recommended resolution ("Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht"), which goes back to the parliament. For example, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, whose office is considered part of the legislative, regularly reports on the situation of and in the German military.

3.3 Analyzing the Drone Debate Documents

This subchapter outlines the practical procedure and choices for the analysis of the qualitative text data. The data analysis went together with multiple rounds of reading and rereading the material while continuously taking notes. In the first section, I discuss the differences between discourse analysis and content analysis. The latter would have been the closest alternative text-based method, but was rejected because of its different assumptions (3.3.1). Then it presents my two complementary coding procedures. Since there is no unified analytical framework for discourse analyses, the last two sections describe my two analytical steps. The second section presents how I obtained a first overview of recurrent topics and issues in the debate, using an

[462] Glossary of the German Bundestag, "Unterrichtung," https://www.bundestag.de/services/glossar/glossar/U/unterricht-245544

[463] Glossary of the German Bundestag, "Entschließungsantrag," https://www.bundestag.de/services/glossar/glossar/E/entschl_antrag-245394.

open coding procedure (3.3.2). Subsequently, I present the set of analytical questions, derived from my research sub questions, which guided my in-depth discourse analysis (3.3.3).

Overall, inductive reasoning dominates in this project because it analyzes a large number of speech instances, drawn from several hundreds of documents to gain knowledge not only about the drone debate as such, but also about how the process of constructing a new policy field and forming policy-options developed. So far, scholarly work on the Bundestag drone debate had been largely anecdotal. As the scope of the observation period as well as the broad range and vast number of parliament documents is unprecedented, this research is exploratory in character, making inductive reasoning a suitable choice.

3.3.1 Analyzing Discourse Beyond Its Literal Content

Since human learning requires the repetition of information, our brains are wired to detect frequencies in textual data. Consequently, when we cognitively process data, we inadvertently recognize whether certain terms or topics appear more often than others. Virtually all discourse analysts use this mechanism intuitively. It is a basic way of analyzing information. The decisive question is whether detecting the frequency of words remains just this, a largely subliminal cognitive process, or if it triggers further scholarly interest. Analyzing the frequencies of words and terms can be part of a discourse analysis. Unlike CA, which focuses on describing manifest communicative content and analyzing frequencies, it goes deeper. As interpretative scholar Hendrik Wagenaar claimed: "[Q]uite a few studies that purport to engage in discourse analysis are in fact nothing more than a simple content analysis".[464] That is why I will briefly contrast both methods.

Content analysts often assume that word frequency is an indicator of relevance. A politician stressing a certain point repeatedly might indicate that this point is particularly important to the politician, the audience, or the public. For a long time, CA was predominantly associated with statistical analysis and this link has, to some extent, persisted until today. Statistical content analysis is a computer-aided method for coding, structuring, and analyzing text documents. It serves to generate aggregated quantitative results on the appearance of single words or word combinations. Scholars have used CA for studying, among others, the British and the American governments' justifications of military interventions in Afghanistan (2001) and Libya (2011).[465] Other inquiries examined legitimizing patterns used by Western political elites for justifying

464 Wagenaar, *Meaning in Action*, 8.
465 Holland and Aaronson, "Dominance through Coercion," 7.

the resort to military violence.[466] These studies show CA works for mapping and pinpointing central aspects of policy debates, which can provide a starting point for other scholarly inquiries. That is why, to get a first impression of the data, I also acknowledged how frequently a subject appeared in order to examine the main subjects in the drone debate. Since repetition of information is necessary for human learning, our brains are wired to detect frequencies, even in textual data. While an overview of the subjects as such was useful, I later decided to fully focus on qualitative discourse analysis.

According to Wagenaar, a CA would mainly produce superficial summaries. A possible reason for his critique is that it runs risk of neglecting the interpretation of nonliteral meanings.[467] The meaning of words or terms can be implicit or hidden between the lines. A second reason is that, while frequency can be an indicator for its importance, there could be other reasons for its' repetition. Discourse analyses address and expose what is hidden between and beyond the lines. Third, CA would omit the structural dimension of discourse, such as collective common-sense, ideologies, identities, values, and so on.[468] Fourth, it is not clear what to learn from words analyzed in isolation from the rest of the text. A words' meaning is linked to its' context, whereas a word by itself does not convey much meaning.[469]

Seeking to understand a discourse as solely based on statistics has drawbacks. That is why, although I familiarized myself with the parliamentary drone debate by identifying the most frequent debate contributors, these results are only part of the appendix and not of my main analysis (see Appendix 3 – The Main Contributors of the Debate). There are several reasons for this decision. First, why does *n* frequency of a word equal importance? For example, Minister von der Leyen spoke nine times in parliament, whereas opposition MP Hunko (Left Party) accounted for more than 150 speech instances. Still von der Leyen's fewer contributions might have impacted the discourse greatly, because of her position of power as minister. Generally speaking, even a single word can sometimes have a wide-reaching political impact, as it is the case with insults, for example, or concepts that describe a significant political shift in a single word, such as "Zeitenwende" (see 8.1.3). Listing the speakers and counting the speech instances demonstrated which party and politicians raised the issue of military drones most frequently but it neither accounted for the length of the text section where the term drone occurs, for the

466 For example, Anna Geis et al. conducted a content analysis of parliamentary debates in seven states inquiring why some liberal western democracies go to war while others do not (Geis, Müller, and Schörnig, "Liberale Demokratien und Krieg.").

467 Larsen, *Foreign Policy and Discourse Analysis*, 29.

468 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 12.

469 Philipp Mayring, *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse Grundlagen und Techniken*, 11. ed. (Weinheim; Basel: Beltz, 2010), 14.

quality of its content nor for its power within the discourse. During my analysis, I noticed that the people whose name appeared the most in the text documents were not necessarily the ones who I ended up quoting, because it was more important that those quotes were analytically rich. Moreover, although ministers themselves rarely spoke in the parliament throughout the ten-year observation period, their statements had more political weight than contributions by back-benchers.[470] These observations illustrate the limitations of this method.

As Andrew Bennett has pointed out, CA makes different assumptions, but it can still have benefits for a discourse-analytical research process. While the former assumed "fixed and objective reality", the latter presumes reality is socially constructed.[471] Similarly, CA acknowledges in a rather positivist manner, that knowledge can be objective, whereas discourse analysis, often informed by interpretivism, assumes researchers are subjective (see 2.1).[472] Nevertheless, discourse analysts can use computer-assisted analysis methods when dealing with large amounts of digital text data.[473] According to Bennett, doing so speeds up the research process, allows to cover more texts, and "make[s] research more systematic".[474]

3.3.2 Recurring Topics in the Data

After having collected an extensive amount of text documents, I wanted to organize it and get a systematic overview of the debate content before beginning my qualitative discourse analysis (see section 3.3.3). That is why – in a preliminary step – I clustered text parts into descriptive, topical categories. The intention was to familiarize myself with the debate landscape and orientate myself along the timeline without going into deeper analysis just yet. Instead, I sought to know: What were the main subject matters discussed in the German drone debate overall? To answer this question, I leaned into an open coding procedure. Reading through the documents I inductively identified codes for recurring topics based on the texts.[475] While viewing and reviewing the data, I repeatedly cross-checked the preliminary categories and refined them.[476] A saturation point was reached when the elements of new texts consistently worked for the created categories and propositions.[477]

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470 For German Ministers of Defense and Ministers of Foreign Affairs 2009-2019 see Appendix 2, Table 17.
471 Bennett, "Found in Translation," 989.
472 Ibid.
473 See for example Holland and Aaronson, "Dominance through Coercion," 7; van Dijk, "Theoretical Background," 28.
474 Bennett, "Found in Translation," 991.
475 My master's thesis on armed drone discourses (in the US and the UK) as well as my general familiarity with German foreign and security debates provided background information.
476 Milliken, "The Study of Discourse," 234; Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (New York, NY: Aldine, 1967).
477 Milliken, "The Study of Discourse," 234.

The resulting coding scheme (Table 3) has two levels: The overarching topic (Level 1) and the more specific issue discussed (Level 2). The starting point for the topical clusters of Level 1 were broad categories, adjusting while viewing more documents. For Level 2, I developed issue categories, also closely to the text. In the appendix I explain this preliminary categorization of Level 2 further (Appendix 4 – Cluster of Recurring Topics). The categories were written into a hierarchical code tree in MAXQDA and the texts were coded by hand. In this way, I gradually identified and clustered recurring topics.

Specification level 1 – topic	**Specification level 2 – issue**
T1) German military drone program	T1 a) Military operation
	T1 b) Bundeswehr
T2) German military drone procurement	T2 a) Acquisition
	T2 b) Capability-building
	T2 c) Defense and aerospace industry
T3) Military drone programs of other actors	T3 a) United States
	T3 b) Not United States
	T3 c) Non-state actors
T4) Germany's international relations	T4 a) Bilateral – United States
	T4 b) Bilateral – not United States
	T4 c) Multilateral
T5) International Law	T5 a) Targeted killing
	T5 b) State sovereignty
	T5 c) Human Rights and Just War Theory
T6) International arms dynamics	T6 a) Proliferation
	T6 b) International arms control
	T6 c) Disarmament

Table 3: Coding Scheme of Debate Topics
Source: Author's own work

Using this scheme, I determined which broad topics were discussed most and when. These results were useful for gaining a rough overview of the debate. Still, I decided against including them as part of my actually analysis chapters, because they do not significantly contribute to

answering my research questions.[478] After all, the more specific the coding, the more codes will be attached to the same section. When one section includes for example arms export, horizontal proliferation and arms control regime, a short section can account for three hits in "arms dynamics". This might make the arms dynamics category weigh heavier when compared to other categories, even though these counts come down to one single (rich) section. After all, the frequency does not convey much information about its' framing, or the position agents take on it. Just as Wagenaar argued, a qualitative discourse analysis needs to go deeper and beyond the mere manifest content of texts (compare 3.3.1).

3.3.3 Questions Guiding the Qualitative Discourse Analysis

Since my discourse analysis is an exploratory endeavor, defining a set of research questions was vital for guiding my analysis as well as for making the process transparent to the reader. My set of questions resembles a pyramid. The main research question of my entire dissertation is at the top, followed by the three sub-questions. Each of the following three chapters tackles one of these sub-questions. On the bottom level of the question pyramid are the analytical questions which guided my qualitative discourse analysis. These analytical questions further specify my sub-questions and break them into smaller packages to guide the analysis. Consequently, this guided coding procedure was more relevant for answering my research question and hence also more extensive than the open one used for identifying the recurrent topics (see 3.3.2). It was also more focused. Specifically, I developed the analytical questions based on my research interest, the international drone and military procurement literature, and my general knowledge of the German foreign and security policy at large.

Codebook for Qualitative Discourse Analysis

1. **How do policymakers characterize drone warfare as such …**
    a. regarding the operational style of (armed) military drones?
        i. For example, by emphasizing the precision-strike capability, the remote operation, or targeted killing strikes of military drones.
    b. by linking (armed) military drones to other objects or practices?
        i. For example, by mentioning them together with special forces operations, torture, or raids, etc. or by comparing them to manned airplanes?

2. **How do policymakers evaluate drone warfare as such …**
    a. as good?

[478] Nevertheless, these insights might interest some readers, since the description and clustering of the debate content does give a good first impression of the data. That is why I included them in Appendix 4.

i. For example, by presenting (armed) military drones as effective,[479] lawful and ethical[480].

b. as bad?

i. For example, by presenting (armed) military drones as ineffective or counter-effective,[481] and unlawful.[482]

3. How do policymakers present the relation between using armed military drones and the German military …

a. as compatible with preexisting German military practices?

i. For example, drone strikes would always be used in harmony with international law and rules of engagement.

b. as opposed to preexisting German military practices?

i. For example, the availability of armed drones would facilitate "sliding" into extralegal killing.

4. How do policymakers formulate the tableau of available military drone policy options for Germany[483]…

a. when acknowledging one or more options are possible?

i. For example, by mentioning them as an option or by mentioning that other countries have proceeded similarly.

b. when suggesting or implying one or more options are not possible?

i. For example, by never mentioning them at all.

5. How do policymakers evaluate a certain military drone policy option …

a. regarding its potential in terms of (expected) benefits or costs?

i. For example, getting armed drones would improve or worsen the situation in a certain way given international proliferation dynamics.

b. by recognizing one or more options as appropriate or inappropriate?

i. For example, by claiming new arms control measures would be an adequate or inadequate policy response.

6. When talking about military drones, how do policymakers describe the international security situation and how it affects Germany …

a. in terms of major challenges?

i. For example, the threat posed by terrorist organizations.

b. in terms of major opportunities?

i. For example, as Germany living up to its responsibility and fulfilling an important international role.

7. When talking about military drones, how do policymakers frame German military power …

a. regarding the purpose it should be used for?

i. For example, international humanitarian assistance backed by UN-mandates.

b. compared to other instruments available to the state?

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479 E.g., because more information available, better situational awareness.

480 E.g., because better physical protection of own soldiers.

481 E.g., because drone strikes radicalize local population and stand in way of peace.

482 E.g., because drone operations violate state sovereignty, and civilians die during strikes.

483 Including the R&D, the procurement of armed drones, the employment of armed drones, supporting international arms control, abstaining from armed drone procurement and use, supporting disarmament, and supporting an international drone ban.

i. For example, diplomatic efforts.

8. **When talking about military drones, how do policymakers characterize German foreign policy …**
   a. in light of important values?
      i. For example, every military action must be part of a multilateral effort.
   b. regarding central interests?
      i. For example, secure trade routes at the Horn of Africa.
   c. in terms of core objectives?
      i. For example, bringing peace to the Middle East.

With this catalogue at hand, I went through all the data once more, assigning the texts parts to one or more of my analytical questions. Those questions provided the foundation for my three analysis chapters. The in-depth discourse analysis reconstructed patterns and identified layers of meaning. It facilitated to interpret und understand dynamics and developments of the parliamentary drone debate, characterizations, evaluations, positions, framings, contexts, and recommended actions. In order to accomplish a thick description, I aimed to include rich narrative details. Just as Neumann recommended, I sought to "include as many representations and their variations as possible, and to specify where they are to be found in as high a degree as possible".[484] That is why there is an extensive amount of evidence, resulting, in turn, in a burgeoning number of references in the footnotes.

Some documents were cited more often than others. That is because, while data sampling techniques in quantitative methods seek representativeness of the population (phenomenon) of interest, my sampling strategy followed the qualitative criterion of theoretical purpose. When documents highlighted the issue of interest well, they lent themselves to a closer examination and were purposively selected.[485] At the same time, I will also heed to Milliken's advice, who recommended selecting texts by "whether they take different positions on a relevant issue", in order to prevent selection bias.[486] Finally, as indicated above, plenary protocols have been prioritized in the in-depth analysis because they bear a richer, more interactional content for the discourse analysis.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the qualitative methodological framework for studying the parliamentary discourse about military drone policy in the German Bundestag. It demonstrated why a

484 Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 62.
485 Compare Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 94.
486 Milliken, "The Study of Discourse," 233.

longitudinal perspective fits my research interest best, that is, to understand how the use of armed military drones emerged as an option in the German parliamentary debate 2009–2018. As the discussion has shown, discourse analysis is no unified approach but encompasses a broad spectrum of instruments, techniques, and frameworks. At the same time, most studies of discourse center on three analytical activities, namely description, interpretation, and contextualization. Out of the three activities contextualization is particularly important for discourse analysis. That is why this dissertation also highlights it; in the theoretical concept of discursive ecosystems, for distinguishing discourse analysis from other text-based methods such as CA, or when it comes to explaining the particular institutional setting of the studied debate such as the Bundestag.

The first subchapter provided a bridge between the theory chapter and the present discussion of methods by operationalizing relevant concepts for the analysis. Language is a pivotal element of discourse approaches since they are "language-sensitive".[487] Language practices allow to operationalize the large concept of discourse into analytical units, which helps me navigate the empirical discourse analysis. Specifically, the analysis focuses on representations, frames, and narratives. All of these units (re)produce meanings and convey ideas. These units can express a range of ideas, for instance about armed drones as such, they can propose definitions of the situation at stake, give recommendations for courses of action, or characterize agents relevant for this policy issue. Agents can purposefully mobilize certain meanings. However, different ideas can compete for discursive dominance and even clash. When constructing these ideas and meanings, speakers often use the rhetorical strategies of framing and grafting. Frames can orientate towards cognition or emotion, as Rosert pointed out. Framing is the process in which agents create a frame by choosing to include certain representations in their contributions, attributing meaning to something. Grafting, on the other hand, means to link a new idea or meaning to an established one to create resonance. Resonance, solvability, and comprehension are characteristics of an effective cognition-oriented frame. Emotion-oriented frame characteristics, on the other hand, become effective when they are concrete (instead of abstract), connect with the audience, and create drama.

The chapter discussed the unique conditions researchers face when studying textual documents from the Bundestag. It depicted the characteristics of parliamentary debates and explained how I collected the textual data in order to build a corpus of documents to be analyzed. After a careful selection process 532 documents remained for the qualitative discourse analysis. Out of

487 Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 7.

this bulk, some material was, naturally, more valuable for the analysis than others, culminating in over 230 documents cited in this dissertation. This extensive number of sources will provide rich discursive details, promising a thick description, which is a criterion for evaluating interpretative research (compare 2.1.2).

In order to facilitate a sharper methodological understanding of discourse analysis, I contrasted it with another method for text analysis, namely CA. To increase the trustworthiness of my research, I openly communicated the main challenges I encountered during my project. One such challenge was realizing that it would be better for my inquiry to not focus on the frequencies of the subjects and speakers that appeared most often. The decision resulted from a deeper engagement with the literature contrasting discourse analysis and CA, especially based on critical points by Wagenaar, Bennett, and others, who emphasized their different depth of analysis and epistemological assumptions. The appendix still includes a list of the most frequent contributors as an additional information. Instead, I opted for a two-step research procedure: First, I used open coding to identify preeminent themes in the debate. Second, I resorted to more focused coding, based on analytical questions derived from my sub-research questions.

Another challenge was how to handle the newly elected government's approval of drone armament in November 2021, when I was already more than half-way through my project and well into writing. Consequently, I added an epilogue with a brief analysis of twelve key documents from Bundestag debates between January 2019 and fall of 2021. However, this is only a supplementary addition. The key focus remains on the three main analysis chapters, examining the armed drone debate 2009–2018, which follow on the next pages.

4 Two Worlds of Meaning: Military Uses of Combat Drones

This chapter analyzes how German politicians discursively represented the military uses of armed and unarmed drones from January 2009 to December 2018.[488] It examines the representations, concepts, and discursive framings of MPs, PGs, and government representatives. The analysis seeks to spot thematic dynamics, overlaps, and tensions over time by pinpointing contested and uncontested issues regarding the military uses of combat drones. Together, these arguments constitute what I call the "immediate" drone debate, whereas the following chapters examine the broader discussion. Although the scope of my analysis – one decade of debates and hundreds of speech instances – is unparalleled, it reflects some familiar arguments and framings from the public discussions about armed drones.[489] However, the purpose of this chapter is not only to show the quintessential arguments. It also highlights the multiple meta-narratives on matters of warfare interlinked with the drone debate, such as on the scope of violence, the purpose of military operations, geographic and legal issues of warfare, the (non-)neutrality of technologies, and trust in democratic institutions. Many of these meta-narratives will reappear throughout the remainder of this dissertation when discussing procurement and proliferation (Chapter 5) and Germany's (future) role in armed conflicts (Chapter 6), constituting the discursive and empirical context of this "immediate" drone debate.

Specifically, this part of the dissertation sheds light on the agenda-setting process, in which agents represent and debate what is important. As described in the theory chapter, the discursive representations of an issue contribute to shaping what decision-makers consider a good policy response (see Chapter 5). Out of the three analysis chapters, this one studies the back-and-forth of claims and counterclaims most directly, due to its focus on agenda-setting. It pays attention to specific language practices. I reconstruct meanings-in-use and interpretatively analyze both cognitive-oriented and emotion-oriented discursive framings and their characteristics, which define and interpret situations by fixing meanings and organizing experience (see Chapter 2).[490] The analysis reveals two overarching narratives, which I will call the "military defense"-narrative and the "targeted killing"-narrative.[491] The CDU, CSU, and FDP (re)produced the former, while the Left Party and the Greens, and to a lesser extent the SPD, engaged in the latter. The

488 Policymakers sometimes use the term "drone" without distinguishing whether they refer to an armed or unarmed system. For the sake of analytical clarity, I use the exact words from the text data, for instance "drone" ("Drohne") or "combat drone" ("Kampfdrohne").

489 Sauer and Schörnig, "Killer Drones."; Horowitz, Kreps, and Fuhrmann, "Separating Fact from Fiction."

490 The characteristics of cognitive-oriented framings include comprehension, solvability, and resonance, emotion-oriented framings concreteness, proximity, and drama see Rosert, *Nicht-Entstehung internationaler Normen*, 137-38.

491 A narrative is a comprehensive story that facilitates sense-making. It contains discursive frames and meanings that link together issues, events, actors, and locations and so forth into a plot (see 2.2.2).

"military defense"-narrative presents armed drones as an object; as a useful military technology that effectively protects soldiers. This perspective features German soldiers as the main agents. At its core is an existing operational (military) process that drones could improve, particularly in defensive scenarios. In contrast, the "targeted killing"-narrative centers on the practice of targeted drone strikes, with the local population as the key agent in asymmetric conflict zones. this narrative considers the larger political, strategic, and legal context of armed drone use rather than the immediate operational process. Contributors to this narrative tightly linked the German drone question to American targeted killings via drone strikes, suggesting that Germany could "slide into" a US-style drone warfare. Consequently, they recommended abstaining from drone strikes altogether (see Table 4). This brief comparison already reveals the silos of the debate.

	Drone advocates	**Drone opponents**
Narrative	Military defense	Targeted killing
Core	Armed drones	Targeted killing
Perspective	Existing processes	Larger context
Agent	German soldiers	Targeted people and locals
Policy	Defensive use	No drone strikes

Table 4: Narratives "Military Use of Combat Drones"
Source: Author's own work

Examining the development of the debate in the Bundestag over the years showed that the opposition initially drove the construction of meaning about armed drone use in warfare. One reason for their dominance is timing. They got a head start. Already in the early phase of the German debate (2009–2012) they laid out why drones would be despicable. By 2012 leaked information about CIA drone strikes had sparked public criticism and resistance, and the number of US drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen, and Afghanistan had increased.[492] Moreover, three German citizens had been killed by US drone strikes in Pakistan.[493] In addition, the opposition benefitted from outspoken activist groups that opposed drones, especially the German "Drone

[492] Peter Bergen, David Sterman, and Melissa Salyk-Virk, "America's Counterterrorism Wars," *New America Foundation*, June 17, 2021, https://www.newamerica.org/future-security/reports/americas-counterterrorism-wars/.

[493] Heinz, "Wann hat der Staat das Recht zu töten?," 9.

Campaign" network ("Drohnen-Kampagne").[494] Instead of coining the debate by advancing their own arguments, the conservative-liberal government and pro-drone PGs were in the position to respond to and counter the framing of the opposition. Although Defense Minister Thomas de Maizière (CDU/CSU) had already announced his intent of acquiring armed drones for Germany in 2012, the government did not effectively promote its own arguments until 2013. Slowly, the government became more assertive in its framings and narrative. As a result, the contestation of meanings and frames about armed drones in warfare was at its highest in 2013, potentially spurred on by the national election that fall. In later years, when the CDU/CSU governed with the SPD, the pro-drone camp became more successful. Gradually, the public controversy began to subside, both in Germany and internationally. US President Barack Obama revised the US drone program by reducing CIA drone strikes, introducing the "near-certainty" standard for targeting decisions, and fostering transparency.[495] In 2018, the German government settled on leasing "armable" (though not armed) drones; a decision that required parliamentary approval through the budget committee. This prompted a moderate resurgence of the debate, with speakers reiterating established arguments and frames. Overall, however, the increasing acquisition and use of armed drones worldwide had gradually "normalized" the technology by then (see Chapters 5 and 7). Technological advances made autonomous machines an increasingly realistic option. As LAWS expanded the spectrum of what is (or seemed) possible, remotely piloted drones forfeited some of their scandalization potential. Collectively, these developments shaped the context of the drone debate as part of the "discursive ecosystem" (see 3.3).

In what follows, I will first introduce the broad evaluations of armed military drones, which are categorized as either positive or negative. I will then depict how decision-makers shaped meanings by mentioning military drones alongside other objects and practices (4.1). The remaining two sections shed light on specific issues related to the discussions about the military uses of (armed) drones. The second section examines issues on which parties agreed to a certain extent (4.2). The third section analyzes the contentious issues in the debate on the military uses of combat drones in the Bundestag. These issues include operational scenarios, the main targets of drone strikes, judgments of the effectiveness of drone attacks, and expectations about how

494 The "Drone Campaign" is a German network founded in March 2013 by 149 organizations, including the Left Party. Their open letter of request quickly encompassed 30,000 signatures, among others, from Left, Green, and SPD politicians (Drohnen-Kampagne, "Appell: Keine Kampfdrohnen!," 2013, https://drohnen-kampagne.de/appell-keine-kampfdrohnen/.).

495 See Ray Acheson, Matthew Bolton, and Elizabeth Minor, "Introduction," in *The Humanitarian Impact of Drones*, ed. Ray Acheson, et al. (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; International Disarmament Institute, Pace University; Article 36, 2017), 20.

the availability of armed drones would (potentially) affect the behavior of soldiers and the decisions of policymakers (4.3). The next chapter will proceed similarly with regard to common and contentious issues in debates on procurement and proliferation (see 5.2 and 5.3). Finally, this chapter summarizes the developments in the debate on the military uses of combat drones. I conclude that the speakers created two worlds of meaning and, by extension, a discursive stalemate (4.4).

4.1 Evaluating Armed Drone Warfare

Before discussing the common and contentious issues of the Bundestag drone debate, I shall provide a brief introduction into how the parties broadly evaluated AMALE-drones through their discursive framings. To provide an overview, it summarizes the findings from my analysis of how the agents defined and interpreted the situation in order to, among other things, provoke a certain (re)action on the part of the audience (see 2.2.). It also illustrates what kinds of objects or practices policymakers mentioned military drones with. By mentioning them together, they suggested resemblances and assigned meanings: Drones are like object X. In this way they guided the sense-making process, establishing an understanding of what we are dealing with.
One can identify two distinctive positions on AMALE-drones throughout the entire debate in the Bundestag: Advocates and opponents. While agreeing on smaller issues (see 4.2), these groups produced two respective narratives on the main themes of the debate, including the military uses (this chapter), procurement and proliferation (Chapter 5), and foreign and security policy context (Chapter 6). The advocates presented AMALE-drones as a new and improved technology, one which is not that different from similar military platforms. The drone opponents presented armed drones very negatively; as a weapon system for killing people. For the sake of analysis, I focus on these two poles. Based on the findings from the analysis, I categorize the CDU/CSU, the FDP, and the AfD as AMALE-drone advocates. The SPD, the Greens, and the Left were drone opponents, although the SPD's opposition decreased after they entered government in 2013. If one differentiates between armed and unarmed military drones, the

Greens and the SPD supported unarmed drones but opposed armed drones. Only the Left rejected any kind of military drones, including ISR systems, because they facilitated espionage.[496] Speakers often used the word "drone" as an umbrella term without properly distinguishing between armed and unarmed systems even though these systems have different functions, operational scenarios, and hence, political, legal, and strategic implications. For instance, the Left tended to use the term "combat drone" without specifying on armament, possibly due to their general disapproval of military drones. CDU/CSU MPs have called them out for grouping armed and unarmed drones together.[497] In the earlier years of the studied time period, this was a common problem for many parties, but the context usually clarifies the type of platform the speakers are referring to. The umbrella term phenomenon was not exclusive to semantics. Because the distinction between system types was not always clear, the boundaries were fluid. In some ways, the pro-drone camp benefited from the terminological fluidity. When agents prescribed positive meanings to unarmed drones used for ISR, they created a positive connotation for military drones in general, including armed platforms. That is why the following section also depicts representations of unarmed drones.

4.1.1 Same, Same but Different (Good)

Speakers in favor of military drones, and armed drones in particular, faced a challenge in their discursive representation. One the one hand, they needed to present armed drones as adding value to the Bundeswehr to justify their procurement. Consequently, government representatives as well as MPs from the CDU/CSU, and to a lesser extent from the FDP, praised drone systems, especially unarmed ones. Throughout the years, CDU/CSU speakers cherished drones as the "best possible" equipment ("bestmöglich").[498] Drones would provide "valuable services" ("wertvolle Dienste"),[499] especially "better" ISR,[500] making this capability not only "useful and

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496 Andrej Hunko, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 17/219", 17th leg. period, 219th sess., January 31, 2013, 27109; Paul Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246", 17th leg. period, 246th sess., June 13, 2013, 31351-2; LEFT Parliamentary Group (PG), ibid., "Drucksache 18/213: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/124 – Anstehende Entscheidung zur „europäischen Drohne" auf dem EU-Gipfel im Dezember 2013", 18th leg. period, December 19, 2013, 3; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/3605: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/3293 – EU-Konzept zum Einsatz von Drohnen in Militärmissionen", 18th leg. period, December 18, 2014, 1-2.

497 See for example Philipp Mißfelder, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/21", 18th leg. period, 21st sess., March 14, 2014, 1631; Johann Wadephul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209", 18th leg. period, 209th sess., December 15, 2016, 20873.

498 Florian Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/100", 18th leg. period, 100th sess., April 23, 2015, 9560.

499 Bernd Siebert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27115; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39", 19th leg. period, 39th sess., June 14, 2018, 3870.

500 Reinhard Brandl, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/54", 18th leg. period, 54th sess., September 25, 2014, 5008.

necessary" ("sinnvoll und notwendig")[501] but even "indispensable" ("unverzichtbar").[502] Conservative Ministers of Defense were similarly enthusiastic. They emphasized the uniqueness of this military means,[503] recognized the facilitated security gains,[504] and described them as a "giant step forwards" ("Riesenschritt vorwärts").[505]

Liberal speakers emphasized that drones would be a necessary capability because they substantially improved the situational awareness of the Bundeswehr.[506] Heron drones would carry out "outstanding" ("hervorragend") and "important" ("wichtig")[507] work in Afghanistan. The ISR results drones could deliver would be "extremely important" ("außerordentlich wichtig"),[508] since they had "strongly improved" ("stark verbessert") the reaction time.[509] Despite having been absent from parliament for four years, the FDP praised military drones more frequently than the SPD for example. The SPD did not elaborately depict why drones were good for the military, even when they were in government. However, they did recognize that ISR drones were a "high-value capability" ("Hochwertfähigkeit")[510] of "great benefit" ("großen Nutzen")[511] that provided "positive experiences" ("gute Erfahrungen").[512] Speech instances praising drones peaked across all parties in 2013, declined in 2014, and increased again in 2018. On the other hand, agents interested in acquiring this capability had to avoid giving the impression of drones being something out of the ordinary, as not to reinforce the framing of the opposition. In line with the "resonance" characteristic for successful cognitive frames outlined in the theory chapter (see 2.2.3), the pro-drone agents hence attempted to present drones as something

501 Jürgen Hardt, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31358.
502 Ingo Gädechens, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45", 18th leg. period, 45th sess., July 2, 2014, 4062; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/3400: Gesetzentwurf der Bundesregierung Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2019 (Haushaltsgesetz 2019)", 19th leg. period, August 10, 2018, 67.
503 Thomas de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27109-10.
504 Ursula von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/3", 19th leg. period, 3rd sess., November 22, 2017.
505 von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/213", 18th leg. period, 213th sess., January 20, 2017, 21360.
506 Christoph Schnurr, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/65", 17th leg. period, 65th sess., October 7, 2010, 6976; Elke Hoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237", 17th leg. period, 237th sess., April 25, 2013, 29767.
507 Hoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27112.
508 Rainer Erdel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31353.
509 FDP PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/3179: Änderungsantrag der Abgeordneten Christian Lindner, Christian Dürr, Ulla Ihnen, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP zu der zweiten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/1700, 19/1701, 19/2413, 19/2424, 19/2425, 19/2426 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2018 (Haushaltsgesetz 2018)", 19th leg. period, July 3, 2018, 2.
510 Dirk Vöpel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/215", 18th leg. period, 215th sess., January 26, 2017, 21518.
511 Ibid., "Drucksache 17/7125: Bericht* des Haushaltsausschusses (8. Ausschuss) zu dem Gesetzentwurf der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 17/6600, 17/6602 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2012 (Haushaltsgesetz 2012)", 17th leg. period, November 18, 2011, 3-4; Rainer Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225", 17th leg. period, 225th sess., February 28, 2013, 28126.
512 Gabi Weber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3865.

familiar.[513] While representatives of the conservative-liberal government referred to armed drones as a technological asset "with new qualities" ("mit neuen Qualitäten")[514] in 2009 or described them as a "new military capability" ("[n]euartige militärische Fähigkeiten").[515] Later, their perspective shifted. From 2013 to 2014, conservative defense ministers and MPs emphasized that military drones were no different from other weapon systems. Instead of presenting them as a singular, new technology, drones would rather extend existing capabilities.[516] Comparisons between drones and manned aircraft hence peaked in 2013.

Conservative MPs, government representatives, and, to a lesser extent, SPD MPs used two main arguments to substantiate the viewpoint that drones were not new. First, drones would not be a new technology because the German military had already been using them in the past, such as the Heron 1 and the smaller Aladin platforms.[517] Conservatives argued that drones would be just like other remotely piloted systems armed with precision-guided missiles, such as helicopters or ships.[518] There would be no "substantial"[519] or "qualitative"[520] difference between these kinds of systems and drones. The "same rules, the same principles and the same chains-of-command" would apply to drones as to other weapons.[521] MPs from the opposition parties the Greens and the Left, by contrast, mentioned drones alongside indiscriminate explosives such as "nuclear weapons, landmines or cluster munition",[522] improvised explosive devices (IEDs),[523] and bombs.[524] Thus, they challenged the framing of the governing parties. Conservatives countered there would always be a human operator looking at a monitor who decides whether to

513 Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 71.

514 Transl. by author. FGG, German Bundestag, "Drucksache 16/12481: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Alexander Bonde, Winfried Nachtwei, Omid Nouripour, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIEGRÜNEN – Drucksache 16/12193 – Einführung und Bedeutung unbemannter militärischer Fahrzeuge und Luftfahrzeuge", 16th leg. period, March 26, 2009, 12.

515 Transl. by author. FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11956: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Volker Beck (Köln), Marieluise Beck (Bremen), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/11769 – Abrüstungs- und Rüstungskontrollpolitik", 17th leg. period, December 20, 2012, 6.

516 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12136: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Herbert Behrens, Annette Groth, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/11978 – Integration von schweren Drohnen in den allgemeinen zivilen Luftraum", 17th leg. period, January 21, 2013, 14; Karin Strenz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27122.

517 Siebert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27115; Hahn, ibid., ibid., 27120; Erdel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28127; de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242", 17th leg. period, 242nd sess., June 5, 2013, 30647.

518 Christian Schmidt, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/148", 17th leg. period, 148th sess., December 14, 2011, 17681.

519 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4064.

520 Gisela Manderla, ibid., ibid., 4066.

521 Transl. by author. In original: "die gleichen Regeln, die gleichen Grundsätze und die gleichen Befehlsketten" (Manderla, ibid., ibid.)

522 Transl. by author. In original: "Atomwaffen, Landminen oder Streumunition" (P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28127.)

523 Hans-Christian Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29769.

524 Thomas Lutze, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/111", 18th leg. period, 111th sess., June 17, 2015, 10667; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/7991: Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Inge Höger, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van

strike or not.[525] From 2015 to 2018, all parties (except the Left Party) shifted towards mentioning military drones together with other heavy weapon systems such as tanks, battleships, and combat aircraft, especially helicopters.[526] By then, drones had come closer to a representation as a conventional military system, understood as just one capability among many.

4.1.2 A Bad Path to Go Down

Compared to the CDU/CSU and the FDP, the Left, the Greens, and the SPD were skeptical of armed drones. Thus, they employed different discursive framings and representations. Unlike the first two parliamentary groups, they often mentioned armed military drones as part of a broader style of warfare practiced by the US and its allies during the GWOT in the Middle East and in North Africa.[527] For several years, speakers grouped drone strikes and targeted killings together with the use of special forces, capture-or-kill operations, secret (nighttime) special operations, and an active involvement of the CIA, including the use of force.[528] By grouping armed drones in this way, they organized experience. They suggested what is at stake here is not a conventional, ordinary military system, but rather an extraordinary security practice.

At the same time, their language revealed nuances in their positions. The Left used extreme, dramatic, and emotional language to describe armed drone operations, evoking images of

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Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Erfahrungen aus 14 Jahren „Krieg gegen den Terror“ – Eine Bilanz in Irak, Afghanistan, Pakistan”, 18th leg. period, March 22, 2016, 1.

525 Siebert, ibid., “Plenarprotokoll 17/219,” 2013, 27115; de Maizière, ibid., ibid., 27110.

526 Arnold, ibid., “Plenarprotokoll 18/45,” 2014, 4057; Ströbele, ibid., “Drucksache 18/7510: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 8. Februar 2016 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung”, 18th leg. period, February 12, 2016, 17; Sigmar Gabriel, ibid., “Plenarprotokoll 18/228”, 18th leg. period, 228th sess., March 30, 2017, 22907; Hahn, ibid., “Plenarprotokoll 19/8”, 19th leg. period, 8th sess., January 19, 2018, 667; FGG, ibid., “Drucksache 19/1098: Antrag der Bundesregierung Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an der Multidimensionalen Integrierten Stabilisierungsmission der Vereinten Nationen in Mali (MINUSMA) auf Grundlage der Resolutionen 2100 (2013), 2164 (2014), 2227 (2015), 2295 (2016) und 2364 (2017) vom 25. April 2013, 25. Juni 2014, 29. Juni 2015, 29. Juni 2016, 29. Juni 2017, ergänzt durch Resolution 2391 (2017) des Sicherheitsrates der Vereinten Nationen vom 8. Dezember 2017”, 19th leg. period, March 7, 2018, 6; Henning Otte, ibid., “Plenarprotokoll 19/39,” 2018, 3863; Otte, ibid., “Plenarprotokoll 19/45”, 19th leg. period, 45th sess., July 4, 2018, 3863; Weber, ibid., ibid., 3866-7.

527 A Social Democrat MP also included the involvement of private military companies (Hans-Peter Bartels, ibid., “Plenarprotokoll 17/71”, 17th leg. period, 71th sess., November 11, 2010, 7617.). The use of violent interrogation methods, such as water boarding, is missing from these accounts.

528 Ströbele, ibid., “Plenarprotokoll 17/116”, 17th leg. period, 116th sess., June 29, 2011, 13320; LEFT PG, ibid., “Drucksache 17/7705: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Sevim Dağdelen, Annette Groth, Heike Hänsel, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/7561 – Humanitäre Katastrophe und politisch-militärische Interessen in Somalia”, 17th leg. period, November 11, 2011, 2; P. Schäfer, ibid., “Plenarprotokoll 17/211”, 17th leg. period, 211th sess., November 29, 2012, 25767; Wolfgang Gehrcke, ibid., “Plenarprotokoll 17/214”, 17th leg. period, 214th sess., December 13, 2012, 26336; Heike Hänsel, ibid., “Plenarprotokoll 18/3”, 18th leg. period, 3rd sess., November 28, 2013, 127; Green PG, ibid., “Plenarprotokoll 18/17”, 18th leg. period, 17th sess., February 20, 2014, 1357; Ströbele, ibid., “Plenarprotokoll 18/25”, 18th leg. period, 25th sess., April 2, 2014, 1993; Hänsel, ibid., “Plenarprotokoll 18/79”, 18th leg. period, 79th sess., January 15, 2015, 7588; Agnieszka Brugger, ibid., “Plenarprotokoll 18/146”, 18th leg. period, 146th sess., December 17, 2015, 14359; Martina Renner, ibid., “Plenarprotokoll 18/242”, 18th leg. period, 242nd sess., June 28, 2017, 24843; Green PG, attachment 7, ibid., “Plenarprotokoll 19/23”, 19th leg. period, 23rd sess., March 22, 2018, 2138.

drones causing death, which potentially triggered feelings of discomfort or even fear in the audience. According to them, combat drones existed to kill people.[529] Their frequent use of terms such as "killer drones" ("Killerdrohnen"),[530] "killer weapons" ("Killerwaffen"),[531] and "death drones" ("Todesdrohnen")[532] underlines this reasoning. The Left was the only party that continued to use these terms until the end of the studied period.[533] For them, armed drones were clearly offensive weapons.[534] Additionally, their statements often included legal or ethical judgements by speaking of drone strikes as murder.[535] Left MPs also emphasized the asymmetric combat situation by describing US drone strikes as "a kind of manhunt" ("einer Form von Menschenjagd"),[536] targeting individuals rather than armed forces ("Streitkräfte").[537] They portrayed drone strikes as inherently wrong and terrifying, using vivid words such as "inhumane" ("unmenschlich"),[538] "barbaric" ("barbarisch"),[539] and "terror" ("Terror").[540] The combination of dramatic, emotionally charged language and a straightforward explanation of the negative aspects of drones created a powerful framing.

529 Inge Höger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27119.

530 Transl. by author. Hunko, ibid., ibid., 27109. See also Alexander S. Neu, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/23", 18th leg. period, 23rd sess., March 20, 2014, 1856; Ulla Jelpke, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/180", 18th leg. period, 180th sess., June 24, 2016, 17841; Neu, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/228," 2017, 23073.

531 Transl. by author. Höger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27119.

532 Transl. by author. LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/3589: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der Beratung des Antrags der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 18/3246, 18/3583 – Entsendung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte am NATO-geführten Einsatz Resolute Support Mission für die Ausbildung, Beratung und Unterstützung der afghanischen nationalen Sicherheitskräfte in Afghanistan", 18th leg. period, December 17, 2014, 1.

533 Occasionally even CDU/CSU MPs picked up this terminology, for instance by asking the opposition to "delete the image of the killer drone from your head" (In original: "Streichen Sie das Bild der Killerdrohne aus Ihrem Kopf"). (Transl. by author. Gädechens, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4063.)

534 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/12799: Antrag der Abgeordneten Wolfgang Gehrcke, Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Inge Höger, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Abrüstung jetzt und hier beginnen", 18th leg. period, June 21, 2017, 2; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/1988: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Michel Brandt, Ulla Jelpke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/1406 – Internationale Regulierung bewaffneter oder bewaffnungsfähiger Drohnen", 19th leg. period, May 4, 2018, 1-2.

535 See among others Hänsel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/201", 17th leg. period, 201st sess., October 25, 2012, 24528-9; Sevim Dağdelen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/94", 18th leg. period, 94th sess., March 19, 2015, 8987; Sahra Wagenknecht, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/202", 18th leg. period, 202nd sess., November 23, 2016, 20164.

536 Transl. by author. P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28127; see also P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/85", 17th leg. period, 85th sess., January 21, 2011, 9611.

537 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12437: Antrag der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr", 17th leg. period, February 21, 2013, 1.

538 Transl. by author. Hänsel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/24", 18th leg. period, 24th sess., March 21, 2014, 1901; see also Christine Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4053.

539 Transl. by author. P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31351.

540 Transl. by author. Neu, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/97", 18th leg. period, 96th sess., March 26, 2015, 9222; see also Jan van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/214," 2012, 26319.

The Greens also used an emotional framing but appealed to sympathy rather than fear. MP Christian Ströbele, one of the main speakers on drones, notably coined the green agenda and language on military drone policy. For instance, after Ströbele left the Bundestag in 2017, the term "killer drones" appeared far less frequently by the Greens. Ströbele had often used this term in the past.[541] Of his many statements on drone warfare, his depictions in 2011 stood out the most. He told the audience that drones would kill people "out of the blue" ("aus heiterem Himmel") while they were eating a meal, sleeping at home, driving in a car, or working in the fields.[542] By describing everyday activities, he allowed the audience to relate to these people and feel sympathy for them. When he mentioned that family members, neighbors, and other people often lose their lives in (misled) drone attacks, he also implicitly referenced the concepts of shared humanity and injustice.[543] He described drone strikes as a "vile" ("niederträchtig")[544] and "insidious" ("hinterhältig")[545] style of combat. By creating these visual images of people's fates, he created a highly emotional frame of unfair drone warfare.

SPD politicians were more reserved in their language when discussing drone strikes on human targets. Although they spoke about "targeted killing" and criticized it, they did not characterize the practice further. In 2017, an SPD MP condemned this practice as "cowardly" ("feige") and "wrong" ("unrecht"), but this criticism remained an exception.[546] When they used the term "targeted killing", they almost always mentioned the US in the same breath.[547] In this way, the Social Democrats assigned this practice to the US. They assigned responsibility for this practice to the US while distancing themselves from the (controversial) American practice.

Furthermore, speakers from all three parties, the SPD, the Greens, and the Left, were concerned about the broader legal repercussions of agents increasingly resorting to targeted killing via

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541 See for example Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/148," 2011, 17681; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/149", 17th leg. period, 149th sess., December 15, 2011, 17774; 77; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/155", 17th leg. period, 155th sess., January 26, 2012, 18572; 669.

542 Transl. by author. Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/139", 17th leg. period, 139th sess., November 10, 2011, 16534; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/149," 2011, 17773; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/113", 17th leg. period, 113th sess., June 8, 2011, 12912.

543 Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/113," 2011, 12912.

544 Transl. by author. Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/149," 2011, 17773.

545 Transl. by author. Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29769.

546 Transl. by author. Josip Juratovic, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/212", 18th leg. period, 212th sess., January 19, 2017, 21343.

547 Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27121; SPD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13192: Antrag der Fraktion der SPD Für eine umfassende Debatte zum Thema Kampfdrohnen", 17th leg. period, April 23, 2013, 1; Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29766; SPD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13655: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Rolf Mützenich, Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels, Rainer Arnold, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der SPD – Drucksache 17/11102 – Haltung der Bundesregierung zum Erwerb und Einsatz von Kampfdrohnen", 17th leg. period, May 29, 2013, 4-6; Rolf Mützenich, ibid., "Drucksache 17/14577: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 12. August 2013 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 17th leg. period, August 16, 2013, 5; Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4056.

drone strikes. States, especially the US, would undermine the power of IHL.[548] The IHL would erode.[549] US drone strikes would create legal precedents.[550] On the grand scale, they could potentially lead to the gradual evolution of an illegal practice into customary law.[551]

4.2 Issues with a Common Ground

While there were many contentious issues regarding the military uses of combat drones in the Bundestag drone debate, there was also a common understanding on some issues across the aisles. This was possible despite the different overarching narratives (in this chapter: "military defense" versus "targeted killing", compare Table 4). Even when agents highlight different aspects of an issue, define the stakes differently, or aim to provoke distinct (re)actions (see 3.1.1 on frames), they may still share a general disposition toward it. In discussions about the military uses of drones, most parties agreed on the use of unarmed drones for ISR in international military operations, disapproved of extralegal targeted killings by drone strikes, and opposed LAWS. At the same time, however, this harmony should not be overrated. After all, conducting ISR with unmanned aerial vehicles has been a long-established military practice; the way drone-strike advocates spoke about extralegal killings was highly general, and opposing LAWS is politically noncommittal because such weapon systems do not yet exist. In sum, these topics were not as provocative for the parties as the issues of where, against whom, with what effect, and when states use drones strikes, which are discussed in the next chapter section on contentious issues.

4.2.1 Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Operations

ISR is one of the main tasks for military drones in warfare, whether armed or unarmed ones. In March 2010, German forces used the unarmed Heron 1 ISR drone for the first time. Thus, in the very early years of the debate, politicians could not draw on much operational experience.[552]

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548 Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13235: Antrag der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Volker Beck (Köln), Marieluise Beck (Bremen), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN: Keine bewaffneten Drohnen für die Bundeswehr – Internationale Rüstungskontrolle von bewaffneten unbemannten Systemen voranbringen", 17th leg. period, April 24, 2013, 2.

549 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/3185: Änderungsantrag der Abgeordneten Heike Hänsel, Tobias Pflüger, Dr. Gesine Lötzsch, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der zweiten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/1700, 19/1701, 19/2413, 19/2424, 19/2425, 19/2426 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2018 (Haushaltsgesetz 2018)", 19th leg. period, July 3, 2018, 2.

550 Karl-Heinz Brunner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20883.

551 Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4056; Tobias Lindner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/212," 2017, 21345.

552 Niklas Engelking, "Zehn Jahre im Einsatz: Drohne Heron 1 erreicht 50.000 Flugstunden in Afghanistan," *Bundeswehr.de*, November 25, 2020, https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/luftwaffe/aktuelles/zehn-jahre-im-einsatz-drohne-heron-1-erreicht-50-000-flugstunden-in-afghanistan-4628420

Initially (2009–2013), when they discussed the ISR capabilities of drones, they mainly focused on technical characteristics.[553] While SPD MPs only occasionally spoke positively about aspects of drone technology, conservative and liberal politicians did so regularly. They pointed out that military drones had extensive endurance and could loiter in the air to observe the ground.[554] Longer endurance allows drones to provide reconnaissance at day and night, even 24/7, as the Hans-Peter Bartels, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces and member of the SPD, remarked.[555] This also facilitates the observation of vast areas without interruption.[556] Real-time communication would shorten the reaction time, enabling faster and more flexible operation in many situations.[557]

Starting in 2012, pro-drone speakers began talking about drones not only as a technology, but also as military equipment. By this, I mean they discussed the capabilities that drones offered for military ISR scenarios.[558] Conservatives mentioned that the unarmed Heron 1 would accompany patrolling forces in Afghanistan.[559] Since 2010, the German military had been using unarmed MALE ISR drones in Afghanistan. Therefore, it took politicians a couple of years to take this step. In 2014, Conservatives and Social Democrats (both of which were governing parties

553 For instance Schnurr, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/65," 2010, 6976; ibid., "Drucksache 17/7400: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses als 1. Untersuchungsausschuss gemäß Artikel 45a Absatz 2 des Grundgesetzes Beschlussempfehlung", 17th leg. period, October 25, 2011, 211; ibid., "Drucksache 17/7125: Bericht* des Haushaltsausschusses (8. Ausschuss) zu dem Gesetzentwurf der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 17/6600, 17/6602 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2012 (Haushaltsgesetz 2012)," 2011, 3-4; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11956: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Volker Beck (Köln), Marieluise Beck (Bremen), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/11769 – Abrüstungs- und Rüstungskontrollpolitik," 2012, 6.

554 Endurance refers to the ability to fly for hours without needing to land to refuel or for the pilot to rest. FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/9316: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Tom Koenigs, Volker Beck (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/8861 – Entwicklung und Planung unbemannter Systeme in der Bundeswehr", 17th leg. period, April 16, 2012, 9; de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27109; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125; Siebert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29772.

555 Bartels, ibid., "Drucksache 17/7400: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses als 1. Untersuchungsausschuss gemäß Artikel 45a Absatz 2 des Grundgesetzes Beschlussempfehlung," 2011, 441.

556 von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/213," 2017, 21360; see also Thomas Silberhorn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/252", 17th leg. period, 252nd sess., September 2, 2013, 32606.

557 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29765; FDP PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/3179: Änderungsantrag der Abgeordneten Christian Lindner, Christian Dürr, Ulla Ihnen, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP zu der zweiten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/1700, 19/1701, 19/2413, 19/2424, 19/2425, 19/2426 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2018 (Haushaltsgesetz 2018)," 2018.

558 For example Hardt, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31358. See also Hoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29767; Manderla, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4066; Brandl, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/54," 2014, 5008.

559 CDU/CSU PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11083: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss)", 17th leg. period, October 18, 2012, 4.

at the time) continued to explain that ISR drones could help military forces to detect and recognize potential threats such as hostile ambushes or IEDs.[560] From 2015 to 2018, they discussed the role of ISR drones in the UN Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).[561] For instance, Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen explained the unarmed Heron 1 could facilitate surveillance and reconnaissance of the main roads connecting major cities in Mali.[562] Two years later, the government (CDU/CSU and SPD) said the Heron 1 would gather intelligence for MINUSMA from locations many hours away from the air base in northern Mali. [563] These small examples illustrated to the audience how German forces used ISR drones overseas (see 6.2.3).

Although speakers talked about the technical characteristics of ISR drones, ISR scenarios were far less present in the Bundestag debate than combat scenarios. This may be the case because unarmed ISR drones were less controversial in Germany than armed ones. Only the Left Party criticized ISR drones as "spy drones" ("Spionagedrohnen").[564] The Greens questioned the alleged technological superiority of drone systems by inquiring about the technological risks they were prone to, such as hostile cyberattacks.[565] However, it would be a stretch to say they contested ISR drones. Instead, they remained rather silent on the issue. The minor role of ISR scenarios in the drone debate is curious. If pro-drone speakers had dedicated more discursive space

560 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11956: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Volker Beck (Köln), Marieluise Beck (Bremen), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/11769 – Abrüstungs- und Rüstungskontrollpolitik," 2012, 6; Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4058; Weber, ibid., ibid., 4063.

561 For instance State Secretary Markus Ederer, ibid., "Drucksache 18/7510: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 8. Februar 2016 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2016, 18; von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/213," 2017, 21360; Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3863; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/6728: Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Tobias Pflüger, Heike Hänsel, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Flüge von Drohnen der Bundeswehr über den von Israel besetzten Gebieten", 19th leg. period, December 28, 2018, 1.

562 von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/149", 18th leg. period, 149th sess., January 14, 2016, 14696.

563 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/1098: Antrag der Bundesregierung Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an der Multidimensionalen Integrierten Stabilisierungsmission der Vereinten Nationen in Mali (MINUSMA) auf Grundlage der Resolutionen 2100 (2013), 2164 (2014), 2227 (2015), 2295 (2016) und 2364 (2017) vom 25. April 2013, 25. Juni 2014, 29. Juni 2015, 29. Juni 2016, 29. Juni 2017, ergänzt durch Resolution 2391 (2017) des Sicherheitsrates der Vereinten Nationen vom 8. Dezember 2017," 2018, 6; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/5136: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Michel Brandt, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/4714 – Drohnen der Bundeswehr in Mali", 19th leg. period, October 18, 2018, 1.

564 Hunko, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27109; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31351-2; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/213: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/124 – Anstehende Entscheidung zur „europäischen Drohne" auf dem EU-Gipfel im Dezember 2013," 2013, 3; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/3605: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/3293 – EU-Konzept zum Einsatz von Drohnen in Militärmissionen," 2014, 1-2.

565 Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/2243: Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Dr. Tobias Lindner, Doris Wagner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN Planungen des Bundesministeriums der Verteidigung zum Einsatz waffenfähiger bzw. bewaffneter Drohnen", 18th leg. period, July 28, 2014, 7.

to them, they could have established ISR as the main scenario and marginalized combat scenarios as minor ones. This would have made armed drones seem less daunting.

4.2.2 Extralegal Killings

In 2012 and 2013, the opposition parties repeatedly condemned drone strikes for carrying out executions without any legal process or court judgment, also known as "extrajudicial killings".[566] The Left Party went even further, calling them extralegal executions ("außergerichtliche Hinrichtungen")[567] and declaring them a form of "death penalty" ("Todesstrafe").[568] After 2013, the term "extrajudicial killing" appeared less frequently.[569] However, after joining the government in early 2014, the SPD began using the terms "extralegal" or "extrajudicial" killings ("extralegale Tötung"), instead of using "targeted killing".[570] This new terminology placed a greater emphasis on the legal aspects of the issue and less emphasis on the GWOT practice.
In the summer of 2015, the SPD members of the Subcommittee on Disarmament, Arms Control, and Non-Proliferation ("Unterausschuss Abrüstung, Rüstungskontrolle und Nichtverbreitung") demanded that the German parliament ban extralegal killings.[571] A few years prior, the German government, formed by the CDU/CSU and the FDP, had already publicly condemned extralegal targeted killings by means of drone strikes. For instance, in 2011, Thomas Kossendey (CDU), the Parliamentary State Secretary at the Ministry of Defense, stated: "This way of warfare, of combat is not the basis for the work of our German soldiers" who are in North Afghanistan as

566 See for instance Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/148," 2011, 17681; Mützenich, ibid., "Drucksache 17/8509: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 23. Januar 2012 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 17th leg. period, January 27, 2012, 2; Omid Nouripour, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/195", 17th leg. period, 195th sess., September 27, 2012, 23447; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28127; Annette Groth, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/251", 17th leg. period, 251st sess., June 28, 2013, 32563.

567 Transl. by author. LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/10379: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Jan van Aken, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/10070 – Haltung der Bundesregierung zu einem verantwortungsbewussten Umgang mit bewaffneten Drohnen", 18th leg. period, November 21, 2016, 8.

568 Transl. by author. LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/3181: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Ausschusses für Menschenrechte und humanitäre Hilfe (17. Ausschuss)", 17th leg. period, October 5, 2010, 7; Niema Movassat, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/65," 2010, 6930; Groth, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/251," 2013, 32563; Groth, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/58", 18th leg. period, 58th sess., October 10, 2014, 5417; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/10863: Antrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Andrej Hunko, Wolfgang Gehrcke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. US- und NATO-Stützpunkt Ramstein unverzüglich schließen", 18th leg. period, January 17, 2017, 2.

569 See for instance Brunner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/155", 18th leg. period, 155th sess., February 18, 2016, 15229; Hunko, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20872; Ströbele, ibid., ibid., 20874-5; Thomas Hitschler, ibid., ibid., 20876; Brunner, ibid., ibid., 20883; Juratovic, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/212," 2017, 21343; Hunko, ibid., ibid., 21344; Katja Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3868.

570 Transl. by author. Brunner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/155," 2016, 15229; Hitschler, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20876; Juratovic, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/212," 2017, 21343.

571 Brunner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20883.

part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).[572] In 2013, CDU MP Bernd Siebert announced that legally dubious "scenarios like in North Pakistan or in the Yemen" were "unthinkable" ("undenkbar") for German military forces.[573] The following year, another CDU MP admitted that using armed drones as extensively as the Americans do would be a "shady business" ("fragwürdige Angelegenheit").[574] During a debate on German drone procurement, Minister von der Leyen (CDU) reiterated that the government would "categorically disapprove" of extralegal killings which are against IHL ("lehnt extralegale völkerrechtswidrige Tötungen kategorisch ab"), with any kind of weapon system.[575] Two years later, when discussing US targeted killings without any legal process another conservative MP reassured that "we would never militarily take part in something like that".[576] Thus, the governing parties clearly stated the position of the German government in light of the opposition's concerns.

Though the Conservatives opposed extralegal killings, they did not reject armed drones altogether, like the Left Party did. Instead, from 2012 on, they portrayed drones as neutral objects, alluding to a meta-narrative on the inherent neutrality of weapons.[577] According to them, weapons alone would neither "break the international humanitarian law",[578] nor "shoot by themselves".[579] Ultimately, the legal, ethical, and moral charge would lie with the human operators.[580] The language of CDU/CSU politicians underlined the idea of drones as mere objects, referring to UAVs as "means" ("Mittel"), [581] "material" ("Material"),[582] and a "building block" ("Baustein").[583] However, unlike the US government in 2012, the German MPs did not promote drone warfare as "surgical".[584] In 2013, Defense Minister de Maizière acknowledged that "there

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572 Transl. by author. In original: "Diese Art und Weise der Kriegsführung, der Kampfführung, ist nicht Grundlage der Arbeit unserer deutschen Soldaten" (Thomas Kossendey, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/113," 2011, 12912.)

573 Transl. by author. Siebert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29772.

574 Transl. by author. Mißfelder, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/21," 2014, 1631.

575 Transl. by author. von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4054-5.

576 Transl. by author. In original: "wir … würden uns militärisch nie an so etwas beteiligen" (Wadephul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20874.)

577 Ernst-Reinhard Beck, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/191", 17th leg. period, 191st sess., September 12, 2012, 23054; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28127; von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4054; Arnold, ibid., ibid., 4057; Hahn, ibid., ibid., 4064; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20884; Anita Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/212," 2017, 21343; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3871.

578 Transl. by author. In original: "Es ist nicht die Waffe, die das Völkerrecht bricht, sondern es ist der Mensch, der sie bedient, … " (Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3871.)

579 E.-R. Beck, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/191," 2012, 23054.

580 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4064.

581 de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27109-10; Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4058; Manderla, ibid., ibid., 4065-6.

582 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/100," 2015, 9560.

583 Manderla, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4066.

584 John O. Brennan, "The Ethics and Efficacy of the President's Counterterrorism Strategy", 2012.

is no clean warfare" and that the use of force would always be a very serious matter.[585] The Greens and the Left Party agreed that a "clean" ("sauber") war would not be possible.[586]

4.2.3 Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems

Policymakers from both sides of the aisle agreed that the prospect of LAWS would be highly concerning. Humans, not robots, should continue to make the decisions over life and death. The Bundestag discussed this topic most in 2013 and 2014, right before and after the federal election. The Left, the Greens, and the SPD painted the prospect of machines and algorithms making life-or-death decisions as a real possibility, calling it "not acceptable" ("nicht akzeptabel"),[587] and "ominous" ("unheilvoll").[588] They argued we were "sliding" into a new technology. Drones would "operate increasingly automatic" ("zunehmend automatisch operieren").[589] The growing amount of collected information and the increasing performance of computers would gradually lead to autonomous drones.[590] They requested Germany should abstain from contributing to a process whose outcome would be "combat robots deciding over life and death" ("Kampfroboter über Leben und Tod entscheiden").[591] Green MP Agnieszka Brugger reminded the audience that experts warned against arming drones because autonomous systems would lurk "behind the corner" ("hinter der nächsten Ecke").[592] The SPD claimed that drones flying a route automatically or filtering information were acceptable, but computers should not fire weapons.[593]

The Conservatives and the speakers representing the conservative-liberal government held against these assertions of autonomous machines. MP Siebert claimed that, as with any other weapon system in any military in the world, a human being would decide whether to strike or not – armed drones would "not change a thing about this" ("ändern daran überhaupt nichts").[594] Other conservative MPs reiterated that no "machine" ("Maschine")[595] and no "autonomously acting robot" ("autonom handelnde Roboter")[596] would decide to launch a weapon from a

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585 Transl. by author. In original: "Es gibt keinen sauberen Krieg; …" (de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27110.)

586 Höger, ibid., ibid., 27119; Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4056; Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3868.

587 Transl. by author. SPD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13192: Antrag der Fraktion der SPD Für eine umfassende Debatte zum Thema Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 1.

588 Transl. by author. P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28128.

589 Transl. by author. Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13235: Antrag der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Volker Beck (Köln), Marieluise Beck (Bremen), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN: Keine bewaffneten Drohnen für die Bundeswehr – Internationale Rüstungskontrolle von bewaffneten unbemannten Systemen voranbringen," 2013, 1-2.

590 P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28128.

591 Transl. by author. C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4053-4.

592 Transl. by author. Brugger, ibid., ibid., 4056.

593 Arnold, ibid., ibid., 4057; Weber, ibid., ibid., 4063.

594 Transl. by author. Siebert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27115.

595 Transl. by author. Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125.

596 Transl. by author. Manderla, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4066.

drone. De Maizière assured that weapons would not be allowed to become detached from human decision-making.[597] Government officials, as well as conservative and liberal MPs, emphasized that people would always be responsible for operating the drones and deciding to use force.[598] Drones would function like manned airplanes, except the pilot would be on the ground instead of inside the aircraft.[599] In 2013, Parliamentary State Secretary Christian Schmidt (CSU) informed the Bundestag that – contrary to the predictions of the Left Party – fully autonomous capabilities would have no role in procurement decisions for a German MALE drone.[600] In summary, there was common ground on these three issues. All actors agreed on two issues (extralegal killings and LAWS) and the Left Party remained silent on the issue of unarmed ISR drones despite having concerns about espionage (see Table 5).

Issue	**Discursive tactics**
ISR drones are okay	Silence by the Left
Extralegal killings are bad	Agreement by all
LAWS will be a problem	Agreement by all

Table 5: Issues with Common Ground and Discursive Tactics: Military Uses of Combat Drones
Source: Author's own work

4.3 Contentious Issues

Discursive meanings are always contested and discussions on the military uses of combat drones are no exception. My analysis identified five contentious issues in the debates. Unlike issues with a common ground, agents did not share a general disposition toward these subjects. Instead, the framings and representations clashed between the AMALE-drone advocates and opponents. The first three contentious issues deal with operational and strategic questions: What are the likely operational scenarios for military drones – defensive aerial support or offensive targeted killing? Who are the main targets, and thus victims, of drone strikes – terrorists or civilians? What criteria should be used to judge how effective drone strikes are – whether they successfully protect soldiers or contribute to promoting peace? The other two issues address the agents who decide on the use of force in Germany. What decisions will German soldiers and state leaders make in the future regarding the use of force? Will they be tempted to carry out

597 Transl. by author. de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31350.
598 Siebert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27115; Hahn, ibid., ibid., 27120.
599 de Maizière, ibid., ibid., 27110; Wadephul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20874; Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3863; Marcus Faber, ibid., ibid., 3867-8.
600 Transl. by author. C. Schmidt, ibid., "Drucksache 18/221: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 16. Dezember 2013 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 18th leg. period, December 20, 2013, 53.

targeted killings, or can we trust that they will act responsibly? Together, these framings of contentious issues contribute to the distinctive narratives of drone advocates and opponents. Examining them, we also see how discourses overlap through meta-narratives on the purpose and effects of violence in conflicts, the priorities of IHL or human rights, mission creep, and trust in democratic institutions, such as soldiers and politicians (see Table 6).

Contentious issue	**Drone advocates framing**	**Drone opponents framing**
Depicting operational scenarios	Defensive aerial support in asymmetric conflicts	Targeted killing outside of declared warzones
Naming the targets and victims	Terrorists and insurgents	Civilians and innocents
Criteria for judging effectiveness	Protecting soldiers and reducing risks	Promoting peace
Anticipating behavior of German soldiers	Soldiers act responsibly, no matter the weapon	Armed drones make killing easier
Forecasting decision-making on the use of force	Trusting the parliament	The targeted killing temptation

Table 6: Framings of Contentious Issues: Military Uses of Combat Drones
Source: Author's own work

4.3.1 Depicting Operational Scenarios

The parties talked about various military scenarios in which the German Bundeswehr could employ armed drones. The Conservatives and Liberals primarily discussed defensive scenarios involving close air support that could happen in the *future*. The other parties critically discussed offensive drone attacks such as targeted killing in non-declared war zones, which taken place in the *past* and continued to happen in the present at the time of the debate.

4.3.1.1 Targeted Killing Outside of Declared Warzones

Conducting drone strikes outside of declared war zones was linked to the preemptive strike doctrine introduced by US president George W. Bush after 9/11. For many countries, including Germany, this practice was highly controversial. The US had carried out its first drone strike in Pakistan (a non-active warzone) in 2004. Still, the Bundestag only began seriously discussing the legal questions in 2011. The previous year, there was an extreme surge in US drone strikes in Pakistan, and the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions

published a well-received report on targeted killing.[601] This was also a year after a US drone strike had killed the German citizen Bünyamin E. in the Pakistani region of Waziristan in 2010.[602] Despite this slightly delayed start, targeted killing outside of declared warzones became the main issue for the opposition parties from 2011 on.[603] It defined their statements and substantially shaped the entire Bundestag debate on armed drones. They portrayed the use of armed drones as closely linked to targeted killing, depicting it as a dark, unjust, and dreadful practice.

Since targeted killing was key to the opposition's main narrative about armed drones, it played a significant role in almost all the contentious issues. As such, the remaining paragraphs of this section focus on the legal aspects. In 2011, MPs began asking whether the government thought it would be legal under IHL to kill people with drones in countries where there is no official warzone.[604] The government formed by the CDU/CSU and the FDP replied it is legal and substantiated this judgement with different reasons over the years. First, drones would in principle not differ from manned airplanes and there would have to be a legal evaluation on case-by-cases basis.[605] Second, it would be in line with IHL to fight combatants in armed conflicts outside of battle situations.[606] Peaking from 2013 to 2014 MPs from the SPD, the Left, and the Greens repeatedly stated their own position: Drones strikes and targeted killing outside of declared warzones would violate IHL. From 2013 on, even without providing exhaustive legal

601 Philip Alston, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Philip Alston," ed. Human Rights Council (United Nations General Assembly, 2010); Peter Bergen, David Sterman, and Melissa Salyk-Virk, "America's Counterterrorism Wars - The Drone War in Pakistan," *New America Foundation*, June 17, 2021, https://www.newamerica.org/future-security/reports/americas-counterterrorism-wars/the-drone-war-in-pakistan/.

602 Heinz, "Wann hat der Staat das Recht zu töten?," 9.

603 Green MP Ströbele raised national legal concerns, questioning how US targeted killings through drone strikes in the German-managed area in Afghanistan aligned with the German Basic Law ("Grundgesetz"), precisely with its first article protecting human dignity (Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/148," 2011, 17681; see also Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/172", 18th leg. period, 172nd sess., June 1, 2016, 16968.) However, national law concerns were relatively rare compared to the widely debated topic of international law.

604 Mützenich, ibid., "Drucksache 17/8279: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Zeit vom 19. bis 30. Dezember 2011 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 17th leg. period, December 30, 2011, 11; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/9316: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Tom Koenigs, Volker Beck (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/8861 – Entwicklung und Planung unbemannter Systeme in der Bundeswehr," 2012, 4.

605 Harald Braun, ibid., "Drucksache 17/8279: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Zeit vom 19. bis 30. Dezember 2011 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2011, 11-12.

606 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/9316: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Tom Koenigs, Volker Beck (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/8861 – Entwicklung und Planung unbemannter Systeme in der Bundeswehr," 2012, 4.

reasoning, speakers from these parties often characterized US drone strikes as "völkerrechtswidrig"; meaning "against international law".[607] According to them, IHL violations would take place in Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen because the US was not officially at war with these states.[608] In 2013, speakers spelled out very clearly why these military interventions were problematic: They violated state sovereignty. Since drone warfare was in a gray area and border-crossing strikes could go unnoticed, there seemed to be a legal vacuum. The local government would not have the exclusive power over what happened.[609] Thus, the opposition passionately and extensively argued against targeted killing. They also stressed various ethical aspects such as killing people based on so-called "death lists",[610] without a trial or warning.[611]

The reaction of the conservative-liberal government was multi-layered. In 2013, Defense Minister de Maizière reinterpreted the framing of the opposition. He shifted the subject from controversial targeted killing practices to the opposition having a problem with the limited scope of lethal force. In this manner, he omitted the true legal and ethical concerns of the opposition. Instead, he referred to the literal meaning of "targeted" as aiming precisely at a specific target and contrasted it with a "non-targeted" use of force in an attempt to change its meaning. Two allegories were used for illustration: One appealing to common sense and the other to German historical memory.

First, every police officer and every soldier would learn early on how to hit a target ("gezielt treffen"). The purpose of targeting would be "to hit what you want to hit, and not what you do

607 Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27113; Groth, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/251," 2013, 32563; Nouripour, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/33", 18th leg. period, 33rd sess., May 8, 2014, 2757; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/4908: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 11. Mai 2015 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 18th leg. period, May 15, 2015, 3; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/11023: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Niema Movassat, Dr. Alexander S. Neu, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/10618 – Die US-Basis Ramstein als wichtiger Knoten im weltweiten Drohnenkrieg", 18th leg. period, January 25, 2017, 2.

608 P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/211," 2012, 25767; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28127; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31351; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/215: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Ulla Jelpke, Jan Korte, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/136 – Verdacht der Verwendung von Informationen aus Asylverfahren für „targeted killings"", 18th leg. period, December 19, 2013, 2; Nouripour, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/33," 2014, 2757; Jürgen Trittin, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20881. See also Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31355; Groth, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/251," 2013, 32563; van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/36", 18th leg. period, 36th sess., May 22, 2014, 3080; Dağdelen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/94," 2015, 8987.

609 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12437: Antrag der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," 2013, 1; Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29766; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31351.

610 P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/155," 2012, 18563.

611 Nouripour, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/195," 2012, 23447; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/113," 2011, 12912.

not want to hit".[612] Second, he appealed to the historical memory of his German audience by contrasting targeted drone strikes with carpet bombing; an aerial warfare tactic heavily employed by Allied forces against Nazi Germany during WW2.[613] The options he presented were either unprecise carpet-bombings of large areas or precise drone strikes of specific target, whereby the latter option would be "ethically rather a progress than a disadvantage".[614] After de Maizière called drone strikes ethically progressive or even neutral he received much criticism.[615] His party colleague, MP Florian Hahn, supported this argument, asking Left MPs: "Do you want to wipe out the civilian population in Afghanistan with large-area bombings only to be able to assert our soldiers would not kill in a targeted way"?[616] In this way, de Maizière and Hahn argued in a process-oriented way. They focused on the practicality of launching explosives rather than considering whether hitting the targets was appropriate given the context.

In later years, some parties continued as before, such as the Left Party, while others shifted their position slightly. For instance, the SPD had unanimously condemned targeted killings via drone strikes as contrary to IHL in 2013 and 2014.[617] However, in 2016, MP Hitschler recognized drone strikes were not necessarily against international law, even though they may undermine IHL.[618] Other SPD MPs remained skeptical.[619] The unity of the Social Democrats cracked on this controversial issue.

In response to the opposition's critique, officials from both government coalitions (the CDU/CSU and the FDP, as well as the CDU/CSU and the SPD) gave statements to parliament,

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612 Transl. by author. In original: "Sinn des Zielens ist, dass man das trifft, was man treffen will, und nicht das, was man nicht treffen will." (de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27110.)

613 de Maizière, ibid., ibid.; see also de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/149," 2011, 17774.

614 Transl. by author. In original: "Ich halte das ethisch eher für einen Fortschritt als für einen Nachteil." (de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27110-11.)

615 See for instance Nouripour, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/195," 2012, 23447; Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/240", 17th leg. period, 240th sess., May 16, 2013, 30139; Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31358-9.

616 Transl. by author. In original: "Wollen Sie mit großflächigen Bombardements in Afghanistan die Zivilbevölkerung auslöschen, nur damit Sie danach behaupten können, unsere Soldaten würden nicht gezielt töten?" (Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125.)

617 Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27116; SPD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13192: Antrag der Fraktion der SPD Für eine umfassende Debatte zum Thema Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 2; Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4056.

618 Hitschler, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20876.

619 For example, in 2018 MP Gabi Weber noted there is at least "a question mark" whether the American employment of armed drones was "flawless" under international law (Transl. by author. In original: "An vielen Stellen machen wir ein Fragezeichen dahinter, ob das, was da geschieht, völkerrechtlich einwandfrei ist." (Weber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3865.)

They did not offer any new information but merely underlined that the existing IHL was sufficient for legally containing the use of drones.[620] Whether a particular drone strike was in harmony with international law would only be determined on a case-by-case basis.[621] To make a legal evaluation, one would require ample facts and knowledge anyways, which the government would not possess, as officials pointed out in 2015 and 2016.[622] Government officials repeatedly resorted to merely citing what IHL said about civilians in combat and the use of weapons such as armed drones.[623] They also generically outlined the meaning of the IHL principles of military necessity, distinction, and proportionality.[624] The Left, being in the opposition, criticized this approach by the government. They would refuse to give an actual legal evaluation by abstractly assuring the significance of IHL.[625]

4.3.1.2 Defensive Aerial Support in Asymmetric Conflicts

After 2014, politicians from the governing parties CDU/CSU and SPD challenged the framing of armed drones as an offensive weapon used for targeted killing in both language and content. Regarding the terminology used, especially the expression "targeted killing", the rhetoric of

620 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13655: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Rolf Mützenich, Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels, Rainer Arnold, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der SPD – Drucksache 17/11102 – Haltung der Bundesregierung zum Erwerb und Einsatz von Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 4.

621 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/237: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Omid Nouripour, Katja Keul, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/129 – Hinweise auf völkerrechtswidrige Praktiken der USA von deutschem Staatsgebiet aus und die diesbezüglichen Kenntnisse der Bundesregierung", 18th leg. period, December 23, 2013, 13; Michael Roth, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/25," 2014, 1993-4.

622 Cornelia Pieper, ibid., "Drucksache 17/8509: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 23. Januar 2012 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2012, 3; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/4911: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Jan van Aken, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/4604 – Kooperation der Firma Rohde & Schwarz mit einem US-Hersteller von Kampfdrohnen", 18th leg. period, May 15, 2015, 3; Maria Böhmer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/195", 18th leg. period, 195th sess., October 19, 2016, 19407; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/10364: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Inge Höger, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/7991 – Erfahrungen aus 14 Jahren „Krieg gegen den Terror" – Eine Bilanz in Irak, Afghanistan, Pakistan", 18th leg. period, November 17, 2016, 35.

623 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13655: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Rolf Mützenich, Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels, Rainer Arnold, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der SPD – Drucksache 17/11102 – Haltung der Bundesregierung zum Erwerb und Einsatz von Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 10; Stephan Steinlein, ibid., "Drucksache 18/10313: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 7. November 2016 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 18th leg. period, November 11, 2016, 18; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/10379: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Jan van Aken, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/10070 – Haltung der Bundesregierung zu einem verantwortungsbewussten Umgang mit bewaffneten Drohnen," 2016, 8.

624 Braun, ibid., "Drucksache 17/14577: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 12. August 2013 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2013, 5.

625 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/14053: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Jan van Aken, Herbert Behrens, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/13497 – Militärische Drohnen-Strategie der Bundesregierung: Kampfdrohnen", 17th leg. period, June 20, 2013, 2; Hunko, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20872.

government representatives shifted. Whereas Minister von der Leyen spoke of "targeted killings" in 2014, one year later the government announced officials would no longer use the term. As they argued, they found it had neither a distinct linguistical nor legal definition.[626] This shift in language illustrates a challenge by omission. Instead of responding to the opposition and openly challenging their statements ("this is not targeted killing" or "we do not know if it is targeted killing"), the government dropped the term and focused on their preferred representations and language instead. This shift indicates how dominant the "targeted killing"-framing of the opposition was up to that point.

Furthermore, the government introduced a counter-frame about operational scenarios depicting armed drones as a mainly defensive weapon. While the presentation of potential combat scenarios lacked precision in the earlier years, Minister de Maizière introduced a more detailed vision in 2013 and 2014 namely the scenario of providing close air support.[627] The Minister explained armed drones could accompany patrols in dangerous situations or during special forces operations. The drone could watch and then "if our own soldiers get in danger, fight as well and fight the enemy".[628] Similarly, MP Hahn argued Germany would need armed drones because of the "guerilla tactic" ("Guerillataktik") of terrorists including IEDs and ambushes.[629] De Maizière in particular sought to emphasize the defensive – not offensive – use of future German armed drones.[630] By contrast, the Greens and the Left Party spoke of "drone attacks" accentuating the offensive quality.[631]

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626 von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4054; compared with FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/4911: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Jan van Aken, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/4604 – Kooperation der Firma Rohde & Schwarz mit einem US-Hersteller von Kampfdrohnen," 2015, 2-3.

627 Compare also Erdel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28127. At some point, the conservative-liberal government called it "armed overwatch" but the term did not stick in the Bundestag drone debate (FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12136: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Herbert Behrens, Annette Groth, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/11978 – Integration von schweren Drohnen in den allgemeinen zivilen Luftraum," 2013, 14.)

628 Transl. by author. In original: "dann, wenn unsere eigenen Soldaten in Gefahr geraten, auch zu kämpfen und den Gegner zu bekämpfen" (de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27109-10.)

629 Hahn, ibid., ibid., 27120; Gädechens, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4062; Faber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3868.

630 For other examples, see Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30652; von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4054-5; Otte, ibid., ibid., 4058; Gädechens, ibid., ibid., 4063; Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3863.

631 Dağdelen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/65," 2010, 7008; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/113," 2011, 12912; Green PG, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/17," 2014, 1357; LEFT PG, "Drucksache 18/2794: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Niema Movassat, Sevim Dağdelen, Annette Groth, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/2589 – Die Rolle des United Staates Africa Commands und der US-Militärbasis in Ramstein für US-Drohnenangriffe", 18th leg. period, October 8, 2014, 7; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/7084: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Frithjof Schmidt, Omid Nouripour, Agnieszka Brugger, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN zu der Beratung des Antrags der Bundesregierung – Drucksache 18/6743, 18/6946 – Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte am NATO-geführten Einsatz Resolute Support für die Ausbildung, Beratung und Unterstützung der afghanischen nationalen Verteidigungs- und

The justification for armed drones as a useful defensive weapon hinged on the criterion of speed. Even if German forces got ambushed in Kunduz, drone operators in Mazar-i-Sharif could support them in real-time. They could tell the soldiers where the attackers are, warn them when and from where they attack, and fire a warning shot. When necessary, they could even launch a strike.[632] Since drones could accompany troops for a long time, due to their endurance, they were already close by in cases of attacks. They would strongly improve the reaction time, allowing to react and strike faster.[633] By focusing their argument on speed politicians put a spotlight on the existing processes of contemporary military operations. Drones would merely improve these processes through faster reactions.

In 2013, the opposition parties (SPD, Greens, and Left Party) did pick up on the close air support scenario suggested by de Maizière.[634] Despite his depictions speakers still complained about a lack of clarity regarding the exact operational scenarios and thus the operational necessity for armed drones. The SPD pointed out it would neither be clear in what types of conflicts Germany would use them, nor what kind of new tasks the Bundeswehr would be able to carry out.[635] After all, in twelve years of international engagement in Afghanistan there had only been two incidences where US drones had to provide close air support, when German forces were involved.[636] Green MP Brugger pointed out the government should first decide which type of military operations German forces should engage in before procuring armed drones.[637] Even an MP from the FDP (who governed at the time) demanded to know what new value drones would add to "close air support" missions.[638] This claim carried over into the later years. In 2018, a Left MP still asked the same questions – what should Germany use armed drones for? Are they even operationally necessary?[639] All in all, explanations were thin. Only few pro-drone speakers

Sicherheitskräfte in Afghanistan", 18th leg. period, December 16, 2015, 3; Green PG, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/23," 2018, 2138.

632 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125; de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30647; de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31349; von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4054; Otte, ibid., ibid., 4058.

633 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125; Kossendey, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30680; de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31349; Gädechens, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4062-3; Manderla, ibid., ibid., 4066; FDP PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/3179: Änderungsantrag der Abgeordneten Christian Lindner, Christian Dürr, Ulla Ihnen, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP zu der zweiten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/1700, 19/1701, 19/2413, 19/2424, 19/2425, 19/2426 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2018 (Haushaltsgesetz 2018)," 2018.

634 Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27121; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28128; Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29766.

635 Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27116; Bartels, ibid., ibid., 27121-2.

636 Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29766.

637 Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27114.

638 Hoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29767.

639 Michael Leutert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/32", 19th leg. period, 32nd sess., May 16, 2018, 3043-4; Leutert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/45," 2018, 4745.

from the CDU/CSU stood their ground claiming drone strikes had eliminated terrorist leaders, and would hence contain the danger of terrorist groups, preventing their growth.[640]

4.3.2 Naming the Targets and Victims

Who is the main target of drone strikes for which group of politicians? How policymakers talked about the targeted agents reflects and, simultaneously, defines the issue of armed drone use. Drone-friendly government officials, together with conservative and liberal speakers, tended to focus on conflict adversaries, namely terrorists and insurgents. By contrast, the Greens, the Left, and, to some extent, the Social Democrats portrayed the targeted people instead as victims. Their speech instances paid attention to the people, civilians and suspected terrorists, harmed by drone strikes. These representations are broadly in line with their partisan foreign policy focuses. While the Conservatives and the Liberals focused on security, speakers from the Greens and the Left focused on human rights. However, by focusing on a specific category of targets (or enemies), they also assigned meanings to themselves as agents.[641] Pro-drone speakers who spoke about drones fighting terrorists – in other words the "bad guys" – presented themselves as the "good guys" who would provide security. Drone opposing agents, who primarily emphasized the civilian victims, accused the government or pro-drone colleagues of contributing to injustice by tolerating it. At the same time, while the latter group rigorously framed drone strikes as the problem (causing innocent deaths), the former hesitated to discursively represent drones as the solution for fighting terrorists.

4.3.2.1 Civilians and Innocents

The beginning of a heated debate about civilian victims of drone strikes was sparked in 2011 by media publications around the globe, leaked information about CIA drone strikes in Pakistan, and NGO research on drone strikes, such as by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (BIJ).[642] The Greens and the Left were able to join this existing debate about the targets of drone strikes. Usually, they mentioned targets together with targeted killing. The Greens raised the issue of drone targets most frequently in 2011 and 2012. The Left started a little later, in 2012–2013, and raised the issue again in 2015. In 2011 and 2012, both the Greens and the Left frequently talked about lists with the names of people to be killed through drone strikes or captured

640 Volker Kauder, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/48", 18th leg. period, 48th sess., September 1, 2014, 4431; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/94," 2015, 8991; Egon Jüttner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/243", 18th leg. period, 243rd sess., June 29, 2017, 24920.

641 Weldes, "Constructing National Interests," 283.

642 Jessica Purkiss and Jack Serle, "Humanitarian Harm," in *The Humanitarian Impact of Drones*, ed. Ray Acheson, et al. (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; International Disarmament Institute, Pace University; Article 36, 2017), 15-16.

by special forces of allies.[643] Sometimes they provocatively called them kill lists or death lists.[644] The exact processes and selection criteria behind the lists would be "dubious" ("dubios")[645] and "uncheckable" ("unüberprüfbar").[646]

Taking a closer look at the language reveals the Greens mainly spoke about "people" hit by drone strikes, especially in 2011. They also spoke of "insurgents" ("Aufständische") and "Taliban" more often than terrorists. The Left mentioned targeted subjects as "people" ("Menschen")[647] and "civilians" ("Zivilisten").[648] Moreover, they mostly referred to "supposed" ("vermeintliche")[649] terrorists. While the SPD did not talk about drone strike targets as often as the other two parties, they used a similar language as the Greens. They referred to the killing of "people" ("Menschen"),[650] but also mentioned that "extremists" ("Extremisten"),[651]

643 Ströbele, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 17/116," 2011, 13320; Gehrcke, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/214," 2012, 26336; Gehrcke, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/100," 2015, 9569.

644 Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/149," 2011, 7773-4; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/155," 2012, 18563; Green PG, attachment 6, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/17," 2014, 1358; C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4053.

645 Transl. by author. Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/155," 2012, 18669.

646 Transl. by author. LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/6730: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Christine Buchholz, Wolfgang Gehrcke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/6322 – Mögliche Teilnahme eines Verbindungsoffiziers der Bundeswehr bei Auswahlprozessen für sogenannte gezielte Tötungen", 18th leg. period, November 17, 2015, 1-2.

647 Transl. by author. Gregor Gysi, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30644; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31351; Groth, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/251," 2013, 32563; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/6730: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Christine Buchholz, Wolfgang Gehrcke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/6322 – Mögliche Teilnahme eines Verbindungsoffiziers der Bundeswehr bei Auswahlprozessen für sogenannte gezielte Tötungen," 2015, 1-2; Neu, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/153", 18th leg. period, 153th sess., January 29, 2016, 15058; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/8656: Antrag der Abgeordneten Wolfgang Gehrcke, Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Die NATO durch ein kollektives System für Frieden und Sicherheit in Europa unter Einschluss Russlands ersetzen", 18th leg. period, June 2, 2016, 3.

648 Transl. by author. Hänsel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/201," 2012, 24528; Neu, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/97," 2015, 9222. LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/6730: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Christine Buchholz, Wolfgang Gehrcke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/6322 – Mögliche Teilnahme eines Verbindungsoffiziers der Bundeswehr bei Auswahlprozessen für sogenannte gezielte Tötungen," 2015, 1-2.

649 Transl. by author. van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/158", 17th leg. period, 158th sess., February 9, 2012, 19007; Dağdelen, ibid., "Drucksache 17/8637: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 6. Februar 2012 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 17th leg. period, February 10, 2012, 4; Höger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27119. See also Neu, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/228," 2017, 23073.

650 Transl. by author. Mützenich, ibid., "Drucksache 17/8279: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Zeit vom 19. bis 30. Dezember 2011 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2011, 11; Johannes Pflug, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/201," 2012, 24526; SPD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13655: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Rolf Mützenich, Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels, Rainer Arnold, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der SPD – Drucksache 17/11102 – Haltung der Bundesregierung zum Erwerb und Einsatz von Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 5; Juratovic, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/212," 2017, 21343.

651 Transl. by author. Mützenich, ibid., "Drucksache 17/8509: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 23. Januar 2012 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2012, 2.

"insurgents" ("Aufständische"),[652] and "alleged or actual terrorists" ("angeblichen oder tatsächlichen – Terroristen")[653] were the targets.

Each party was skeptical of the civilian damage caused. When talking about the civilian damage caused by drone strikes, the Left and the Greens often spoke of the civilian "victims" ("Opfer")[654] and the former also used the term "innocents" ("Unschuldige").[655] From 2012 to 2014, the Left often mentioned that children had been killed or hurt.[656] Again, their speech instances created an image of horror. Combat drones would be killer weapons that "tear women, children, and old people to pieces" ("Frauen, Kinder und Greise zerfetzen"),[657] causing "fear and terror" ("Angst und Schrecken").[658] Starting in 2011 and peaking in 2015, Green and Left speakers emphasized the damage drone strikes would do to local communities by killing civilians. For instance, they criticized "family members, neighbors and others" ("Familienangehöriger, Nachbarn und anderer")[659] would have lost their lives during drone strikes as well as people who happened to be in physical proximity.[660] US drone strikes had attacked a wedding

652 Transl. by author. Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27116.

653 Transl. by author. Juratovic, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/212," 2017, 21343; see also SPD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11102: Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Rolf Mützenich, Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels, Rainer Arnold, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der SPD. Haltung der Bundesregierung zum Erwerb und Einsatz von Kampfdrohnen", 17th leg. period, October 17, 2012, 1.

654 Transl. by author. LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12437: Antrag der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," 2013, 1; Dağdelen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/94," 2015, 8987. Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/146," 2015, 14359; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/4196: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Doris Wagner, Dr. Tobias Lindner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/3977 – Der etwaige deutsche Beitrag bei der Listung von Personen für gezielte Tötungen in Afghanistan", 18th leg. period, March 4, 2015, 1; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/7084: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Frithjof Schmidt, Omid Nouripour, Agnieszka Brugger, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN zu der Beratung des Antrags der Bundesregierung – Drucksache 18/6743, 18/6946 – Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte am NATO-geführten Einsatz Resolute Support für die Ausbildung, Beratung und Unterstützung der afghanischen nationalen Verteidigungs- und Sicherheitskräfte in Afghanistan," 2015, 2; Green PG, attachment 7, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/23," 2018, 2138; Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3868.

655 Transl. by author. P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/191," 2012, 23053; Harald Koch, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/195," 2012, 23446; C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4053; Alexander Ulrich, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20879.

656 Hänsel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/201," 2012, 24528; Hunko, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27108; Neu, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/97," 2015, 9222. LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/6730: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Christine Buchholz, Wolfgang Gehrcke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/6322 – Mögliche Teilnahme eines Verbindungsoffiziers der Bundeswehr bei Auswahlprozessen für sogenannte gezielte Tötungen," 2015, 1-2.

657 Transl. by author. C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/8", 18th leg. period, 8th sess., January 16, 2014, 420.

658 Transl. by author. Renner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/242," 2017, 24843.

659 Transl. by author. Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/113," 2011, 12912.

660 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/6730: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Christine Buchholz, Wolfgang Gehrcke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/6322 – Mögliche Teilnahme eines Verbindungsoffiziers der Bundeswehr bei Auswahlprozessen für sogenannte gezielte Tötungen," 2015, 1-2.

party mistaken for a car convoy of Al-Qaeda members,[661] a Doctors Without Borders hospital in Kunduz,[662] and killed the employee of a German aid agency in Pakistan.[663]

Most speech instances about the civilian damage referenced the number of victims, noting their number was too high.[664] In 2012 and 2013, MPs mainly referred to drone strikes in Pakistan, while after 2013 they also spoke about Afghanistan and, later, Yemen and Somalia. Addressing the dimension of the problem can help substantiating claims against drone strikes. Yet, official strike statistics were rare. As a consequence, speakers either omitted specific numbers of harmed civilians and instead spoke in vague quantities such as "numerous" ("zahlreiche")[665] and "many" ("viele"),[666] or gave rough estimations such as many hundreds or thousands.[667] Alternatively, they used information from NGOs and other non-state sources.[668]

In several speech instances the Greens and the SPD backed up their criticism of US drone strikes harming civilians with references to international (humanitarian) law.[669] Government officials,

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661 Höger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27119; Nouripour, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4061.

662 Green PG, attachment 3, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/146," 2015, 14488.

663 Nouripour, ibid., "Drucksache 18/4908: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 11. Mai 2015 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2015, 24.

664 See for instance Green PG, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/88", 17th leg. period, 88th sess., January 28, 2011, 9953; Hänsel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/201," 2012, 24528; SPD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11102: Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Rolf Mützenich, Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels, Rainer Arnold, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der SPD. Haltung der Bundesregierung zum Erwerb und Einsatz von Kampfdrohnen," 2012, 1; Hunko, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27108; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28127; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31351. Neu, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/97," 2015, 9222.

665 Transl. by author. Green PG, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/155," 2012, 18674; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13235: Antrag der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Volker Beck (Köln), Marieluise Beck (Bremen), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN: Keine bewaffneten Drohnen für die Bundeswehr – Internationale Rüstungskontrolle von bewaffneten unbemannten Systemen voranbringen," 2013, 1-2; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/4196: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Doris Wagner, Dr. Tobias Lindner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/3977 – Der etwaige deutsche Beitrag bei der Listung von Personen für gezielte Tötungen in Afghanistan," 2015, 1; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/7084: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Frithjof Schmidt, Omid Nouripour, Agnieszka Brugger, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN zu der Beratung des Antrags der Bundesregierung – Drucksache 18/6743, 18/6946 – Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte am NATO-geführten Einsatz Resolute Support für die Ausbildung, Beratung und Unterstützung der afghanischen nationalen Verteidigungs- und Sicherheitskräfte in Afghanistan," 2015, 2; see also LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/10863: Antrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Andrej Hunko, Wolfgang Gehrcke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. US- und NATO-Stützpunkt Ramstein unverzüglich schließen," 2017, 2.

666 Transl. by author. Dağdelen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/94," 2015, 8987; Trittin, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20881.

667 Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/155," 2012, 18669; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12437: Antrag der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," 2013, 1; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/8656: Antrag der Abgeordneten Wolfgang Gehrcke, Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Die NATO durch ein kollektives System für Frieden und Sicherheit in Europa unter Einschluss Russlands ersetzen," 2016, 3.

668 Among others the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (BIJ), the Afghan Analyst Network, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, and the human rights organization Reprieve.

669 Among others referred to by the Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/3916: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Jerzy Montag, Hans-Christian Ströbele, Omid Nouripour, weiterer

in turn, evoked the IHL principles of military necessity, the proportionality of attack principle, and the duty of states to avoid civilian harm.[670] Human rights were also part of this debate. When MPs talked about drone strikes on civilians, they touched on the right to life and security. When they criticized the lack of legal processes for terrorist suspects, they related to the right to recognition as a person before the law.[671] Usually, speakers did not provide much detail about how and why drone strikes would violate which human rights. Left and Green MPs did, however, express a firm position on this issue, especially from 2013 to 2015: Targeted killing via US drone strikes would abandon, undermine, and endanger human rights.[672] In 2018, Anita Schäfer, a conservative MP eventually dismissed such statements by the opposition. She pointed to a December 2015 statement by the European Council, which she interpreted to mean that the use of combat drones neither violated IHL nor human rights *per se*.[673]

When they governed together, the CDU/CSU and the FDP addressed the criticism regarding civilian casualties, although this issue was discussed far less than the benefits of drones for German soldiers, for example (see 5.3.3). From 2011 to 2013, they counterargued drone strikes could actually avoid collateral damage better in several ways. Previous collateral damage would have resulted from military equipment ill-fitted to the specific mission.[674] Two CDU/CSU MPs, for instance, claimed the Kunduz incident might not have happened with drones.[675] Speakers

Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/ DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/3623 – Tötung deutscher Staatsangehöriger durch US-Drohnenangriff – Eingreifen der deutschen Justiz", 17th leg. period, November 23, 2010, 1-2; SPD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13655: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Rolf Mützenich, Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels, Rainer Arnold, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der SPD – Drucksache 17/11102 – Haltung der Bundesregierung zum Erwerb und Einsatz von Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 10; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/4196: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Doris Wagner, Dr. Tobias Lindner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/3977 – Der etwaige deutsche Beitrag bei der Listung von Personen für gezielte Tötungen in Afghanistan," 2015, 1-2.

670 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13655: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Rolf Mützenich, Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels, Rainer Arnold, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der SPD – Drucksache 17/11102 – Haltung der Bundesregierung zum Erwerb und Einsatz von Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 10; Braun, ibid., "Drucksache 17/14577: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 12. August 2013 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2013, 5; Steinlein, ibid., "Drucksache 18/10313: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 7. November 2016 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2016, 18.

671 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes both rights (Art. 3 and Art. 6) (United Nations Organization, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights)

672 Movassat, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 17/65," 2010, 6930-1; van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/158," 2012, 19007; Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29763; Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31355; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/4196: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Doris Wagner, Dr. Tobias Lindner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/3977 – Der etwaige deutsche Beitrag bei der Listung von Personen für gezielte Tötungen in Afghanistan," 2015, 1-2.

673 A. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3870.

674 Hardt, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31358.

675 E.-R. Beck, ibid., "Drucksache 17/7400: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses als 1. Untersuchungsausschuss gemäß Artikel 45a Absatz 2 des Grundgesetzes Beschlussempfehlung," 2011, 436-7; Mißfelder, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/21," 2014, 1631.

also shifted the blame for civilian casualties to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.[676] Drone strikes were more precise and operators could better differentiate between combatants and non-combatants.[677] Being physically safe, operators would make targeting decisions more prudently.[678] In turn, opposition MPs repeatedly challenged the notion of a highly precise drone, until at least 2014. In the past, drone strikes would have mistakenly hit the wrong people.[679] In 2016 and 2017, drone advocates wrapped up their counterargument, claiming precision-strikes of drones could reduce the risk to civilians.[680] German ISR drones would "protect human lives" ("schützen Menschenleben").[681] Thus, drones would protect civilians better.[682]

4.3.2.2 Terrorists and Insurgents

Government officials and MPs from the CDU/CSU and the FDP were often vague and abstract when discussing drone strikes as part of a potential German military operation. In speech instances mentioning situational awareness benefits they vaguely claimed drones would detect specific "patterns of life" ("Verhaltensmustern"),[683] provide "scouting and reconnaissance results" ("Erkundungs- und die Aufklärungsergebnisse"),[684] and "active and passive visual reconnaissance" ("aktive und passive bildgebende Aufklärung").[685] Sometimes they simply stated drones would provide ISR without elaborating any further.[686]

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676 Kossendey, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/113," 2011, 12912; Hoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/149," 2011, 17777; Hoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29767-8.

677 C. Schmidt, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/148," 2011, 17681; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/9316: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Tom Koenigs, Volker Beck (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/8861 – Entwicklung und Planung unbemannter Systeme in der Bundeswehr," 2012, 9; Martin Lindner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27091; de Maizière, ibid., ibid., 27109-10; Gädechens, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4062-3.

678 M. Lindner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27091; Siebert, ibid., ibid., 27115; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125.

679 Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/155," 2012, 18572; Nouripour, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4061.

680 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20884.

681 Transl. by author. Wadephul, ibid., ibid., 20873.

682 Brandl, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/54," 2014, 5008; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20884; A. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/212," 2017, 21343; Jüttner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/243," 2017, 24920.

683 Transl. by author. FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/9316: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Tom Koenigs, Volker Beck (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/8861 – Entwicklung und Planung unbemannter Systeme in der Bundeswehr," 2012, 9.

684 Transl. by author. Erdel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31353.

685 Transl. by author. FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/3787: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Heike Hänsel, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/3329 – Betrieb von Drohnen der Luftwaffe auf dem israelischen Flughafen Tel Nof", 19th leg. period, August 13, 2018, 14.

686 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12136: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Herbert Behrens, Annette Groth, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/11978 – Integration von schweren Drohnen in den allgemeinen zivilen Luftraum," 2013, 13; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/1382: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Jan van Aken, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE

Furthermore, they often spoke in military jargon about the lethal effects of drone strikes which obscured the use of violence to audiences unfamiliar with military terminology. For example, in 2012 and 2013, they described the launch of explosives, such as bombs and missiles, as "wirken"[687] and weapons as "Wirksysteme";[688] expressions that literally translate to "having an effect". In 2015, they used the term "effector" ("Effektor") instead of saying missile.[689] Other abstract descriptions for firing weapons from drones were "to actively intervene in the situation" ("[a]ktiv ins Geschehen eingreifen")[690] and the "direct projection of military means in an operational area" ("direkte Projektion militärischer Mittel in einem Einsatzraum").[691]

When pro-drone politicians talked about the (potential) targets of drone strikes, one could detect a similar pattern. They referred to "insurgents" ("Aufständische")[692] and "terrorist groups" ("terroristische Gruppen").[693] Sometimes, they mentioned the names of groups, for instance the Taliban,[694] the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL),[695] and Al-Shabaab.[696] But just as often, they talked about (potential) targets of drone strikes in an abstract way, using terms such as "enemy" ("Feind"),[697] "adversarial forces" ("gegnerische Kräfte"),[698] and "attacker" ("Angreifer").[699] The conservative-liberal government also used these kinds of expressions, when

LINKE. – Drucksache 18/1202 – Drohnen im Einsatzspektrum der Bundeswehr", 18th leg. period, May 9, 2014, 5.

687 Klaus-Peter Willsch, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/191," 2012, 23057; similarly see also C. Schmidt, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/148," 2011, 17681; de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27111; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125.

688 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12136: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Herbert Behrens, Annette Groth, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/11978 – Integration von schweren Drohnen in den allgemeinen zivilen Luftraum," 2013, 14; see also FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/13593: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Andrej Hunko, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/13468 – Entwicklung einer European MALE Kampfdrohne (EURODROHNE)", 18th leg. period, September 19, 2017, 2.

689 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/5022: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/4791 – Kampfdrohnen der Bundeswehr", 18th leg. period, May 27, 2015, 11.

690 de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30647.

691 Manderla, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4065-6.

692 Transl. by author. CDU/CSU PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11083: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss)," 2012, 4.

693 Transl. by author. Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125.

694 Hoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/149," 2011, 17777.

695 Jüttner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/243," 2017, 24920.

696 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/94," 2015, 8991.

697 Transl. by author. Willsch, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/191," 2012, 23057; Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4058.

698 Transl. by author. Manderla, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4066.

699 Transl. by author. Gädechens, ibid., ibid., 4062; Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3863.

talking about "opponents" ("Gegner")[700] and "insurgents" ("Aufständische").[701] Frequently, their indication of actors remained on an even more abstract level, for example when using undefined references, such as "those who conduct terrorist activities" ("die terroristischen Aktivitäten derer, die …"),[702] threats posed by "others",[703] or drones aiming at a "target" ("Ziel").[704] Minister von der Leyen omitted the opponent entirely by saying: "[i]f this convoy would have been attacked" ("[w]äre diese Kolonne angegriffen worden").[705] This finding is curious because, when discussing military operations in general, they did mention the names of opponents in respective conflicts, but not in statements dealing directly with combat drones. In 2013, Elke Hoff, an MP from the FDP, commented on this deficit. The international community and Germany should "clearly define who the enemy is; our soldiers also have to know this" because our soldiers needed to know what is expected of them in asymmetric conflicts.[706]

At other times (2013–2018), Conservatives spoke more openly about target engagement. Drones would have to "fight the opponent" ("den Gegner zu bekämpfen")[707] and to "shoot and kill the attacker" if necessary ("schießen und den Angreifer auch töten zu können").[708] They also spoke of "drone attacks" ("US-Drohnenangriffe")[709] by US forces and leaders of ISIL "being eliminated" ("ausgeschaltet werden")[710] through drones. This straightforward language did not gloss over what drone strikes were meant for. Then again, it was mainly MPs (not government officials) who spoke so bluntly, and they did so infrequently.

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700 Transl. by author. de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27109-10; see also FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12136: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Herbert Behrens, Annette Groth, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/11978 – Integration von schweren Drohnen in den allgemeinen zivilen Luftraum," 2013, 14.

701 Transl. by author. FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11956: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Volker Beck (Köln), Marieluise Beck (Bremen), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/11769 – Abrüstungs- und Rüstungskontrollpolitik," 2012, 5.

702 Transl. by author. Kossendey, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/113," 2011, 12912.

703 De Maizière talked about the need to avoid "exposing own soldiers to being killed by others." (Transl. by author. In original: "man sie sozusagen der Tötung durch andere aussetzt." de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27110.)

704 Transl. by author. FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12136: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Herbert Behrens, Annette Groth, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/11978 – Integration von schweren Drohnen in den allgemeinen zivilen Luftraum," 2013, 14.

705 Transl. by author. Von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4054.

706 Transl. by author. In original: "dass klar definiert wird, wer Gegner ist; auch unsere Soldatinnen und Soldaten müssen das wissen." (Hoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29767-8.)

707 Transl. by author. de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27109-10; see also de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30647; Gädechens, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4063.

708 Transl. by author. Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3863.

709 Transl. by author. Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/94," 2015, 8991.

710 Transl. by author. Jüttner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/243," 2017, 24920.

4.3.3 Judging the Outcomes

A crucial question, especially for a procurement decision, is what outcomes the employment of armed drones can accomplish. It is a highly contentious issue, also because advocates and opponents argue along two distinct dimensions – military operations or peace. For each camp these are the fundamental points for judging whether AMALE-drones create desirable results or not. Both groups presented their own measures for success. They also differed in who they saw as the most relevant agents. For Conservatives, both government representatives and MPs, the main agents are German soldiers. Accordingly, they judge effectiveness by how armed drones could reduce risks for the forces. For the Greens, the Left, and the SPD, on the other hand, the focus is on the local people in the country of conflict. The former group promoted drones as solution that could improve a military process by making it more secure. The latter group presented drone strikes as a problem; as being ineffective or even counter-productive judged by the political-strategic dimension of the entire counterinsurgency mission.[711] Again, both sides centered either the process or the context in their contributions.

4.3.3.1 Counter-Effective for Peace

The drone-skeptical parties did not halt at arguing that drone strikes were not effective (because they killed the wrong people, namely civilians), but went even further, claiming they could be counter-effective. From a theoretical perspective, the Greens, the Left and the SPD referred to the "solvability" aspect of successful cognitive frames (see 2.2.3). They countered the competing conservative-liberal presentation of drones as a solution by vigorously stressing the unreasonably high costs of drone strikes. However, whereas the "protecting soldiers"-framing is very straightforward and comprehensive, the causal chain entailed in the "counter-effective"-framing is relatively long and thus complex. It includes five points, summarized below.

First, some MPs argued drone strikes would worsen the relations with the country of operation, especially when it was not an officially declared conflict zone. This proposition arose between 2009–2012 against the background of US drone strikes in northern Pakistan, though it also applied to Somalia.[712] In 2009, a Green MP warned that US drone strikes would undermine the authority of the Pakistani government.[713] By expanding the war to Pakistan, the US would have

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711 Since only counterterrorism and counterinsurgency scenarios were discussed back then, while interstate wars were disregarded, it remains unclear if the opponents viewed drone strikes as always detrimental to peace or only in these asymmetric scenarios.

712 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/7705: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Sevim Dağdelen, Annette Groth, Heike Hänsel, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/7561 – Humanitäre Katastrophe und politisch-militärische Interessen in Somalia," 2011, 2; Neu, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/97," 2015, 9222.

713 Winfried Nachtwei, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 16/204", 16th leg. period, 204th sess., February 11, 2009, 23333.

destabilized the country.[714] In 2012, a Left MP remarked the US military assistance for Pakistan would lead to even more violence while human rights, democracy, and development got neglected.[715] For the Left Party, drones would have become "a symbol for the disregard of state sovereignty in the Global South."[716] A Social Democrat concluded the security situation in Pakistan was disastrous with several ten thousand deaths caused by terrorist attacks as well as operations by the Pakistani military – and US drone attacks.[717]

A second point throughout the years was that the Pakistani and Afghani civilian population would resent drone strikes in their countries. Due to the persistent feeling of a constant surveillance and potential attack through military drones, people would not feel safe, as opposition MPs observed.[718] The Left went so far as to label the targeted killings and night raids carried out by NATO and US troops as "terror" against the people of Afghanistan, Somalia, Yemen, and Pakistan.[719] The Green party remarked, since drone strikes also caused victims among the civilian population, people would decrease their support for the military operation as a whole

714 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/4564: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, Christine Buchholz, et. al. und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der Beratung des Antrags der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 17/4402, 17/4561 – Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an dem Einsatz der Internationalen Sicherheitsunterstützungstruppe in Afghanistan (International Security Assistance Force, ISAF) unter Führung der NATO auf Grundlage der Resolutionen 1386 (2001) und folgender Resolutionen, zuletzt Resolution 1943 (2010) des Sicherheitsrates der Vereinten Nationen", 17th leg. period, January 26, 2011, 3; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/8465: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der Beratung des Antrags der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 17/8166, 17/8393 – Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an dem Einsatz der Internationalen Sicherheitsunterstützungstruppe in Afghanistan (International Security Assistance Force, ISAF) unter Führung der NATO auf Grundlage der Resolutionen 1386 (2001) und folgender Resolutionen, zuletzt Resolution 2011 (2011) vom 12. Oktober 2011 des Sicherheitsrates der Vereinten Nationen ", 17th leg. period, January 24, 2012, 2; Hänsel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/201," 2012, 24528.

715 van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/158," 2012, 19007.

716 Transl. by author. In original: "ein Symbol für die Missachtung staatlicher Souveränität im globalen Süden" (LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12437: Antrag der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," 2013, 1.)

717 In original: "Seit Beginn des sogenannten Kriegs gegen den Terror sind mehrere Zehntausend Menschen in Pakistan durch Terrorattentate, Einsätze des pakistanischen Militärs und Drohnenangriffe der USA umgekommen." (Pflug, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/201," 2012, 24526.)

718 Hunko, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27108; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31351; Brunner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20883.

719 C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/149," 2011, 17780; van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/214," 2012, 26319; Neu, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/97," 2015, 9222.

and lose trust.[720] Eventually, locals would disapprove of the presence of foreign troops. Some would already protest against the intervention.[721]

Third, from 2011 on, the Left Party and the Greens repeatedly stressed how drone strikes would be politically counter-effective because they led people to support terrorist groups. The Left argued that the desire for revenge over family members killed in drone strikes, combined with pervasive poverty and a lack of future prospects, drove people to join the insurgents or to send their sons to fight alongside them.[722] Partly due to the outspokenness of MP Ströbele, the Greens emphasized this issue even stronger than the Left. Capture or kill operations with drones and special forces would foster hate and desires for revenge among the Afghani population, as they claimed in 2011.[723] In later years, other parties used this argument once more. As the Left remarked, "[w]ho kills with drones in Afghanistan drives people in the arms of the 'Islamic State'",[724] and "young people radicalize and join Islamist groups, when they have experienced injustice and arbitrariness."[725] An SPD MP observed, "for each killed – allegedly or actually –

720 Green PG, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/155," 2012, 18674; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/609: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Frithjof Schmidt, Omid Nouripour, Agnieszka Brugger, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN. zu der Beratung des Antrags der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 18/436, 18/602 – Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an dem Einsatz der Internationalen Sicherheitsunterstützungstruppe in Afghanistan (International Security Assistance Force, ISAF) unter Führung der NATO auf Grundlage der Resolution 1386 (2001) und folgender Resolutionen, zuletzt Resolution 2120 (2013) vom 10. Oktober 2013 des Sicherheitsrates der Vereinten Nationen", 18th leg. period, February 19, 2014, 3; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/7084: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Frithjof Schmidt, Omid Nouripour, Agnieszka Brugger, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN zu der Beratung des Antrags der Bundesregierung – Drucksache 18/6743, 18/6946 – Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte am NATO-geführten Einsatz Resolute Support für die Ausbildung, Beratung und Unterstützung der afghanischen nationalen Verteidigungs- und Sicherheitskräfte in Afghanistan," 2015, 2; Green PG, attachment 7, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/23," 2018, 2138.

721 Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 16/204," 2009, 22053; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/113," 2011, 12912; Hänsel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/201," 2012, 24528; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/1847: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Heike Hänsel, Sevim Dağdelen, Dr. Alexander S. Neu, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der Beratung des Antrags der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/1596, 19/1833 – Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an der durch die Europäische Union geführten EU NAVFOR Somalia Operation Atalanta zur Bekämpfung der Piraterie vor der Küste Somalias", 19th leg. period, April 24, 2018, 2.

722 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/4564: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, Christine Buchholz, et. al. und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der Beratung des Antrags der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 17/4402, 17/4561 – Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an dem Einsatz der Internationalen Sicherheitsunterstützungstruppe in Afghanistan (International Security Assistance Force, ISAF) unter Führung der NATO auf Grundlage der Resolutionen 1386 (2001) und folgender Resolutionen, zuletzt Resolution 1943 (2010) des Sicherheitsrates der Vereinten Nationen," 2011, 3.

723 Green PG, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/88," 2011, 9953; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/116," 2011, 13320; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/148," 2011, 17681.

724 Transl. by author. In original: "Wer mit Drohnen in Afghanistan tötet, treibt die Menschen in die Scheuer des „Islamischen Staates"" (Gehrcke, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20906; see also P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31351.)

725 Transl. by author. In original: "sich junge Menschen radikalisieren und islamistischen Gruppen anschließen, wenn sie Ungerechtigkeit und Willkür erfahren haben" (LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/1847: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Heike Hänsel, Sevim Dağdelen, Dr. Alexander S. Neu, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der Beratung des Antrags der Bundesregierung –

terrorist, ten people follow who get radicalized through the drone attack."[726] Beginning in 2013, Green speech instances increasingly focused on the insurgents rather than civilians, warning that targeted killing through drone strikes would help the Taliban and other insurgents to recruit people.[727] Linguistically, the Greens shifted in 2015 and 2016 to a more abstract language. Instead of people's hate and revenge, they talked about "radicalization potential"[728] ("Radikalisierungspotenzial") and similar terms.

Another claim was that drone strikes would be counter-effective because they obstructed peace negotiations, as opposition speakers argued from 2011 on. On several occasions (especially 2011 to 2014) the Greens commented on how ISAF forces would shoot the people they had to negotiate a peace treaty with.[729] In order to end this war with a truce, the focus should be on establishing conversations and negotiations with the insurgents instead of relying on capture or kill operations.[730] Even though the Left did not dwell on this argument as much as the Greens

Drucksachen 19/1596, 19/1833 – Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an der durch die Europäische Union geführten EU NAVFOR Somalia Operation Atalanta zur Bekämpfung der Piraterie vor der Küste Somalias," 2018, 2.)

726 Transl. by author. In original: "Auf jeden getöteten – angeblichen oder tatsächlichen – Terroristen folgen zehn Menschen, die erst durch den Drohnenangriff radikalisiert werden." (Juratovic, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/212," 2017, 21343; see also Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27121.)

727 Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27113; Green PG, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/17," 2014, 1357; Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/26", 18th leg. period, 26th sess., April 3, 2014, 2061; Nouripour, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/33," 2014, 2757; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/4196: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Doris Wagner, Dr. Tobias Lindner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/3977 – Der etwaige deutsche Beitrag bei der Listung von Personen für gezielte Tötungen in Afghanistan," 2015, 1-2; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/7901: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Omid Nouripour, Agnieszka Brugger, Dr. Frithjof Schmidt, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN zu der Beratung des Antrags der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 18/7556, 18/7722 – Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an der EU-geführten Ausbildungs- und Beratungsmission EUTM Somalia auf Grundlage des Ersuchens der somalischen Regierung mit Schreiben vom 27. November 2012 und 11. Januar 2013 sowie der Beschlüsse des Rates der Europäischen Union vom 15. Februar 2010, 22. Januar 2013 und 16. März 2015 in Verbindung mit den Resolutionen 1872 (2009) und 2158 (2014) des Sicherheitsrates der Vereinten Nationen", 18th leg. period, March 16, 2016, 3; Trittin, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20881.

728 Transl. by author. Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/4196: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Doris Wagner, Dr. Tobias Lindner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/3977 – Der etwaige deutsche Beitrag bei der Listung von Personen für gezielte Tötungen in Afghanistan," 2015, 1-2.

729 See for example Green PG, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/88," 2011, 9953; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/149," 2011, 17773-4; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/155," 2012, 18572.

730 Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/116," 2011, 13320; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/148," 2011, 17681; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27289; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/609: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Frithjof Schmidt, Omid Nouripour, Agnieszka Brugger, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN. zu der Beratung des Antrags der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 18/436, 18/602 – Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an dem Einsatz der Internationalen Sicherheitsunterstützungstruppe in Afghanistan (International Security Assistance Force, ISAF) unter Führung der NATO auf Grundlage der Resolution 1386 (2001) und folgender Resolutionen, zuletzt Resolution 2120 (2013) vom 10. Oktober 2013 des Sicherheitsrates der Vereinten Nationen," 2014, 2-3; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20910.

did it was one of their MPs who summed up the situation most succinctly: "When you hunt the leaders with drones and special forces at night they will not sit at a negotiation table by day."[731] A final element of framing drones as counter-productive was the proposition that violence would trigger more violence. The Greens and the Left frequently used this claim from 2011 to 2015, with a peak in 2013. Not only would drone strikes lead parts of the civilian population to radicalize, but they would also make terrorists, such as the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, more radical.[732] In 2012, the Greens spelled out what this meant on the ground: More attacks on the Bundeswehr, their allies, and even in the countries sending the drones.[733] That is why Green and Left MPs stated that drone attacks and targeted killing carried out by US and ISAF forces would escalate armed conflicts and wars, for example in Afghanistan, instead of deescalating them.[734] In 2012 and 2013, the conservative-liberal government and some Conservative claimed the opposite: Armed drones would deter the opponent from using violence.[735] Deterrence ("Abschreckung") is a concept mainly used for nuclear scenarios, assuming the presence of a weapon and the prospect of its potential use would prevent hostile actors from attacks, without having to be coerced by exercising violence. Using this concept allowed speakers to justify the position of the government, to defend the US as their main ally in Afghanistan, and to avoid talking about direct lethal action against the opponent. As the government explained, people on the ground would notice drones and a "certain demoralization" ("gewisse Demoralisierung") of the

731 Transl. by author. In original: "Wenn Sie die Anführer nachts mit Drohnen und Spezialkommandos jagen, werden sie sich tagsüber nicht an den Verhandlungstisch setzen." (P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/85," 2011, 9611.)

732 Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/26," 2014, 2061; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/4196: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Doris Wagner, Dr. Tobias Lindner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/3977 – Der etwaige deutsche Beitrag bei der Listung von Personen für gezielte Tötungen in Afghanistan," 2015, 1. LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/7991: Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Inge Höger, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Erfahrungen aus 14 Jahren „Krieg gegen den Terror" – Eine Bilanz in Irak, Afghanistan, Pakistan," 2016, 1.

733 Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/155," 2012, 18669; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/9316: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Tom Koenigs, Volker Beck (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/8861 – Entwicklung und Planung unbemannter Systeme in der Bundeswehr," 2012, 5.

734 Kathrin Vogler, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/148," 2011, 17682; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/149," 2011, 17773; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28128; Green PG, attachment 5, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/17," 2014, 1357.

735 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/9316: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Tom Koenigs, Volker Beck (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/8861 – Entwicklung und Planung unbemannter Systeme in der Bundeswehr," 2012, 5; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11956: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Volker Beck (Köln), Marieluise Beck (Bremen), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/11769 – Abrüstungs- und Rüstungskontrollpolitik," 2012, 6; Andreas Schockenhoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27073; Karin Strenz, ibid., ibid., 27123.

opponent would be a possible consequence.[736] This "constant and unpredictable threat" ("ständigen und für sie nicht prognostizierbaren Bedrohung") would restrict the actions of the opponent.[737] In this way, drones could secure peace through "believable deterrence" ("glaubhafte Abschreckung").[738] Furthermore, an armed drone could fire off a warning shot to deter attackers.[739] For the Left and the Greens, using armed drones does not have any deterring effects. Instead, the backlash mechanisms illustrated above would cause the opposite.[740] As the Left put it, drone strikes and all the resulting deaths keep the "spiral of violence" ("Gewaltspirale") turning.[741]

4.3.3.2 Protecting Soldiers and Reducing Risks

The main argument in favor of drones during Bundestag debates was that drones would protect and save (German) soldiers. It was linked to the question of whether the Bundeswehr had a "capability gap" ("Fähigkeitslücke").[742] From a theoretical perspective, this framing is promising because it fulfills the criterion of "comprehension". It presented a clear solution (armed drones) for a concise problem (our soldiers are not safe enough).[743] Over the years, many conservative and some liberal and social democrat politicians stressed this point. Looking at events outside of the discourse, one would have expected the "protecting soldiers"-framing to rise to prominence in the debate in 2010 already, when German soldiers died during an ambush of the Taliban in what became known as the Good Friday Battle ("Karfreitagsgefecht"). This was the exact type of scenario that advocates would later use to stress the pressing defensive need for AMALE-drones (see Chapter 7). But at the time, the Bundestag discourse, at least the one on

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736 Transl. by author. FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/9316: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Tom Koenigs, Volker Beck (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/8861 – Entwicklung und Planung unbemannter Systeme in der Bundeswehr," 2012, 5.

737 Transl. by author. (FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12136: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Herbert Behrens, Annette Groth, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/11978 – Integration von schweren Drohnen in den allgemeinen zivilen Luftraum," 2013, 14.)

738 Transl. by author. FGG, ibid., ibid.

739 de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30647.

740 Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27113.

741 Transl. by author. LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/1847: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Heike Hänsel, Sevim Dağdelen, Dr. Alexander S. Neu, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der Beratung des Antrags der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/1596, 19/1833 – Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an der durch die Europäische Union geführten EU NAVFOR Somalia Operation Atalanta zur Bekämpfung der Piraterie vor der Küste Somalias," 2018, 2; see also van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/158," 2012, 19007; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31351.

742 Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27116; Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29765; Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/240," 2013, 30139. See also SPD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13192: Antrag der Fraktion der SPD Für eine umfassende Debatte zum Thema Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 1.

743 See Rosert, *Nicht-Entstehung internationaler Normen*, 137.

drones, did not really pick it up. This framing only slowly emerged in 2012, peaking in 2013 and 2014. Then, it appeared again in 2018, albeit less strongly.[744]

By representing the lack of armed drones as a problem affecting their fellow Germans, politicians may have prompted a feeling of proximity among the audience.[745] At the same time, speakers linked the acquisition of armed drones to the "good" practice of protecting German soldiers, creating positive cognitive resonance. The language used in 2013–2014 featured a high density of the words such as "protect" ("schützen") and "protection" ("Schutz"), as well as "protection gap" ("Schutzlücke"), especially among Conservatives.[746] In 2013 and 2014, this wording was rarely *not* used by Conservatives when the purpose of keeping soldiers safe was discussed. In a 2013 parliamentary speech, Minister de Maizière emphasized four times that armed drones could protect and save the lives of German soldiers.[747] His rhetorical use of repetition reinforced the positive meaning.[748] The emergence of the save-soldiers framing furthermore shows a "productive moment" of the discourse in the Foucauldian sense (see 2.3.1).

His successor, Minister von der Leyen, pointed out that in some combat scenarios, not having armed drones would come at the expense of soldiers' lives.[749] The "saving lives"- or "not risking the lives of soldiers"-claims were very common from 2013 until 2016 both among conservative MPs and government speakers representing the governments of the CDU/CSU and FDP as well as the CDU/CSU and SPD.[750] Unlike saying drones "support" soldiers, which suggests they are only an additional but no crucial capability, this argument holds a rhetorical gun to the critics heads. It suggests that, if politicians were not in favor of armed drones, they would send soldiers into conflict without proper equipment or protection (compare 6.1.2). Thus, they evoked the sensation of injustice. Still, the political context reveals armed drones might not have sufficed as equipment to guarantee the security of German soldiers. In 2015, Minister von der Leyen admitted to the "serious faults" of the inaccurately firing German-produced G36

744 Since the number of quotes on this matter is in the double digits the listed citations only present a sample.

745 See Rosert, *Nicht-Entstehung internationaler Normen*, 137-38; Kingdon, *Agendas*, 96.

746 Transl. by author. See FDP PG, German Bundestag, "Drucksache 17/11083: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss)," 2012, 4; Hoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27112; Siebert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29772; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30652; Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4057; Gädechens, ibid., ibid., 4062; Wadephul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20873; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3870; Karsten Klein, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/45," 2018, 4742.

747 de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30647.

748 Compare Rosert, *Nicht-Entstehung internationaler Normen*, 136; Entman, "Framing," 52; Holzscheiter, *Children's Rights*, 60-69; Creed, Langstraat, and Scully, "Picture of the Frame," 39-40.

749 von der Leyen, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4054.

750 de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27110; de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30647; de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31349; Silberhorn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/252," 2013, 32606; Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4058; Wadephul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20874.

assault rifles.[751] Given that more soldiers would benefit from functioning guns than from armed drones, some drone advocates uptalked their significance.

Sending out only drones instead of soldiers was no main demand of the pro-drone camp. Still, the Conservatives did include this proposition in a few statements, especially in 2013 and to a lesser extent in 2012. In this way, one could refrain from endangering own personnel, such as pilots who otherwise would stand at risk to get shot down.[752] Bringing a machine into a dangerous environment instead of a person would be "more efficient" ("effizienter")[753] as well as "more rational and responsible" ("vernünftiger und verantwortungsvoller")[754] given the outcome was the same.[755] While the Conservatives seem to have dropped this talking point after 2013, the FDP picked it back up in 2018.[756] All these statements were sober in style. Only once an MP emotionally reminded the audience German soldiers were fathers and mothers, ready to give "life and limb" ("Leib und Leben") for their countries.[757]

Countering these claims was tricky for the opposition if they did not want to seem like they did not care about German soldiers. Brugger rejected the "saving lives"-argument as straight out of the "rhetorical gimmickry"; any new weapon system would initially improve the protection.[758] Opposition MPs disagreed with framing armed drones as a mere support instrument and life-saver for German troops. Among others MP Rainer Arnold recognized: "It is not true that drones are being used for the protection of soldiers in Afghanistan. It is a fact that armed drones, […] are presently being used for targeted killing".[759] The Left simply argued if one wanted to keep German soldiers safe, they should not be sent into out-of-area operations at all.[760]

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751 Cited in Gabriel Borrud, "The Assault Rifle Held in All the Wrong Places," *Deutsche Welle*, April 23, 2015.

752 FGG, German Bundestag, "Drucksache 17/11956: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Volker Beck (Köln), Marieluise Beck (Bremen), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/11769 – Abrüstungs- und Rüstungskontrollpolitik," 2012, 6; Schockenhoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27073; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29765.

753 Transl. by author. Willsch, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/191," 2012, 23057.

754 Transl. by author. Siebert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27115.

755 de Maizière, ibid., ibid., 27110.

756 FDP PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/2582: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Heike Hänsel, Andrej Hunko, Sevim Dağdelen, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/1831 – Keine Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen – Rüstungsbegrenzung stärken", 19th leg. period, June 6, 2018, 4; Faber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3868.

757 Transl. by author. Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3863.

758 Transl. by author. In original: "ein unredlicher Griff in die rhetorische Trickkiste" (Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4055.)

759 Transl. by author. In original: "Es ist nicht wahr, dass Drohnen in Afghanistan zum Schutz der Soldaten eingesetzt werden. Es ist einfach Fakt, dass bewaffnete Drohnen derzeit, ob von Israel oder von den Vereinigten Staaten, zum gezielten Töten eingesetzt werden." (Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27116; see also Höger, ibid., ibid., 27119; Gysi, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30644; Gehrcke, ibid., ibid., 30679. Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3868.)

760 C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/100," 2015, 9555.

A major flaw of this pro-drone argument was, however, the lack of evidence to show a pressing operational necessity of armed drones at the time. Consequently, the argument remained hypothetical. In the US by comparison, the "protect and save our soldiers"-argument was incredibly strong, because in 2009 and 2010 alone about 800 US soldiers had died in Afghanistan.[761] Thus, American policymakers presented armed drones as the solution to US soldiers being killed. Not only was the number of fallen German soldiers significantly lower, but Berlin was still coming to terms with the realities in Afghanistan. In the press, Defense Minister Karl-Theodor von Guttenberg only called the conflict a "war" for the first time in 2010 (see 6.1.1).[762] He took this step after three German soldiers had died in an ambush attack during a patrol – the exact scenario de Maizière later wanted armed drones for in 2013. Yet, Conservatives refrained from using this tragic incident as a point in case. After all, Germany had just begun using unarmed MALE drones in Afghanistan in March 2010.[763] Still, as a consequence the discursive space remained wide open to doubts of operational necessity. Even in 2018, Katja Keul, a Green Party MP and Disarmament Policy Spokesperson (2017–2021), stated that she could not think of any incidences in which an armed drone could have prevented a soldier from being harmed.[764] This only changed from 2019 on, as the epilogue will show (see 7.1.2).

4.3.4 Anticipating Behavior of German Soldiers

Bundestag speakers controversially discussed whether armed drones would alter the behavior of German soldiers, specifically drone operators and commanders, in battle scenarios. The opposition anticipated that the remote drone operation would make it easier to kill via drone strike than being physically in the battlefield. This could, in turn, lead to opting to kill more often instead of attempting to capture the opponent. Conservative politicians doubted this would be the case. They called on the plenary to have trust in the Bundeswehr, trust into the strong moral principles of soldiers, and the strict rules of engagement for military operations. According to them, the German forces would use armed drones as responsibly as any other weapon.

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761 Defense Casualty Analysis System, "U.S. Military Casualties - Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) Casualty Summary by Month and Service" https://dcas.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/app/conflictCasualties/oef/byMonth (accessed March 7th, 2023).

762 Transl. by author. Franz Solms-Laubach, "Afghanistan-Einsatz: Warum spricht Guttenberg jetzt von Krieg?," *BILD*, April 5, 2010, https://www.bild.de/politik/2010/spricht-verteidigungsminister-guttenberg-jetzt-von-krieg-12080796.bild.html. Compare Martin Zapfe and Thomas Rid, "Mission Command without a Mission: German Military Adaption in Afghanistan," in *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan*, ed. Theo Farrell, Frans P. B. Osinga, and James Avery Russell (Standford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 197.

763 Engelking, "Zehn Jahre im Einsatz: Drohne Heron 1 erreicht 50.000 Flugstunden in Afghanistan".

764 Transl. by author. Keul, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3868.

4.3.4.1 Armed Drones Make Killing Easier

Until 2014, the Left, the SPD, and the Greens expressed concerns that armed drone systems would be prone to making it easier for soldiers to kill. In 2012 and 2013, some speakers claimed drones would "lower of the barrier" ("Herabsinken der Schwelle") for the use of force. In the debate this expression previously referred to governments deciding to use military force, but they took it from the state level to the level of the individual operator. One reason was that the remote operation of armed drones could create a distance between soldier and target, making it easier to order a strike and, potentially, to kill someone. From 2012 to 2014, Left MPs depicted the remoteness and distance of targeted killing via drone strikes as wrong and unethical. They highlighted that people carrying out the strike remotely would not be physically exposed to the dangers of the battlefield. Instead, they would handle combat by means of a "joystick" ("Joystick"),[765] from the "home office",[766] and kill people by "remote control" ("Fernbedienung").[767] The operator would sit somewhere in Berlin or Bonn, "push a button" ("drückt auf einen Knopf") and end a life.[768] Left MP Koch argued drone operators were emotionally detached and thus quicker to kill. The remoteness would cause "dulling" ("Abstumpfung") of the soldiers involved.[769] Conservative MP Karin Strenz responded sharply, the Greens, and the Left in general, would make it seem as if drone operators were "thirteen-year-old kids in camouflage" playing a computer game.[770]

The Conservatives, especially MP Hahn, reacted strongly to the critique by the opposition that drones would make killing easier. From his point of view, the opposition was "cynic" ("zynisch") because they would indirectly disagree with having German soldiers be exposed to less dangers than their opponents.[771] Using the stylistic devices of rhetorical questions and hyperbole, he asked the plenary: "Do we want to accuse our soldiers of killing carelessly when they are not directly in the battle action? Should we renounce the armoring of vehicles in the future because they keep the risk for our soldiers too low?"[772] He then implicitly redirected the attention away from the soldiers by reminding the audience that "our opponents" ("unsere

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765 Transl. by author. P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28127; Neu, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/23," 2014, 1856.

766 Höger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27119.

767 Transl. by author. C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4053.

768 Transl. by author. Gysi, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27083; compare Neu, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/153," 2016, 15058.

769 Transl. by author. Koch, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/195," 2012, 23446.

770 Transl. by author. Strenz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27122.

771 Transl. by author. Hahn, ibid., ibid., 27120; see also Strenz, ibid., ibid., 27123.

772 Transl. by author. In original: "Wollen wir unseren Soldaten vorwerfen, sie würden leichtfertig töten, wenn sie sich nicht direkt im Kampfgeschehen befinden? Sollen wir in Zukunft auf die Panzerung von Fahrzeugen verzichten, weil sie das Risiko für unsere Soldaten zu klein hält?" (Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125.)

Gegner") – the "terrorists" ("Terroristen") – are the ones "whose barrier of using force is immensely lower anyways" ("deren Hemmschwelle ohnehin ungemein niedriger ist").[773]

In 2015 and 2016, this issue gradually ebbed off. At first, the Left, the Greens, and the SPD were less concerned about the fact *that* soldiers would push a button, but from *which country* they did. The focus thus shifted from ethics to geography. This was around the time, when the public found out that US forces conducted drone strikes from military bases in Germany.[774] In 2017, only one MP remarked on the remote operation. In 2018, no one did anymore.

4.3.4.2 Soldiers Act Responsibly, No Matter the Weapon

In response to the opposition suggesting the remote operation of drones would make it easier for soldiers to kill, in 2013 and 2014 the Conservatives created a counter-frame. They made a firm argument in favor of German soldiers acting responsibly no matter which weapon system they used. Speakers focused on: The emotional distance, the moralities, the team-factor including the chain-of-command, and the existing rules of engagement. De Maizière spoke about the alleged emotional distance from drone operators. Even though this was an important issue, the decision over life or death would always remain a tough one, no matter which weapon is being used. For the Minister, preventing the emergence of emotional distance would rather be an aspect of training soldiers than a drone-specific issue. He reminded the audience that the drone pilots were neither the first nor the only weapon operators who made decisions about life or death while sitting in front of a monitor. Hence, it was no new quality of combat.[775] His party colleague MP Hahn claimed, it would be "not only wrong but also highly cynical and irresponsible" to assume drones facilitated too big of an emotional distance to the combat, especially because almost any other modern "indirect weapon" would work in this way.[776]

De Maizière emphasized that warfare is always "bitter and deadly-serious" ("bitter und blutternst"); as Defense Minister, he has seen soldiers "whose legs were torn" ("deren Beine zerfetzt waren").[777] German soldiers were "fully aware of the ethical, legal, and moral dimension of their actions," since they are in the country of operation taking part in the funerals of their comrades, "forming a guard of honor for the coffins on their way to the Transall."[778] Here, the

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773 Transl. by author. Hahn, ibid., ibid.; see also Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27120.

774 Vogler, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/106", 18th leg. period, 106th sess., May 21, 2015, 10151; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20874-5; Brunner, ibid., ibid., 20883.

775 de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27110.

776 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29765.

777 de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/149," 2011, 17774.

778 Transl. by author. In original: "sie nehmen in Masar-i-Scharif an Trauerveranstaltungen für gefallene Kameraden teil, sie stehen Spalier für die Särge auf dem Weg zur Transall. Diese Soldaten sind sich der ethischen, rechtlichen und moralischen Dimension ihres Handelns vollkommen bewusst." (de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31350.)

Minister created an emotional frame. The story of the soldiers at the funeral entailed "drama", evoking sympathy for the soldiers, highlighting their sacrifices, and connecting on shared humanity. De Maizière also applied "concreteness" by providing details that allowed the audience to visualize the scene. Other Conservatives agreed with his assessment, confirming German soldiers were mature personalities ("charakterlich […] gefestigt"),[779] had a "moral code" ("Moralkodex"),[780] and would do "a very responsible job" ("einen sehr verantwortungsbewussten Job").[781]

Furthermore, CDU/CSU speakers stated it would always be "a team of experienced pilots and analysts"[782] deciding about weapon launches anyways. As Defense Minister von der Leyen put it: A soldier operating a drone would never decide over airstrikes by him- or herself anyways. At first troops on the ground would have to make a request for help and then soldiers would decide whether to provide fire support in that moment.[783] Hahn argued similarly: The decision to kill or not would not be up to the pilots. Usually, it would be ground troops who request fire support, and the operational commander deciding whether to fire or not.[784]

All these decisions and actions take place within "very clearly defined and legally examined rules of engagement",[785] as von der Leyen emphasized. Since the Bundestag issues each mandate for every German military operation and the German armed forces are a so-called "Parlamentsarmee", the parliament also determines what the Bundeswehr is allowed to do and how it may use its weapons.[786] During the same debate, SPD MP Arnold urged the plenary, particularly the Left PG, to have trust in Bundeswehr soldiers to exclusively use weapon systems in conformity with the law and the mandate ("rechtskonform und mandatskonform").[787] After all, as CDU MP Manderla highlighted in her speech later on, the Bundeswehr would have one of the "strictest operational principles" ("strengsten Einsatzgrundsätze") in the whole world."[788]

4.3.5 Forecasting German Decision-Making

In 2013 and 2014, the debate about what would happen if Germany got armed drones was particularly heated, likely also because of the federal election in fall 2013. Before the election, all

779 Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4058.
780 Faber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3868.
781 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29765.
782 Transl. by author. In original: "ein Team aus erfahrenen Piloten und Aufklärern" (Gädechens, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4063; see also Faber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3868.)
783 von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4054.
784 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125.
785 Transl. by author. In original: "innerhalb ganz klar definierter und rechtlich geprüfter Einsatzregeln" (von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4054.)
786 von der Leyen, ibid., ibid., 4054-5.
787 Transl. by author. Arnold, ibid., ibid., 4057.
788 Manderla, ibid., ibid., 4065-6.

parties were seeking to promote their positions and gather support among voters. After the election, politicians were trying to leave a strong first impression in their respective new roles (government or opposition). The opposition cautioned the availability of armed drones would lure decision-makers into using force more readily. By drawing out parallels to the US, they built a whole argumentative case around the idea that Germany might conduct American-style targeted killing if it acquired armed drones – it was a "slippery slope"-argument. For the government parties (the CDU/CSU and the FDP until fall 2013 and the CDU/CSU and the SPD thereafter), these concerns expressed a lack of trust in parliament. After all, the German Bundestag holds the authority to mandate troop deployments. Thus, they created a competing discursive frame and turned the spotlight back on to the "faithless" opposition.

4.3.5.1 The Targeted Killing Temptation

Now what would happen if Germany acquired armed drones? A major concern of the opposition was that armed drones would make states more likely to resort to use military force and political decision-makers eventually succumb to the temptation of targeted killings. In 2013 and 2014, the Greens, the Left, and the SPD elaborated on this "slippery slope"-argument, suggesting the threshold for decision-makers to use force and to eventually conduct targeted killings would become lower. The Greens argued the availability of armed drones would impact political decision-making. If it was possible to send machines instead of soldiers, this would weaken military restraint. [789] Left and SPD politicians gave the example of Mali, where the US could launch airstrikes with armed drones without having any US forces there.[790] Similarly, according to Left MP Jan van Aken, the US would never have conducted airstrikes with manned airplanes in Somalia, Pakistan, and Yemen. The strikes were only possible with drones. Major violations of territorial sovereignty with manned platforms would not have been tolerated by the affected

[789] See for instance Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27113; Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4056; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11956: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Volker Beck (Köln), Marieluise Beck (Bremen), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/11769 – Abrüstungs- und Rüstungskontrollpolitik," 2012, 6; Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3868.

[790] Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27116; C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4053.

state.[791] As Left MPs put it: Drones would change the perspective of political and military leaders, when machines kill people from a safe distance while your own soldiers cannot be killed.[792] The government formed by the CDU/CSU and the FDP rejected such suggestions.[793]

Substantiating the slippery slope argument, opposition speakers proposed if you have a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail. As MP Brugger summarized it in 2013: "[E]ven when you assert to want to resist this dynamic of violence; political and military action is not only being determined by intents and interests but also by the capabilities available."[794] Left MPs were skeptical whether the German government would "resist this temptation" ("Versuchung […] widerstehen") once armed drones were available.[795] The opposition party SPD asked the government whether they thought armed drones would shift the prioritization from capturing towards eliminating non-state combatants.[796] Years later, in 2018, MP Keul (Greens) repeated the warning: The "disposal of certain means leads to temptation" ("Verfügbarkeit bestimmter Mittel führt in Versuchung").[797] Only once, in 2013, FDP MP Christoph Schnurr addressed these allegations, noting that Germany already had the means to conduct targeted killing, but refrained from this practice because it was fundamentally wrong.[798]

Another factor allegedly indicating Germany might resort to targeted killing was that Germany had already initiated drone strikes in the past albeit without carrying them out. In 2012, the Greens asked the conservative-liberal government if allies had ever called in armed drones for aerial support to German troops. The government responded there had been two such cases. On June 8, 2009, a US drone destroyed an IED. On November 11, 2010, German ISAF forces asked the US to strike against a group of insurgents who were setting up an IED, killing four insurgents.[799] In the next year (2013), the Left claimed these drone strikes were "not about helping

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791 van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29771.

792 Inge Höger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27119; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28127-8; see also van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29771; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31351.

793 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11956: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Volker Beck (Köln), Marieluise Beck (Bremen), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/11769 – Abrüstungs- und Rüstungskontrollpolitik," 2012, 6; de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27110.

794 Transl. by author. In original: "auch wenn Sie selbst beteuern, dieser Dynamik der Gewalt widerstehen zu wollen; denn politisches und militärisches Handeln wird nicht nur von Absichten und Interessen, sondern auch von den zur Verfügung stehenden Fähigkeiten bestimmt." (Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27113.)

795 P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31351. See also Tobias Pflüger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3868.

796 Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27116; Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29766; compare also Gysi, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27083.

797 Transl. by author. Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3868.

798 Schnurr, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27118.

799 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11956: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Volker Beck (Köln), Marieluise Beck (Bremen), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/11769 – Abrüstungs- und Rüstungskontrollpolitik," 2012, 5.

endangered soldiers in a supposedly dangerous situation; rather a targeted airstrike has been ordered and carried out."[800] To expand on this, in 2015 the Left asked if the conservative-social democrat government would categorize the September 4, 2009, Kunduz airstrike on two gas trucks and nearby civilians as targeting killing.[801] The government said it would not.[802]

Furthermore, by suggesting Germany might follow in American footsteps, the drone-skeptical speakers linked a prospective German armed drone program to "bad" existing drone practices as carried out by the CIA and the US forces. In this way, speakers implied they knew what would happen because this was the way things have always been with armed drones (resonance).[803] Opposition parties discursively linked a potential German armed drone use with present American drone strikes in three ways. First, speakers stressed the (initially suspected) indirect involvement of Germany, precisely the Bundeswehr and intelligence agencies, in American targeted killing drone strikes.[804] A possible trigger for this subject was the 2010 media coverage about US drone strikes having allegedly killed a German citizen in Pakistan.[805] In 2011, MPs began to systematically bring up how Germany assisted US drone strikes, for example by helping to set up target lists. The conservative-liberal government declined contributing to targeted killings. Yet, they were not able to deny that if Germany passed on information, such as names the US could use it for deadly drone strikes.[806]

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800 Transl. by author. In original: "nicht darum, gefährdeten Soldaten in einer vermeintlich bedrohlichen Situation zu helfen; vielmehr wurde ein gezielter Luftschlag angefordert und ausgeführt" (LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13381: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Herbert Behrens, Nicole Gohlke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/13169 – Gezielte Tötungen durch US-Drohnen und Aktivitäten sowie die Verwicklung deutscher Behörden", 17th leg. period, May 6, 2013, 2.)

801 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/4168: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan Korte, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/2144 – Krieg in Afghanistan – Eine Bilanz", 18th leg. period, February 27, 2015, 83.

802 FGG, ibid., ibid.

803 See Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," 71.

804 Green PG, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/88," 2011, 9953; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/155," 2012, 18563; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/4196: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Doris Wagner, Dr. Tobias Lindner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/3977 – Der etwaige deutsche Beitrag bei der Listung von Personen für gezielte Tötungen in Afghanistan," 2015, 1-2; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/8656: Antrag der Abgeordneten Wolfgang Gehrcke, Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Die NATO durch ein kollektives System für Frieden und Sicherheit in Europa unter Einschluss Russlands ersetzen," 2016, 3.

805 Mentioned by Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/67", 17th leg. period, October 27, 2010, 7116-7; Wolfgang Neskovic, ibid., "Drucksache 17/4275: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 13. Dezember 2010 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 17th leg. period, December 17, 2010, 22.

806 Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/155," 2012, 18669; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27289.

Second, especially in 2013 and the years after, Left and Green speakers described drone warfare as secret because the CIA would operate in the background without public accountability.[807] From 2014 to 2018, agents mentioned the procedures of the CIA for using drone strikes; checking off target lists, using cell phones for locating targets, and carrying out personality strikes.[808] The Left repeatedly criticized how these agencies sentenced people to death through drone strike.[809] Although their remarks referred to US drones, they still contributed to characterizing drone strikes in general, at a time, when Germany was debating a potential procurement. Simultaneously they de-normalized the idea of Germany using drone strikes in harmony with IHL. The involvement of intelligence agencies in drone strikes ties into the third point: Insufficient parliamentary oversight and governmental transparency. The German opposition did not stress this as extremely as the US politicians did in the early 2010s.[810] Still, the Greens did raise some concerns, criticizing the lacking transparency of the government vis-à-vis parliament and complaining about information discrepancies.[811] In 2016, they openly accused the government (CDU/CSU and SPD) of "speaking falsely to us here in the Bundestag" ("hat uns hier im Bundestag die Unwahrheit gesagt").[812] The Left mistrusted the truthfulness of the previous government (CDU/CSU and FDP), especially regarding the alleged precision of drone strikes which they called a "lie" ("Lüge")[813] and a "myth" ("Mythos") in 2012.[814]

807 Hänsel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/3," 2013, 127; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/25," 2014, 1993; Renner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/242," 2017, 24843.

808 C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4053; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/1411: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Annette Groth, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/1168 – Datentausch von INTERPOL, Europol und Bundeskriminalamt mit dem US-Militär über die Projekte VENLIG und HAMAH", 18th leg. period, May 14, 2014, 2; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/6730: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Christine Buchholz, Wolfgang Gehrcke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/6322 – Mögliche Teilnahme eines Verbindungsoffiziers der Bundeswehr bei Auswahlprozessen für sogenannte gezielte Tötungen," 2015, 1-2.

809 Movassat, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/65," 2010, 6930; C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4053; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/10863: Antrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Andrej Hunko, Wolfgang Gehrcke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. US- und NATO-Stützpunkt Ramstein unverzüglich schließen," 2017, 2; Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3868.

810 The prospective nomination of David Barron for the US Court of Appeals for the First Circuit caused much discussion in the US Congress on the oversight policy for American drone strikes.

811 Transl. by author. Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/4196: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Doris Wagner, Dr. Tobias Lindner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/3977 – Der etwaige deutsche Beitrag bei der Listung von Personen für gezielte Tötungen in Afghanistan," 2015, 1-2.

812 Transl. by author. Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20874-5.

813 Hänsel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/201," 2012, 24528.

814 C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4053.

4.3.5.2 Trusting the Parliament

In 2013 and 2014, the Conservatives and the Liberals countered the claim that decision-makers would use force more likely if their military had armed drones. Yet, they neither directly argued the opposite; that armed drones would make the resort to force less likely. Nor did they emphasize the use of force would continue to remain the last resort, since this might have led to follow-up questions what this last resort would look like. Instead, the MPs interpreted the concern of the opposition about a lower barrier to the use of force as a display of their lacking trust in the Bundestag and its decision-making process.[815] MP Hahn suspected that, by calling for the non-procurement of drones, the opposition was trying to "protect themselves from themselves" ("vor sich selbst schützen") because they could no longer hide behind the soldiers. On the contrary, Hahn himself had "great trust in the majority of this house".[816]

This reframing into "(not) trusting the parliament" was possible because the German parliament has the power to vote on the use of military force as stated in the "Parliamentary Participation Act" ("Parlamentsbeteiligungsgesetz"). The German military is a "Parlamentsarmee" ("parliament's force"), as several speakers pointed out in the drone debate as well. Consequently, it would be them – the MPs – who must approve the employment of drone strikes as part of a military mandate, in harmony with the constitution (the so-called "Parlamentsvorbehalt").[817] Minister von der Leyen found that MPs who questioned this process would disfranchise themselves.[818] Liberal MP Joachim Spatz took it more personal than that. After Green MP Brugger claimed drone countries might employ force sooner, he asked her: "Do you realize that you are indicting us – and our successors" by saying this?[819] Again, with the national election approaching, speakers from governing parties, such as Hahn or Spatz, took the opportunity to not only discuss drones, but also portray the opposition parties as unfit to govern.

When the SPD was in government even MP Arnold joined in.[820] He urged the parliament and his fellow MPs to trust themselves. Military operations were contingent on political decisions,

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815 Erdel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28127.

816 Transl. by author. In original: "großes Vertrauen in die Mehrheit dieses Hauses" (Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29765.)

817 Hahn, ibid., ibid.; Joachim Spatz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31355; von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4055; Manderla, ibid., ibid., 4065-6; Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3863; Hahn, ibid., ibid., 3871.

818 von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4055.

819 Transl. by author. In original: "Ist Ihnen klar, dass Sie damit uns alle – und unsere Nachfolger – anklagen?" (Spatz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31355.)

820 From one year to another Arnold thus changed his stance on the matter. In 2013 he had stated drones have transformed the possibilities of engaging in conflicts and a government which is not reflective of these developments should not be handed combat drones (Arnold, ibid., ibid., 31359.).

not military equipment.[821] Not least, when it comes to targeted killing outside of declared warzones, "no German politician, no German general would be allowed to give such an order".[822] In this way, the MPs reframed the problem from being the procurement (and use) of armed drones to being the insufficient trust of opposition parties in the parliament. At the same times, Social Democrats criticized drones would operate in a clandestine way.[823] As an SPD MP argued, a war taking place below the "threshold of perception" ("Wahrnehmungsschwelle")[824] would get trivialized. The above section demonstrated that, until 2013 and 2014, drone advocates had to hold against the opponents, rather than lead the debate according to their own ideas. They did so with the rhetorical tactics of remaining silent on drone opposing claims, waiting until they vanished from the discourse, and arguing the opposite, often by introducing a counter-frame reflecting their perspective (see Table 7).

Drone opponent claim	**Discursive tactics by drone advocates**
Targeted killing outside of declared warzones, which is against IHL	Reinterpretation: They want larger scope of force Silence: "targeted killing" term Claim opposite: Not incompatible with IHL Counter-frame: Aerial defense is main scenario
Drone strikes end up targeting civilians and innocents	Claim opposite: Produce less civilian damage Counter-frame: The main targets are terrorists and insurgents
Counter-effective for peace	Claim opposite: Drones can deter Counter-frame: Drones serve protection
Killing easier for soldiers	Reinterpretation: They disagree with protecting soldiers Counter-frame: Soldiers are very responsible
Temptation for decisionmakers	Counter-frame: They have no trust in us and themselves

Table 7: Contentious Issues: Opponent Claims and Discursive Tactics by Advocates
Source: Author's own work

821 In original: "Militärische Einsätze hängen nicht von dem ab, was wir haben, sondern davon, was wir politisch wollen und politisch beschließen." (Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4057.)

822 Transl. by author. In original: "Kein deutscher Politiker, kein deutscher General dürfte solch einen Befehl erteilen." (Arnold, ibid., ibid., 4056-7.)

823 Brunner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20883; see also Brunner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/155," 2016, 15229; compare LEFT MPs C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/186", 18th leg. period, 186th sess., September 7, 2016, 18477; Hunko, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20872.

824 Transl. by author. Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31354.

One can detect different representations of reality in the discourse – literally. MPs from parties with diverging views often explicitly competed over what "reality" ("Realität" or "Wirklichkeit") would truly look like or claim others would not know what the "reality" of drone warfare is. This happened not only in the peak drone controversy 2013, but also earlier and later on. According to the speakers, the reality would be an illegal use of armed drones to kill innocent people (Greens),[825] to conduct targeted killing (SPD),[826] and drones would primarily serve to engage in war while sparing German soldiers (Left Party),[827] menacing the use of force on a global scale (Left Party).[828] Politicians from other parties claimed to grasp reality in terms of drones eventually replacing manned military platforms (FDP),[829] the operational reality in Afghanistan (government representatives from the CDU/CSU),[830] the reality of the Bundeswehr (FDP),[831] and the actual numbers of US drone strikes and civilian victims (CDU/CSU).[832] At times, there were also accusations of other parties not acknowledging reality. For example, the Conservatives (CDU/CSU) accused the Left of discounting drones as "witches' brew" ("Teufelszeug").[833] In this way, MPs equalized aspects of reality important to them with reality as such. Each group constructed their own – supposedly accurate – view of reality and accused the others of not seeing it. The lacking transparency of drone programs and particularly drone strikes might contribute by fostering uncertainty and leaving ample room for interpretations.

4.4 Conclusion

The analysis of this chapter portrayed the two main narratives of the parliamentary drone debate: The *military defense* one as (re)constructed by the CDU/CSU and the FDP, and the *targeted killing* narrative, advanced by the Left and the Greens, and, to a lesser extent, the SPD. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that there were issues with a common ground among all parties. ISR drones were considered less controversial overall. Only the Left disapproved of them. Extrajudicial killings were also condemned across the benches. Finally, all parties agreed that LAWS were concerning due to their potential to make decisions over life and death. Yet, the contentious issues prevailed. Agents argued heatedly over key questions such as when,

825 Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/149," 2011, 17777; Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3868.
826 Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27116.
827 van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29771.
828 P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/211," 2012, 25767.
829 M. Lindner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27091.
830 de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30647.
831 Faber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3867.
832 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20884.
833 E.-R. Beck, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/191," 2012, 23054.

against whom, and with what effect states (should) use armed drones to carry out strikes, and where.

Apart from identifying party positions and shedding light on the agenda-setting, the analysis sought to trace the dynamics and changes in the debate over time, especially in the different framings and narratives. What was new? What stayed? What disappeared? I found that, during the first years of the studied debate (2009–2012), drone opponents dominated. The "targeted killing"-narrative significantly shaped the parliamentary discourse on the use of armed drones, especially the early debates. In contrast, drone advocates initially struggled to gain traction. They did not even pick up the Good Friday Battle to hammer home the need for armed drones. From 2009 to 2011, the conservative-liberal government discussed this "new" technology in a narrow, technical manner. Meanwhile, the opposition already argued about the repercussions of drone strikes. For instance, drone strikes would harm the relationship with the affected country. In 2011 and 2012, the government then began to expand its representation of drones. Previously focusing on the new technological characteristics, they now presented drones in a purpose-oriented way as a military equipment for ISR scenarios. Still, this was only a small step compared to the opposition, who produced an enormous discursive wave. Starting in 2011, targeted killings outside of official combat zones emerged as a central narrative for opposition parties. They initially dominated the discourse with their narrative of armed drones being bad, substantiated with framings including legal arguments (how drone attacks outside of declared warzones would violate international law), moral outcries (how these strikes, often based on "kill-lists", would cause civilian victims), and strategic critique (how drone strikes would increase local support for terrorist groups, obstructing peace negotiations). Especially speakers from the Left and the Greens concluded that violence triggered more violence. This argument lasted in the debate until 2015.

From 2012 on, speakers from the Left, the SPD, and the Greens proposed armed drones made the use of force easier. They built on the Left MPs' portrayals of remote drone operation as unethical. The Conservatives strongly disputed this claim and, in turn attempted to redirect the debate. They stuck to their idea of drones being a neutral technology, whose use would depend on the people operating it. While drone opponents focused on the wider political and strategic context, advocates centered existing processes. Eventually, in 2012, the CDU/CSU, the FDP, and some SPD politicians introduced an important new argument: Armed drones would save and protect soldiers. Significantly, this addition introduced a purpose of drone use; and a morally and strategically highly relevant at that. While speakers were hesitant to discursively represent drones as a way for dealing with terrorists (that is killing them), saving and protecting

had a "good" connotation. It also presented drones as a solution, whereas the opponents had previously framed drone strikes as a problem (causing innocent deaths). Rhetorically, this argument allowed drone advocates to accuse drone opponents of not caring about the well-being of German soldiers.

In the parliament, 2013 was the climax of the armed drone debate. Drone advocates gradually gained foothold in the discourse. Many essential arguments for and against drones peaked that year, as did the contestation over what a drone warfare "reality" really is. It was the time with the densest controversy. On the one hand, drone praise reached a highpoint in the debate. On the other hand, the Left and the Greens emphasized the CIA drone secrecy and drove the discussion about autonomous weapons making life-or-death decisions. Until 2015, they repeatedly criticized drone strikes for violating human rights. Moreover, the Greens stressed that drone strikes increased local insurgent support. In 2013–2014, the SPD, the Left Party, and the Greens fueled the discussion about the violation of IHL through drone strikes ("völkerrechtswidrig"). In response, Defense Minister de Maizière shifted the topic away from targeted killing. He suggested that the opposition disagreed with limiting force because they disapproved of precision-strike weapons, such as drones. From 2014 onwards, the opposition (the Greens and the Left) stopped challenging the notion of precision. That same year the government (the CDU/CSU and the SPD) stopped using the term "targeted killing". Gradually, the tide began to turn.

De Maizière's response exemplifies an overarching trend of 2013 and 2014 towards a more assertive pro-drone camp, gaining momentum and dominance in the discourse. CDU/CSU MPs supported the arguments of their government representatives, demonstrating partisan unity. Now, the pro-drone speakers presented a more comprehensive framing than before, claiming that drones were no different than other systems, and that they were useful for close air support scenarios. Advocates could have depicted the precise operational and strategic necessity for armed drones even more. However, they did emphasize drones would allow to avoid risking the lives of soldiers. Indeed, in 2013 the "save and protect soldiers"-argument was preeminent. Conservatives flanked this framing with a depiction of the alleged "protection gap" in the forces caused by not having armed drones. In 2014, the "easier use of force"-argument ebbed off, while the "save and protect soldiers"-argument persisted. Countering the opposition's "lower threshold to force"-argument, the CDU/CSU promoted the idea of soldiers acting responsibly no matter which weapon they used. Responding to the slippery slope argument of the Greens, the Left, and SPD, the CDU/CSU and the FDP urged their colleagues to have trust in their

democratic institutions. This example illustrates how the drone debate was often about something bigger and layered with proxy debates about larger issues.

In 2015, the final phase of the parliamentary debate began, when most arguments had been exhaustively discussed. By 2017, the opposition's aversion to the remote way of operation had disappeared. That year, the Greens also stopped using the term "killer drone". Only the Left continued to use it. Nobody actively commented on these shifts. However, not all disagreements had been resolved, since some just continued to drag on without any resolution. For example, from 2015 to 2016, the government (CDU/CSU and SPD) still insisted they lacked sufficient facts for a legal evaluation and opted to cite IHL without presenting an actual legal judgement. In 2018, drone advocates revived their talking points from 2013–2014: Praise for drones increased, and the FDP picked up the former CDU/CSU claim of preferring to send military robots into dangerous areas instead of drones. The "protect and save soldiers"-argument also returned.

Looking at how the debate at-large developed in the parliament, I conclude that drone opponents had a head start and thus an advantage for dominating the discourse with their narrative. The beginning of a new debate is particularly important because it determines how it is initially laid out. In negotiations, the first proposal is called the "anchor", because it determines where the conversation begins. It sets up a scope of what is possible. Drone opponents were able to discursively graft onto existing understandings of armed drones by referencing US drone strikes within the GWOT. They created resonance between the new German armed drone question and US-style drone warfare, which was widely considered inappropriate. Thus, in the early German debate, armed drones were easily framed as abnormal and their use represented as bad.

The drone advocates reacted promptly, pointing out that drones are just like other "normal" military systems despite their remote operation. Yet, they reacted too late and timidly to the other aspect because they only presented operational scenarios when the debate was already in full swing, and many key representations had already been established. US targeted killing of suspected terrorists was the main scenario for drone strikes in the beginning. It took significant discursive efforts to convince the audience that this scenario was out of question for the German government. Advocates also missed out on introducing a counterexample. For instance, they could have pointed to the British drone program, which only used strikes backed up by UN mandates back then. Also, elaborating on the unarmed ISR scenario could have marginalized the combat scenario. Only later in the debate, in 2015–2018, politicians described to the audience what unarmed ISR drones did for the UN mission in Mali (see 6.2.3). Despite these early setbacks, the pro-drone speakers eventually gained foothold and became the dominant group.

Listing the introduction, peaks, and reappearance of major claims by both sides per year illustrates the discursive development and shift in dominance over time (see Table 8).

Year	Claims by drone advocates	Claims by drone opponents
2009	*New*: Drones are new and different *New*: ISR technology	*New*: Drone strikes worsen relations with country of operation
2010	/	/
2011	*New*: Drone strikes avoid collateral damage	*New*: Targeted killing becomes main issue *New*: Target lists *New*: Left uses violent language for drone strikes *New*: Left and Greens stress killing of civilians *New*: Drones are counter-effective
2012	*New*: ISR scenarios *New*: Drones are neutral objects *New*: Drones deter opponents *New*: Protecting soldiers	*New*: Drone strikes are extrajudicial killing *New*: Left stresses children get killed or hurt *New*: Left claims remote drone strikes are unethical *New*: Soldiers have lower barrier for using force
2013	*New*: Drones are not different *New*: Defensive aerial support *New*: Saving lives of soldiers *New*: German soldiers act responsibly *New*: Opposition lacks trust in parliament	*New*: Slippery slope *New*: Lower threshold for decision-makers
	Peak: Drone praise **Peak**: Human-decision making **Peak**: Protecting soldiers	**Peak**: Strikes outside of declared warzones violate IHL, state sovereignty, and human rights **Peak**: Unclear operational scenarios **Peak**: Violence triggers more violence **Peak**: Secret drone warfare
2014	**Peak**: Human-decision making **Peak**: Protecting soldiers	Peak: Violation of IHL
2015	*New*: Mentioned with other heavy weapons	*New*: Mentioned with other heavy weapons (except by the Left)

	New: Government stops using term "targeted killing"	
2016	*New*: Drone strikes decrease risk for civilians	/
2017	/	/
2018	*Reappearance*: Drone praise *Reappearance*: Protecting soldiers	/

Table 8: The Parliamentary Discourse over Time: Claims about Military Uses of Drones
Source: Author's own work

Regarding the two overarching framings, the analysis demonstrated how speakers have discursively (re)produced two worlds of meanings. My analysis revealed both framings raced towards extreme poles, resulting not only in largely irreconcilable representations but, eventually, in a stalemate situation. There was not even that much debating in all of these debates to the extent of a repeated back and forth of arguments (claim, counterclaim, response, potentially counter-response). As the summary showed, after the debate climax in 2013 and 2014 barely any new arguments appeared, yet the divisions remained.

What explains this finding? First, the use of highly emotional and dramatic language may have contributed to making the debate so important in the public, but it also made the debate less rational. The language of the Left stood out, since they linked drones with violence and terror, evoking images of death drones, inhumane practices, murderer, and manhunts. The Green language drew on shared humanity and injustice, appealing to sympathy with the victims of vile attacks on everyday people. By contrast, the SPD language was more reserved and balanced. The CDU/CSU presented the idea of drones as mere objects, often hiding violent actions behind military jargon and vague target descriptions. Yet, they also spoke emotionally about the injuries, sacrifices, and losses of German soldiers. Second, both camps were rigid in their positions to the extent that, generally speaking, the two worlds of meaning seemed mutually exclusive. Each side claimed the high ground, factually by declaring they were the only ones who knew what reality looked like, and morally by asserting whose protection mattered most – civilians or soldiers. As a result, it was extremely difficult to combine perspectives. Only the SPD resumed a center position and incorporated claims from both sides.

Third, the discursive ecosystem missed evidence, especially with regards to civilian victims and operational necessity. Drone debates in general suffer under a notorious lack of available data to base decisions on. This is an obstacle. If an argument is not backed up by evidence, it makes

it difficult to engage with it, especially, when you oppose what it suggests, for instance because of moral or ideological reasons. At the same time, if you agree with the argument, you may not rethink your position as long as data does not proof you wrong. By 2019, few states provided official statistics on the civilian "collateral damage" of drones strikes. Likewise, speakers had not picked up on any cases of Bundeswehr forces being attacked by terrorists or insurgents, where armed drones would have made a decisive difference. The parliamentary policy-process was stuck, but the debate continued. After all, the public was interested in drones, and the parties could use this polarizing topic to position themselves in the political landscape. It continued, not least because the CDU/CSU and the FDP really wanted to procure AMALE-drones. The policy options for procurement and proliferation will be discussed in the following chapter.

5 Getting Armed Drones – Procurement and Proliferation

German policymakers have discussed uses of armed drones in military operations and potential employment by the Bundeswehr, as the previous chapter showed. Yet, before any state can use armed drones, they must acquire them. That is why this chapter turns away from (potential) military operations and turns towards military procurement. It shows that debates about getting armed drones were more complex than commonly assumed, touching on a range of policy areas, ideas, and material factors. Importantly, political positions on armament and interpretations of proliferation dynamics interacted with each other. The subject of proliferation is a significant part of the discursive ecosystem in which decision makers interact when debating and (re)producing political positions (see 2.3.3). The ecosystem consists of both material structures (more and more countries are acquiring armed drones) and ideational structures (ideas about what this development means for Germany).

This chapter illustrates how policymakers discursively (re)produced meanings about what it means for Germany to get and to have armed drones. It analyzes how politicians represented the tableau of policy options for procurement and proliferation in Bundestag debates. Which option or options did they acknowledge as possible or not possible? How do policymakers evaluate a certain military drone policy option regarding its (expected) benefits, costs, or (in)appropriateness? Similar to the previous chapter, this one showcases the views of advocates and opponents, traces the discourse over time, and evaluates discourse positions. It also shows that agents discursively acted in reflection of their respective political role as opposition or government, rather than engaging in a neutral discourse. Like discussions about military uses of combat drones, the debate about procuring drones revealed two narratives: one on "necessary progress" and one on "perilous procurement" (Table 9).

	Drone advocates	**Drone opponents**
Narrative	Necessary progress	Perilous procurement
Core	Drones as a technology	Drones as a weapon
Perspective	Good investment	Bad investment
Agents	Defense industry, Bundeswehr	Government, arms lobbies, taxpayers
Policy	Industrial capability-building of drones in general	Stopping or reversing armed drone proliferation

Table 9: Narratives "Getting Combat Drones"
Source: Author's own work

These narratives offer different perspectives on potentially beneficial or dangerous consequences of arming drones, they include ideas about the issues at stake for German drone policy, and identify what is important to each group. They provide a contextual framework for the narratives of AMALE-drone advocates and opponents respectively, about what is at stake for the international arms dynamic, and about the far-reaching repercussions of German drone policy actions. That is why they are relevant for the eventual use of armed drones as a political option. At their core lie diverging views of armed drones as either technological progress (advocates) or a lethal weapon (opponents). Accordingly, drone advocates see a future with drones optimistically as providing new opportunities, while opponents are pessimistic and underline potential negative security implications, such as destabilization. Perspective-wise the former noted drones were cost-effective and worthwhile investments, from which the German defense industry and the military would benefit. The latter argued drone projects were wasting taxpayer money and mainly benefitted arms lobbies. They portrayed the governance process of drone procurement as severely flawed. Regarding preferred policies, the drone advocates argued Germany, especially the national defense industry, should engage in drone capability-building. It should not miss out on progress but stay competitive both industrially and militarily. By contrast, drone-opposing parties spoke out in favor of more restrictive arms control regulations, even an international drone ban.

Examining the debate over time reveals several shifts in both camps, although the drone opponents argued more consistently overall. AMALE-drone opposing speakers systematically presented drones as dangerous weapons – and expensive ones at that. Drone procurement would entail the peril of cost explosions, as occurred with the Euro Hawk ISR drone project, whose failure caused a massive scandal. Relying heavily on the unarmed Euro Hawk, they implied that armable drones (capable of carry weapons) were the same as armed ones (carrying weapons). Doing so, the drone opposition discursively linked two topics together just as it did with American targeted killings and a German armed drone program (see Chapter 4.3.5). Regarding proliferation, a shift occurred after 2015, when the implications of armed drone diffusion, for example arms races and buildups, withdrew to the background. One possible reason for this shift is the emerging discourse on LAWS at that time. Still, the subject of arms control for armed drones lasted from 2012 to 2018, especially due to speakers of the Greens and the Left.

Among pro-drone speakers from the CDU/CSU and FDP there were two shifts; one in their rhetoric and the other in how they used their speaking time. The rhetorical style changed, although their main argument, that Germany could do certain things better with armed drones, remained. In the early years, speakers stressed the advantages and opportunities drones would

facilitate. They also linked the positively connoted concepts "future" and "progress" with drone technology. Still, when the opposition parties paraded the expensive, failed Euro Hawk model in 2013 as an example for costly military drone projects, the CDU/CSU shifted to negation; saying what Germany should *not* do in drone policy, namely *not* waste money by *not* arming Bundeswehr drones. Another transition occurred in 2016, when the pro-drone parties CDU/CSU and FDP frequently used their speaking time to defend the decision for armable (note: not armed) drones. When they opted for the rhetorical defense, they missed out on proactively advocating for drone armament – their actual policy objective.

This chapter depicts the discursively represented possibilities for action towards getting armed drones, presented in three stages. The first part focuses on how speakers discussed the crucial question of armament; specifically, whether Germany should have unarmed, armable, or armed drones (5.1). The second part portrays areas of agreement across party lines, including observations of drone technology proliferation and the possibility of doing arms control (5.2). In the third part, I address the contentious issues. These debates also involve a wider structure of meaning, containing visions of future prospects, opinions about financial benefits and costs, and judgments about how to best react to drone proliferation. Combined, these ideas were the baseline for different policy options, such as whether to promote industrial capability-building and/or to restrict the diffusion of armed drones more (5.3). Finally, I conclude that drone opponents dominated the procurement debates by presenting a more elaborate causal narrative, successfully challenging the claim that drones are cheap, and forcing the government to use their speaking time for clarifying that no armament decision had been made yet (5.4).

5.1 Not Arming, Armable, Armed – A Decision already Made?

In the summer of 2012, when the CDU/CSU governed with the FDP, Minister de Maizière publicly announced that he wanted armed drones for the German military.[834] After many years and little progress on the issue of armament, the new government formed by the CDU/CSU and the SPD settled on the compromise of "armable" drone systems. However, the parliamentary debate was not only about the pros and cons of arming military drones. The Greens and the Left, both opposition parties, managed to spin the debate of armament issues as such, towards the question whether the government had already (secretly) decided to arm them. De Maizière and the pro-drone PGs of the CDU/CSU and the FDP actively advocated for arming drones

[834] Thorsten Jungholt and Simone Meyer, "'Ethisch Neutrale Waffe', De Maizière wirbt für Einsatz bewaffneter Drohnen," *Die Welt*, August 3, 2012, https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article108473948/De-Maiziere-wirbt-fuer-Einsatz-bewaffneter-Drohnen.html.

early on, under certain conditions. In 2012 and 2013, they stated armed drones were an option if there was a proven demand and no alternatives were available. They also said that there needed to be an ethical debate about the employment.[835] Between 2013 and 2016, after the FDP left the Bundestag, the CDU/CSU (now governing with the SPD) continued to speak out in favor of getting armed drones.[836] Speakers remarked that any military procurement would be driven by military demand and substantial security improvements (compare Chapter 4).[837]

However, overall, the government barely spoke positively about arming drones. Speakers from the conservative-liberal government rarely supported their position by stressing the benefits of armed drones in Bundestag debates. In 2012 and 2013, the government mainly responded to inquiries about drone armament by reciting formal procedures or by stating that no decision had been made yet. In 2012, it admitted they would not rule out the procurement of armed drones in the future.[838] Only once they highlighted how armed drones would be militarily useful for armed overwatch.[839] Officials potentially preferred to have their respective partisan MPs advocate for armed drones as long as no decision had been made on the matter.

By contrast, the AMALE-drone opponents were very strong and dominated the discourse by determining its direction, especially until around 2014. They redirected the discussion from drone armament to issues of governmental transparency by publicly accusing the government of having, allegedly, already decided to arm their military drones. They used a similar tactic in arguments about financing drones (see 5.1.2). Since the German lease contract for the Heron 1 model did not include an armament option, the decision-making-process for a successor system provided a window of opportunity for changing policy towards armed platforms. This fact left ample room on the discourse for arguments about the more controversial issue of armament. However, the opposition diverted the debate from armament to government actions. As a result, the discourse was not really moving forward.

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835 Jürgen Koppelin, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 17/191," 2012, 23044; Hoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29770.

836 Schockenhoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27073; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29765; Mißfelder, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/21," 2014, 1631; Gädechens, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4062; Wadephul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20874.

837 de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31348; Ralf Brauksiepe, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/38", 18th leg. period, 38th sess., June 4, 2014, 3296.

838 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/9316: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Tom Koenigs, Volker Beck (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/8861 – Entwicklung und Planung unbemannter Systeme in der Bundeswehr," 2012, 2-3.

839 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12136: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Herbert Behrens, Annette Groth, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/11978 – Integration von schweren Drohnen in den allgemeinen zivilen Luftraum," 2013, 14.

From 2013 onwards, the Left and the Greens implied the parliamentary discussions about whether to arm Bundeswehr drones or not were a charade. According to them the governments (of both the 17th and 18th legislation period) had already decided they wanted to arm German drones.[840] In their role as an opposition party, the Left went even further in 2014. They accused the conservative-social democrat government of purposely hiding this decision from the public while pursuing a hidden agenda.[841] According to Left speakers, there were media reports about armed drones for the Bundeswehr.[842] The government would try to secretly get armed drones through the "back door" ("durch die Hintertür").[843]

Claims about bad procurement governance gained further ground in debates dealing with the scandal of the failed Euro Hawk ISR drone program in 2013, which a Bundestag Investigative Committee publicly examined. De Maizière had left the parliament and the household committee "in the dark" ("im Dunkeln gelassen") about the procurement disaster and even "deceived" ("getäuscht") his own cabinet.[844] As the opposition saw it, he went to the committees to get more money even though he had already known about severe problems in 2012.[845] Not examining defense projects was not the "high art of governing" ("hohe Regierungskunst"), as SPD MP Bartels complained.[846] This recent drone case of bad governance involving drones may have created an opportunity for portraying military drone programs as related to the obscure,

840 Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27114; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13235: Antrag der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Volker Beck (Köln), Marieluise Beck (Bremen), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN: Keine bewaffneten Drohnen für die Bundeswehr – Internationale Rüstungskontrolle von bewaffneten unbemannten Systemen voranbringen," 2013, 1-2; Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31355-6; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/9826: Bericht* des Haushaltsausschusses (8. Ausschuss) zu dem Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2017 (Haushaltsgesetz 2017) – Drucksachen 18/9200, 18/9202 – Bericht der Abgeordneten Eckhardt Rehberg, Johannes Kahrs, Dr. Gesine Lötzsch und Sven-Christian Kindler", 18th leg. period, November 18, 2016, 68; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/5905: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Sven-Christian Kindler, Ekin Deligöz, Anja Hajduk, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN zu der dritten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/3400, 19/3402, 19/4624, 19/4625, 19/4626 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2019 (Haushaltsgesetz 2019)", 19th leg. period, November 19, 2018, 12.

841 C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/42", 18th leg. period, 42nd sess., June 25, 2014, 3790.

842 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/1382: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Jan van Aken, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/1202 – Drohnen im Einsatzspektrum der Bundeswehr," 2014, 1.

843 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/2582: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Heike Hänsel, Andrej Hunko, Sevim Dağdelen, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/1831 – Keine Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen – Rüstungsbegrenzung stärken," 2018, 4.

844 Transl. by author. Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/240," 2013, 30127; see also Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30649; Bernhard Brinkmann, ibid., ibid., 30651.

845 Nouripour, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30648; van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/252," 2013, 32603.

846 Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/240," 2013, 30139. See also Arnold, ibid., ibid., 30127; Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/252," 2013, 32608-9.

unaccountable behavior of decision-makers. In return, in 2013 and 2014, government speakers and CDU/CSU MPs kept assuring that no decision about armament had yet been made.[847]

In 2013–2014, there was a window of opportunity for armament, but the SPD stalled the decision-making. In this way, they effectively tipped the scale towards not arming although some Social Democrats wanted armament. Before the 2013 election, when de Maizière tried to enforce a decision, the SPD asked the Minister to slow down.[848] MPs explained this request with the non-existing mission scenario concept, the lack of a capability gap, and implications for arms control.[849] The amount of heat that the SPD received from other parties supports the assumption that the SPD could have shifted the balance away from the middle ground of an armable option. On several occasions from 2013–2014, both the Left and the Greens, as well as the CDU/CSU called the SPD out for not backing up their respective positions. They accused them of "blowing hot and cold" ("Herumgeeiere"),[850] of being a "weathervane" ("dreht sein Fähnchen"),[851] criticized their policy for lacking "clear contours" ("klare Konturen"),[852] and complained their "voices of reason" ("Stimmen der Vernunft") had fallen silent.[853] This time (2013–2014) was a transition period when the SPD moved from being in the opposition into the conservative-social democrat government. The transition process and the prospect of governing with the pro-drone CDU/CSU might have contributed to their hesitancy.

Indeed, one can trace the party-internal divisions in SPD speech instances. Of all the parties, their position on armament was the least coherent. This incoherence was particularly visible when they moved from the opposition into the role of coalition partner to the pro-drone CDU/CSU after the 2013 election. In January 2013, Rolf Mützenich, then foreign policy Spokesman for the SPD parliamentary group in the Bundestag, had brought up the policy option

847 See for example C. Schmidt, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/224", 17th leg. period, 224th sess., February 27, 2013, 27879; Hoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29767; de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31348-9; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/14053: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Jan van Aken, Herbert Behrens, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/13497 – Militärische Drohnen-Strategie der Bundesregierung: Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 7; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/340: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/171 – Nutzung des Spionagesystems ISIS und Subventionierung des Rüstungskonzerns EADS", 18th leg. period, January 24, 2014, 10; Brauksiepe, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/38," 2014, 3296.

848 Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27116; Bartels, ibid., ibid., 27121-2; Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29765.

849 SPD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13192: Antrag der Fraktion der SPD Für eine umfassende Debatte zum Thema Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 1.

850 Transl. by author. van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29771.

851 Transl. by author. Schockenhoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30640.

852 Transl. by author. Frithjof Schmidt, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/10", 18th leg. period, 10th sess., January 29, 2014, 604.

853 Transl. by author. Siebert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29772.

of generally abstaining from arming drones.[854] Only the Left and the Greens joined in as support. In 2014, SPD MPs like Gabi Weber were still skeptical of arming drones due to human rights and IHL issues, as well as a daunting automatization. She reminded the plenary that armable drones would not have to get armed – but her SPD colleague Arnold was open towards armament.[855] Arnold described armed drones as an option for the future – under certain conditions, such as a parliamentary mandate for the German military to conduct offensive attacks only in an officially declared warzone. Before awarding such a mandate, the parliament would have to discuss the specific parameters of drone strikes.[856] As a response, Green MP Brugger accused Arnold of joining the CDU/CSU's "drone euphoria" ("Drohneneuphorie").[857] Arnold had made this statement only one and a half years after Mützenich had raised the idea of Germany abstaining from arming drones entirely.[858] As a compromise the government coalition formed by CDU/CSU and SPD eventually settled on acquiring "armable" drone systems.[859] This compromise was not the outcome drones advocates had hoped for, but it was some progress compared to the previous deadlock.

Although the decision for "armable" drones presented a small step forward, the discursive dynamics changed little after 2015, with the opposition continuously driving the debate. The Left was highly consistent in their position. Even in 2016 and 2017, Left speakers continued to feed the narrative by dropping hints like "[t]he new Bundeswehr drones should be entirely procured from Israel, *including armament*".[860] On another occasion, they asked the government whether or not it had been clear for years which weapons the CDU/CSU and SPD government intended

854 Mützenich, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27112.
855 Weber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4063-4.
856 Arnold, ibid., ibid., 4056-7.
857 Transl. by author. Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/42," 2014, 4056.
858 In original: "Warum wäre es von Deutschland so abwegig […] zu sagen: Wir wollen keine unbemannten Flugobjekte bewaffnen" (Mützenich, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27112.)
859 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/14053: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Jan van Aken, Herbert Behrens, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/13497 – Militärische Drohnen-Strategie der Bundesregierung: Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 3; C. Schmidt, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/224," 2013, 27879; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/5022: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/4791 – Kampfdrohnen der Bundeswehr," 2015, 2-3; 11; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/13346: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Christine Buchholz, Annette Groth, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/13151 – Kampfdrohnen der Bundeswehr für sogenannte kleinteilige, chirurgische Angriffe", 18th leg. period, August 18, 2017, 4.
860 Emphasis added. Transl. by author. In original: "Die neuen Bundeswehrdrohnen sollen komplett aus Israel beschafft werden, einschließlich ihrer Bewaffnung." (LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/9857: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Christine Buchholz, Wolfgang Gehrcke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/9508 – Verwendung von bewaffneten Drohnen der MALE-Klasse ab Frühjahr 2019", 18th leg. period, September 29, 2016, 1.)

to purchase for German "combat drones" ("Kampfdrohnen").[861] By comparison, 2016 to 2018 Conservatives promoted drone armament less frequently.

Speakers from the government and governmental parties shifted their focus to emphasizing that the decision at stake concerned armable drones, not armed ones.[862] From 2016 on, the government parties (CDU/CSU and SPD), later aided by the FDP, assured repeatedly that the current procurement plans only included "armability", meaning the ability to be armed – but no armament.[863] They insisted the armament decision was still pending. Yet, this claim crumbled. The parliament revealed the German government and the Israeli Ministry of Defense had met to discuss – though not to negotiate – possibilities for armament.[864]

Additionally, speakers from the CDU/CSU-SPD government avoided using violent language, such as "bombs", in armament debates, much like they did in debates about lethal military uses of armed drones (see 4.3.2). When the opposition asked about the kinds of weapons armable German drones could carry, the government stated "armability" ("Bewaffnungsfähigkeit") included air-to-ground-effectors,[865] scalable munition,[866] and precision-guided munition,[867] without using the words "bombs" and "missiles" or mentioning any product names. Avoiding product names may have prevented spurring the impression the government had decided to arm drones, to circumvent a link with certain defense companies or to not bore the general public with details. However, this avoidance remains curious. After all, Parliamentary State Secretary

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861 Hunko, ibid., "Drucksache 18/13113: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 10. Juli 2017 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 18th leg. period, July 14, 2017, 57.

862 Hahn, ibid, "Plenarprotokoll 18/149," 2016, 14703; CDU/CSU PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/2582: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Heike Hänsel, Andrej Hunko, Sevim Dağdelen, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/1831 – Keine Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen – Rüstungsbegrenzung stärken," 2018, 3; A. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3870.

863 FDP PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/2582: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Heike Hänsel, Andrej Hunko, Sevim Dağdelen, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/1831 – Keine Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen – Rüstungsbegrenzung stärken," 2018, 4; Weber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3865.

864 C. Schmidt, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13046: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 8. April 2013 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 17th leg. period, April 12, 2013, 57-8; Brauksiepe, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/175", 18th leg. period, 175th sess., June 8, 2016, 17297.

865 Transl. by author. FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/5022: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/4791 – Kampfdrohnen der Bundeswehr," 2015, 11.

866 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/7725: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Christine Buchholz, Sevim Dağdelen, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/7426 – Auswahlentscheidung zur Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen", 18th leg. period, February 26, 2016, 10; Markus Grübel, ibid., "Drucksache 18/13617: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 18. September 2017 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 18th leg. period, September 22, 2017, 34-5.

867 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/13346: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Christine Buchholz, Annette Groth, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/13151 – Kampfdrohnen der Bundeswehr für sogenannte kleinteilige, chirurgische Angriffe," 2017, 4.

Markus Grübel (CDU) had said the "possible kind of armament" had been a "unique selling point" ("Alleinstellungsmerkmal") for the Bundeswehr to pick the Israeli Heron TP in 2016.[868]

In 2018, the armament debate heated up again to some extent. The government had decided to lease "armable" Heron TP drones, which the Bundeswehr had selected back in 2016. The process had been stalled since then. One reason was that the American company General Atomics had legally challenged the rejection of their Predator B model in the procurement plans. Moreover, the SPD had voted against the Heron TP proposal in 2017, which included training German soldiers in carrying out drone strikes. Now, the parliamentary budget committee was to discuss and ultimately approve the lease of these systems. The coalition partners CDU/CSU and SPD defended their support of armable systems in these debates. It was not "the acquisition of armed drones through the back door" as suspected by the Left.[869] Green MP Keul differed, claiming armable drones were capable of shooting ("schussfähig") and ready to shoot ("schussbereit"), the only thing missing was the munition and trained soldiers.[870] Shortly after, her party colleague Lindner claimed the concerns superseded the "possible fictive benefits" ("möglichen fiktiven Nutzen") of armed drones.[871] Hence he indicated the benefits presented by the drone advocates were no matter of fact but resembled fiction. The FDP disagreed. Now strongly promoting to arm the Heron TP system, they even issued a motion for a resolution ("Entschließungsantrag") for arming Heron immediately, which was, however, unsuccessful.[872] Similar to the Conservatives, the FDP argued an armament would make financial sense. If Germany was getting armable drones, they should carry arms otherwise the government would waste taxpayer money.[873] Unlike the financial argument that drones are relatively cheap (see 5.1.2), this one used a negative logic to suggest that if the parliament does not arm now, it would do a poor job.

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868 Transl. by author. Grübel, ibid., "Drucksache 18/13617: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 18. September 2017 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2017, 35-36; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/13347: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Christine Buchholz, Frank Tempel, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/13152 – Möglicherweise rechtswidriges Vergabeverfahren für Kampfdrohnen der Bundeswehr", 18th leg. period, August 18, 2017, 5.

869 Transl. by author. In original: "die Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen durch die Hintertür" (SPD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/2582: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Heike Hänsel, Andrej Hunko, Sevim Dağdelen, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/1831 – Keine Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen – Rüstungsbegrenzung stärken," 2018, 4.)

870 Transl. by author. Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3867.

871 Transl. by author. T. Lindner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/45," 2018, 4747.

872 Transl. by author. FDP PG cited in ibid., "Drucksache 19/4626: Bericht* des Haushaltsausschusses (8. Ausschuss) zu dem Gesetzentwurf der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/3400, 19/3402 – Drucksache 19/4626 Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2019 (Haushaltsgesetz 2019)", 19th leg. period, November 16, 2018, 88.

873 Klein, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/45," 2018, 4742; Christian Dürr, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/46", 19th leg. period, 46th sess., July 5, 2018, 4917; Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/48", 19th leg. period, 48th sess., September 12, 2018, 5117.

After the household committee passed the new Heron TP budget in 2018, Left MP Tobias Pflüger explained the Heron TP would be used as a combat drone "against vehicles, against so-called soft targets, against people", that the armament was prepared, and budgeted with 50 million euros.[874] In this way, the Left speech instances established another version of reality. From their point of view, the crucial aspect of the Heron TP was its armability.[875] The Greens had made a similar point already in 2012 that, technically speaking, one could easily modify drones into armed ones.[876] Eventually in 2018, a SPD MP called them out for misrepresenting the truth and doing "shadow-boxing" ("Spiegelfechterei") because the armament of drones was no agenda item, there was, in fact, no drone strike training, and there was no purchase of drone munition.[877] Just as in the years before, in 2018 Left speakers demanded to stop all military drone projects, both armed and unarmed.[878]

5.2 Issues with a Common Ground

Armed and unarmed drones have spread around the globe (horizontal proliferation) and become more technologically sophisticated (vertical proliferation). In parliament, the Left, the Greens, and the SPD have talked about these trends more frequently than the CDU/CSU or the FDP. Specifically, the first two sections look at representations of proliferation dynamics in the Bundestag drone discourse. They describe how agents talked about horizontal proliferation (5.2.1)

874 Transl. by author. In original: "Das wird eine Kampfdrohne sein: gegen Fahrzeuge, gegen sogenannte weiche Ziele, gegen Personen." (Pflüger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/64", 19th leg. period, 61st sess., November 21, 2018, 7378; see also LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/3185: Änderungsantrag der Abgeordneten Heike Hänsel, Tobias Pflüger, Dr. Gesine Lötzsch, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der zweiten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/1700, 19/1701, 19/2413, 19/2424, 19/2425, 19/2426 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2018 (Haushaltsgesetz 2018)," 2018, 2.)

875 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/1831: Antrag der Abgeordneten Heike Hänsel, Andrej Hunko, Sevim Dağdelen, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Keine Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen – Rüstungsbegrenzung stärken", 19th leg. period, April 24, 2018, 1.

876 Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/9316: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Tom Koenigs, Volker Beck (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/8861 – Entwicklung und Planung unbemannter Systeme in der Bundeswehr," 2012, 1; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/9414: Antrag der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Omid Nouripour, Katja Keul, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN Die Beschaffung unbemannter Systeme überprüfen", 17th leg. period, April 25, 2012, 1.

877 Transl. by author. Weber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3865.

878 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/3144: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Tobias Pflüger, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der dritten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/1700, 19/1701, 19/2413, 19/2424, 19/2425, 19/2426 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2018 (Haushaltsgesetz 2018) hier: Einzelplan 14 Geschäftsbereich des Bundesministeriums der Verteidigung ", 19th leg. period, July 3, 2018, 4; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/3185: Änderungsantrag der Abgeordneten Heike Hänsel, Tobias Pflüger, Dr. Gesine Lötzsch, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der zweiten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/1700, 19/1701, 19/2413, 19/2424, 19/2425, 19/2426 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2018 (Haushaltsgesetz 2018)," 2018, 1.

and vertical proliferation (5.2.2). Both camps directly and indirectly emphasized the significance of armed drone proliferation. Yet, they interpreted it differently. Moreover, their framings differed in what action they prescribed as the best option: Opponents treated it as a consequence of states acquiring armed drones, whereas for the advocates it was an incentive to catch up and join the trend – still, both groups believed arms control was possible (5.2.3).

5.2.1 Horizontal Drone Proliferation

Between 2009 and 2011, the proliferation of armed military drones was a rare topic in the Bundestag. After all, not many states possessed them yet, since armed drone proliferation only significantly increased in 2014 (Figure 4).[879] This slowly changed in 2012, when the opposition parties the Greens and the SPD repeatedly brought up drone proliferation in statements and asked the CDU/CSU-FDP government questions about it. One year later, the Left joined in. Precisely, the focus was on the diffusion of military drones. This topic peaked in 2013 and 2014, at the heyday of the drone controversy. The Left, Greens, and SPD interpreted states adopting military drones as part of an enfolding arms race. Discussions about vertical proliferation played a comparatively smaller role. Here the debate gradually evolved from automatic functions of armed drones to LAWS becoming their own weapons category.

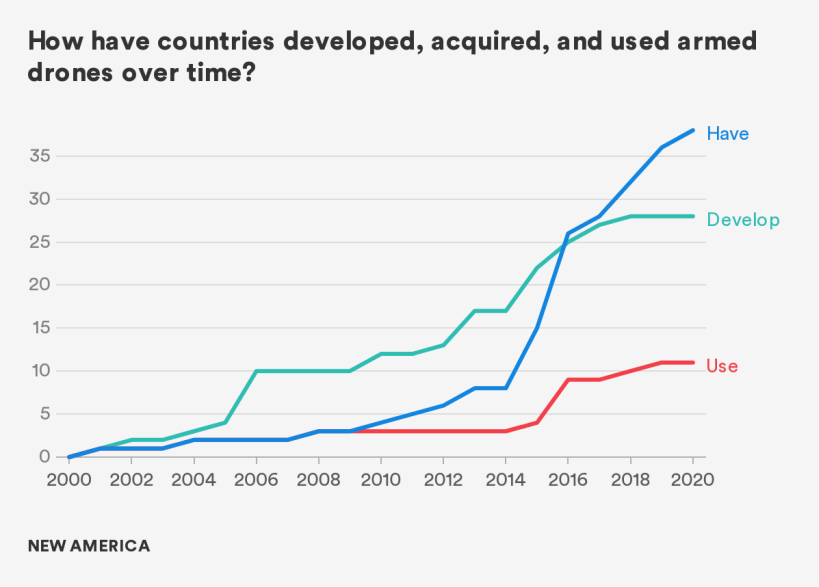

Figure 4: Armed Drone Proliferation 2000–2020
Source: New America Foundation

In the earlier years of the observation period, there was little transparency on armed drone programs and thus less statistics available on the current state of armed drone diffusion. In 2013,

879 Figure downloaded from the New America Foundation Website (New America Foundation, "How We Became a World of Drones".)

the proliferation was still in an early phase and took place relatively slowly.[880] Thus, politicians still talked about the immense diffusion of armed drones among states as a possibility, not a fact.[881] When asked which states currently had or used armed drone systems or what the NATO had planned, different governments responded they would have no reliable information on this matter.[882] In 2014, the amount of available information gradually increased. It allowed German politicians to be more specific in their statements: Over 80 states had ISR drones, a quarter of them were armable.[883] Within the EU, Germany, Greece, France, Italy, and the UK had military MALE-drones in that year.[884] Only the UK had already used armed drones in combat. The US was mentioned numerous times.[885] Together with China and Israel, the US played a dual role in the diffusion process. These states were not only armed drone states as such, but they were also proliferators, meaning they sold domestically produced armed drones to other countries.[886]

As predicted by the speakers in 2013, the horizontal proliferation of armed drones continued over the years. Drone owning states listed in the debates eventually included, among others, the US, China, Israel, the UK, India, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Iraq, and Turkey. The Greens, Left, and SPD as well as the CDU/CSU-FDP government recognized the trend of an expanding

880 P. Schäfer, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28128; Wieczorek-Zeul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29773.

881 Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27116; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12437: Antrag der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," 2013, 1; SPD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13192: Antrag der Fraktion der SPD Für eine umfassende Debatte zum Thema Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 1.

882 See for instance FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13655: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Rolf Mützenich, Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels, Rainer Arnold, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der SPD – Drucksache 17/11102 – Haltung der Bundesregierung zum Erwerb und Einsatz von Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 4; Böhmer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/208", 18th leg. period, 208th sess., December 14, 2016, 20808.

883 von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4054; Otte, ibid., ibid., 4058; Hunko, ibid., ibid., 4059; Höger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/50", 18th leg. period, 50h sess., September 10, 2014, 4628.

884 de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31348; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/3605: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/3293 – EU-Konzept zum Einsatz von Drohnen in Militärmissionen," 2014, 4.

885 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/445: Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung. Bericht der Bundesregierung zum Stand der Bemühungen um Abrüstung, Rüstungskontrolle und Nichtverbreitung sowie über die Entwicklung der Streitkräftepotenziale 2009 (Jahresabüstungsbericht 2009)", 17th leg. period, January 13, 2010, 49; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/8857: Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung Bericht der Bundesregierung zum Stand der Bemühungen um Rüstungskontrolle, Abrüstung und Nichtverbreitung sowie über die Entwicklung der Streitkräftepotenziale (Jahresabrüstungsbericht 2011)", 17th leg. period, February 29, 2012, 53.

886 Stefan Liebich, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27091; 93; de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31348; Wieczorek-Zeul, ibid., ibid., 31354; Groth, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/58," 2014, 5416; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/8065: Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung Bericht der Bundesregierung zum Stand der Bemühungen um Rüstungskontrolle, Abrüstung und Nichtverbreitung sowie über die Entwicklung der Streitkräftepotenziale (Jahresabrüstungsbericht 2015)", 18th leg. period, April 7, 2016, 75; Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3868.

armed and unarmed drone use by states.[887] Two less prominent points in debates about horizontal proliferation were the possibilities of armed drones falling in the hands of non-state actors or hostile drone attacks against German forces. Only the Greens and the Left occasionally raised the issue of non-state actors, such as terrorists, acquiring and using armed drones.[888]

As reasons for drone diffusion, speakers predominantly identified the increasing production and export of large military drones by states, partly facilitated by decreasing production and consequently procurement costs.[889] While Germany was not yet exporting whole drone systems, inquiries by the opposition led the government to tell parliament about German drone component exports, for instance to the US.[890] The speakers barely mentioned the dual-use capability of military drones, although this can accelerate horizontal proliferation. When talking about the intersection of civil and military drones, the prevailing angle was the abundant civil and military applications of drones in terms of aviation.[891]

5.2.2 Vertical Drone Proliferation

Vertical proliferation, meaning armed drone technology becoming more advanced and potent, was overall less prominent in the debate than the horizontal proliferation. In the earlier years of the debate, speakers pointed to developments in hardware heavy areas such as miniaturization,

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887 Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 16/12404: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Alexander Bonde, Irmingard Schewe-Gerigk, Dr. Wolfgang Strengmann-Kuhn und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/ DIE GRÜNEN. – Drucksache 16/12192 – Einführung und Bedeutung ziviler unbemannter Fahrzeuge", 16th leg. period, March 24, 2009, 1; SPD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11102: Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Rolf Mützenich, Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels, Rainer Arnold, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der SPD. Haltung der Bundesregierung zum Erwerb und Einsatz von Kampfdrohnen," 2012, 1-2; Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28128; Wieczorek-Zeul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29773; Höger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/50," 2014, 4628; Hunko, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/208," 2016, 20808; Grübel, ibid., "Drucksache 19/28: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Zeit vom 24. Oktober bis 3. November 2017 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 19th leg. period, November 3, 2017, 30-1.

888 Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 16/12481: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Alexander Bonde, Winfried Nachtwei, Omid Nouripour, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIEGRÜNEN – Drucksache 16/12193 – Einführung und Bedeutung unbemannter militärischer Fahrzeuge und Luftfahrzeuge," 2009, 12; Gysi, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27083; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12437: Antrag der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," 2013, 1; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/2685: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Dr. Tobias Lindner, Doris Wagner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/2243 – Planungen des Bundesministeriums der Verteidigung zum Einsatz waffenfähiger bzw. bewaffneter Drohnen", 18th leg. period, September 29, 2014, 7.

889 Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27116; Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31355.

890 See for instance, LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 16/13609: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Monika Knoche, Heidrun Bluhm, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 16/13341 – Nutzung des deutschen Luftraums durch Drohnen", 16th leg. period, July 1, 2009, 7.

891 For instance Coordinator Airspace, ibid., "Drucksache 16/13941: Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung. Bericht des Koordinators für die deutsche Luft- und Raumfahrt", 16th leg. period, 13 July 2009, 20.

microelectronics, and robotics.[892] Drone swarms played a very minor role.[893] From 2012 on, the spotlight turned towards the increasing automatic functions of military drones, peaking in 2013.[894] The vast amounts of complex information would be too much to process for human soldiers.[895] Speakers from the Left noted a vertical arms race towards autonomy caused by the continuously reduction in communication and decision-making time.[896]

Once LAWS emerged as their own conceptional category, existing drone systems lost their scare factor, because the daunting prospect of machine autonomy had been one of the most controversial aspects in the drone debate. In 2013 and 2014 speakers talked about future (fully) autonomous AMALE-drones and their autonomous capabilities.[897] Here, the drone was a reference category and autonomy a characteristic. In just a few years, this characteristic of drones, and indicator of their vertical proliferation, evolved into a distinct weapons category: LAWS.[898] Gradually, parliamentary discussions about autonomous weapons did no longer take place in

892 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 16/13609: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Monika Knoche, Heidrun Bluhm, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 16/13341 – Nutzung des deutschen Luftraums durch Drohnen," 2009, 1; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/9316: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Tom Koenigs, Volker Beck (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/8861 – Entwicklung und Planung unbemannter Systeme in der Bundeswehr," 2012, 1; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/2685: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Dr. Tobias Lindner, Doris Wagner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/2243 – Planungen des Bundesministeriums der Verteidigung zum Einsatz waffenfähiger bzw. bewaffneter Drohnen," 2014, 7; Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/196", 18th leg. period, 196th sess., October 20, 2016, 19551.

893 Grübel, ibid., "Drucksache 19/28: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Zeit vom 24. Oktober bis 3. November 2017 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2017, 30-1; Hunko, ibid., ibid., 30.

894 Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/9316: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Tom Koenigs, Volker Beck (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/8861 – Entwicklung und Planung unbemannter Systeme in der Bundeswehr," 2012, 1; Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27116-7; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12437: Antrag der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," 2013, 1-2; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29765; Bartels, ibid., ibid., 29766.

895 Mützenich, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27111; Arnold, ibid., ibid., 27116-7; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28127-8.

896 C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4053.

897 Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13235: Antrag der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Volker Beck (Köln), Marieluise Beck (Bremen), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN: Keine bewaffneten Drohnen für die Bundeswehr – Internationale Rüstungskontrolle von bewaffneten unbemannten Systemen voranbringen," 2013, 2; van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29770; Hunko, ibid., "Drucksache 18/221: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 16. Dezember 2013 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2013, 53; C. Schmidt, ibid., ibid.; C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4053.

898 Due to the focus on drones, I will not analyze speech instances exclusively dealing with LAWS. For literature on German perspectives on LAWS see Christian Alwardt and Johanna Polle, "Internationale Rüstungskontrollbemühungen zu autonomen Waffensystemen: Definitionen, Technik und sicherheitspolitische Implikationen," *S&F Sicherheit und Frieden* 36, no. 3 (2018).

the context of drones anymore but centered LAWS.[899] There were only few exceptions where speakers discussed AMALE-drones and autonomy in weapon systems together.[900]

5.2.3 The Possibility of Arms Control

All parties agreed on the importance of regulating armed drones, but their perspectives and recommended policy actions differed (see 5.3.3). Already in the 16th legislation period in 2009, when the CDU/CSU governed with the SPD, the government made clear that the MTCR covered armed drones.[901] Beginning in 2012, the topic of arms control consistently appeared in the parliamentary debates. Arms control is a way to regulate the proliferation of armed drones which can make the security dilemma more manageable and foster stability. While the drone opposition demanded to increase arms control for armed drones, the government sought to build trust in the existing frameworks and its regulation efforts. Throughout the years, governments affirmed the importance of arms control on several occasions.[902] As officials described, many German efforts centered on diplomatic dialogue, such as at the UN and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the promotion of transparency- and trust-

899 Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29763-4; See for instance Brugger, ibid., "Drucksache 18/4296: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 9. März 2015 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 18th leg. period, March 13, 2015, 16; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/1380: Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung Bericht der Bundesregierung zum Stand der Bemühungen um Rüstungskontrolle, Abrüstung und Nichtverbreitung sowie über die Entwicklung der Streitkräftepotenziale (Jahresabrüstungsbericht 2017)", 19th leg. period, March 23, 2018, 9.

900 Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/26", 19th leg. period, 26th sess., April 19, 2018, 2307; Weber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3866; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/5845: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Tobias Pflüger, Christine Buchholz und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der dritten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/3400, 19/3402, 19/4613, 19/4624, 19/4625, 19/4626 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2019 (Haushaltsgesetz 2019)", 19th leg. period, November 16, 2018, 5.

901 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 16/13609: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Monika Knoche, Heidrun Bluhm, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 16/13341 – Nutzung des deutschen Luftraums durch Drohnen," 2009, 7-8.

902 Michael Link, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12440: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 18. Februar 2013 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 17th leg. period, February 22, 2013, 5; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/2685: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Dr. Tobias Lindner, Doris Wagner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/2243 – Planungen des Bundesministeriums der Verteidigung zum Einsatz waffenfähiger bzw. bewaffneter Drohnen," 2014, 8.

building measures.[903] After 2015 most parties, except the Left, stopped stressing the arms race aspect, potentially because the rise of LAWS became a more prominent concern.

Germany was already very engaged in arms control, but speakers rarely used these activities as examples for a German arms control leadership role. Over the years, the drone discourse mentioned several German arms control efforts undertaken in various international fora.[904] From 2014 on, speakers also discussed regulation proposals and arms control efforts for armed drones by the EU and the UN.[905] A significant policy outcome resulting from German regulation efforts was the inclusion of armed drones into the UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA).[906] In July 2016, the government (CDU/CSU and SPD) praised the inclusion of armed drones in the register as a "decisive progress" ("entscheidender Fortschritt").[907] Germany would now try to act as a "role model" ("Vorbild") in arms control and encourage other states to report their arms transfers.[908] However, MPs did not elaborate on this idea.

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903 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/9316: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Tom Koenigs, Volker Beck (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/8861 – Entwicklung und Planung unbemannter Systeme in der Bundeswehr," 2012, 7; Link, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12440: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 18. Februar 2013 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2013, 5; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/2685: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Dr. Tobias Lindner, Doris Wagner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/2243 – Planungen des Bundesministeriums der Verteidigung zum Einsatz waffenfähiger bzw. bewaffneter Drohnen," 2014, 8; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/1380: Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung Bericht der Bundesregierung zum Stand der Bemühungen um Rüstungskontrolle, Abrüstung und Nichtverbreitung sowie über die Entwicklung der Streitkräftepotenziale (Jahresabrüstungsbericht 2017)," 2018, 58.

904 Transl. by author. In original: "neue Typen oder Versionen von Hauptwaffensystemen und Großgerät" (FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/9316: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Tom Koenigs, Volker Beck (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/8861 – Entwicklung und Planung unbemannter Systeme in der Bundeswehr," 2012, 6.) See also Link, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/224," 2013, 27832; Wolfgang Hellmich, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4060.

905 See FGG and LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/1318: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/1186 – Einstellung von Prüfvorgängen der Bundesanwaltschaft zur gezielten Tötung von deutschen Staatsangehörigen durch US-Kampfdrohnen", 18th leg. period, May 5, 2014, 12; ibid., "Drucksache 18/11023: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Niema Movassat, Dr. Alexander S. Neu, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/10618 – Die US-Basis Ramstein als wichtiger Knoten im weltweiten Drohnenkrieg," 2017, 11; ibid., "Drucksache 19/1988: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Michel Brandt, Ulla Jelpke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/1406 – Internationale Regulierung bewaffneter oder bewaffnungsfähiger Drohnen," 2018, 1-2.

906 UNRCA provides an overview of the stockpiles of conventional weapons worldwide. It fosters transparency in arms transfers (FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/1380: Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung Bericht der Bundesregierung zum Stand der Bemühungen um Rüstungskontrolle, Abrüstung und Nichtverbreitung sowie über die Entwicklung der Streitkräftepotenziale (Jahresabrüstungsbericht 2017)," 2018, 58.).

907 Transl. by author. FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/11968: Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung Bericht der Bundesregierung zum Stand der Bemühungen um Rüstungskontrolle, Abrüstung und Nichtverbreitung sowie über die Entwicklung der Streitkräftepotenziale (Jahresabrüstungsbericht 2016)", 18th leg. period, April 18, 2017, 38.

908 Transl. by author. FGG, ibid., ibid.

All in all, there was common understanding across the benches that horizontal and vertical drone proliferation were happening although their interpretations differed on what this meant for Germany and how it should react (see 5.3.3). At the same time, both drone advocates and opponents recognized the regulation of armed drones as possible and important (see Table 10).

Issue	Discursive tactics
Horizontal proliferation is happening	Agreement by all
Vertical proliferation is happening	Agreement by all
Arms control is possible	Agreement by all

Table 10: Issues with Common Ground and Discursive Tactics: Procurement and Proliferation
Source: Author's own work

5.3 Contentious Issues

While policymakers shared a common understanding about drone proliferation developments and the possibility of arms control, there were also three contested issues in debates about drone acquisition. Ideas and judgments about a future with (or without) drones, financial considerations, and policy positions prescribing appropriate behavior for how to react to drone proliferation (see Table 11). Given the ongoing proliferation, would Germany be better or worse off in the future if it had armed drones? Is it cost-effective or not to invest in drones? Which effects would German drone adoption have? These issues touch on important aspects of procurement policies. However, both groups took on different views. While drone advocates often argued from an industrial or economic perspective, drone opponents focused mainly on security.

Contentious issue	Drone advocates framing	Drone opponents framing
A future with drones	Technological progress	Arms races and robot wars
Finances of drone acquisition	Saving costs	Wasting money
Reactions to drone proliferation	Opportunities for aerospace and defense industry	Stopping or reversing armed drone diffusion

Table 11: Framings of Contentious Issues: Procurement and Proliferation
Source: Author's own work

5.3.1 A Future with Drones

Despite agreeing that military drones – both armed and unarmed – were becoming increasingly relevant, the parties disagreed on what a future with drones would look like and what policy actions Germany should take today. Their respective visions framed AMALE-drones as either a technological progress towards a bright unmanned future or a weapon system that fuels dangerous arms races.

5.3.1.1 Technological Progress

Drone advocates promoted the image of a bright drone future in both military and civil aviation to come, especially in 2013. Yet, this image remained abstract without many details. It also was rather detached from the hard-fact question of whether Germany should arm its current military drones right now or not. Drone advocates evoked the big concepts "future" and "progress" to underline the grand scale of the issue at stake, but their presentation lacked consistency over the years. Using these big concepts is an indicator for creating drama and setting up an emotional frame, potentially seeking to make their arguments more compelling. Conservative politicians moreover used repetition by dropping the term "future" ("Zukunft") numerous times in relation to drones. They were the next generation technology ("Zukunftstechnologie")[909] and set the technological course for the future ("Weichenstellung für die Zukunft").[910]

Conservative speakers rhetorically substantiated their arguments about technological progress with historical references. For example, Germany could not stick to the horse carriage while all others were developing railroads.[911] If they refused any new technologies, they would still fight with slingshots.[912] One speaker claimed the SPD chancellor candidate would talk about drones the way Wilhelm II talked about cars, who believed people would eventually go back to using horses instead of vehicles.[913] Such historical references generalized experiences, suggesting the future development and consequences of certain actions would be the same. In these comments speakers also used satire as a rhetorical tool to highlight their criticism and make it more memorable for the audience. Regarding discursive tactics, MP Hahn stood out for marginalizing drone critical PGs, e.g. the Left and the Greens, by calling them "progress-pessimistic and technophobic" ("fortschrittspessimistisch und technologiefeindlich")[914] and by accusing them of

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909 Transl. by author. de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27109; Hahn, ibid., ibid., 27120; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30651.

910 Transl. by author. Siebert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29772.

911 de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27109.

912 Transl. by author. In original: "neue Technologien als Chance für unsere Zukunft und für die Sicherheit unseres Landes begreifen" (E.-R. Beck, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/191," 2012, 23054.).

913 Hardt, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31358.

914 Transl. by author. Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28126.

denying the future ("Zukunftsverweigerer").[915] Doing so, he constructed a direct opposition of agent groups and agendas but used his party line as the "normal" perspective or benchmark by sticking to its concepts ("progress", "future") and negating them to characterize the others.

FDP policymakers similarly presented unmanned systems as part of a necessary progress; as a "technological leap" ("Technologiesprung")[916] in the aerospace industry. The Bundeswehr would require a "modern, technologically advanced aerial surveillance" ("moderne, technisch fortschrittliche Flugüberwachung").[917] They optimistically linked civilian and military drone technology to the new possibilities it would create in the future. Reacting to these propositions, Green MP Brugger accused them of blindly believing technologies could solve all problems ("blinde Technikgläubigkeit").[918] According to the Left, the conservative-liberal government's drone policy direction was guided by a tunnel vision ("Tunnelblick").[919]

Still, framing drones as a technology of the future clashed with the fact that other states, such as the US, has already had armed drones for years, as the previous chapter about military drone operation showed. Drone advocates argued that drones would constitute the future of flying ("Zukunft der Fliegerei")[920] and aviation ("Zukunft der Luftfahrt")[921] in the next decades. they would be central for future warfare ("Krieg der Zukunft")[922] and for the future operational readiness of the German military ("zukünftige Einsatzbereitschaft").[923] Still, the Bundeswehr had already been using unarmed drones for years, as pro-drone speakers pointed out (see 4.1.1). Thus, the novelty was limited.

Drone advocates did not feed this "bright-future"-framing as consistently over the years as the opposition had done with their "targeted-killing"-narrative. Above all, the CDU/CSU and the FDP promoted the positive aspects of drone technology, especially in 2013, when the German drone debate peaked. Yet, after 2013, when the decision about armament was temporarily off the table, drone advocates stopped elaborating on a bright drone future. Even in 2016, when it was back on the agenda, drone advocates did not resume depicting a positive future for drones.

915 Transl. by author. Hahn, ibid., ibid., 28124.
916 Transl. by author. Erdel, ibid., ibid., 28126.
917 Transl. by author. FDP PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/3179: Änderungsantrag der Abgeordneten Christian Lindner, Christian Dürr, Ulla Ihnen, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP zu der zweiten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/1700, 19/1701, 19/2413, 19/2424, 19/2425, 19/2426 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2018 (Haushaltsgesetz 2018)," 2018, 2.
918 Transl. by author. Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4056.
919 Transl. by author. van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/158," 2012, 19007.
920 Transl. by author. Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125.
921 Transl. by author. De Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27109.
922 Transl. by author. Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125.
923 Transl. by author. Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/8," 2018, 667.

5.3.1.2 Arms Races and Robot Wars

Both AMALE-drone advocates and opponents noted the accelerating proliferation of armed drones among states (see 5.2.1 and 5.2.2). Yet, they had different interpretations on how to react to this trend. In their causal stories, they each drew their own conclusions from proliferation and suggested policy options for Germany. One possibility for action in terms of getting drones was active industrial capability-building. Drone advocates did not assume that other states would one day use armed drones against them (arms race logic), but rather, they sought to keep up with the progress of military-industrial developments in other countries (economic competitiveness logic). Another possibility for action was regulation. All parties generally approved of regulating armed drones. However, they disagreed on the specific kind of regulation, whether to control, stop or reverse the proliferation of armed drones (5.2.3).

Especially from 2013 to 2015 the Left, Greens, and the SPD parties warned repeatedly that the increasing diffusion of armed drones would trigger an arms race or arms spiral.[924] Politicians characterized this development as "risky" ("riskant")[925] and "dangerous" ("gefährlich").[926] Occasionally, speakers from the Left and the Greens explained the mechanisms of arms racing: When one side possesses armed drones, the other side would be motivated to get some too.[927] In 2013, the Left even suggested the conservative-social democrat government was intentionally "turning Germany into the next arms spiral" ("Deutschland in die nächste Rüstungsspirale hineindrehen").[928] Conservatives directly disagreed. Bluntly, CDU MP Hahn remarked the arms race was already in place with or without Germany since the development and production was already going on worldwide.[929] After 2015, only the Left continued to raise the problem of a drone arms race, while the Greens and the SPD turned to other issues, such as LAWS.

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924 P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28128; Liebich, ibid., ibid., 28193; SPD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13192: Antrag der Fraktion der SPD Für eine umfassende Debatte zum Thema Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 1; van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29770; Wieczorek-Zeul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31354; Brugger, ibid., ibid., 31355; Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4056; Höger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/50," 2014, 4628; Hänsel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/112", 18th leg. period, 112th sess., June 18, 2015, 10829.

925 Transl. by author. LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12437: Antrag der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," 2013, 1.

926 Transl. by author. P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28128.

927 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12437: Antrag der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," 2013, 1-2.

928 C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/42," 2014, 3790.

929 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29765.

Especially in debates in 2013, a major concern regarding vertical proliferation was that armed drones were the first step into a fully automatic warfare.[930] SPD and Left speakers spoke of weapon systems becoming independent ("Verselbstständigung").[931] Politicians of multiple parties agreed the increasing automatization of armed drones would raise questions of international law, human rights, and ethics.[932] Green and Left MPs encapsulated the messages with memorable futuristic buzzwords, such as "high tech wars" ("Hightechkriege")[933] and "dreadful science fiction scenarios" ("grässliches Sicence-Fiction-Szenario").[934] A Left MP boiled down how he perceived the dynamic of this kind of asymmetric warfare: A clash between the "robotized warfare" ("robotisierte Kriegsführung") of industrial powers against the "archaic forms of violence" ("archaischen Gewaltformen").[935] In response, CDU/CSU politicians dismissed the prediction of these future scenarios with MP Siebert decisively rejecting "robot wars" ("Roboterkrieg") and MP Hahn criticizing it as "not okay" ("nicht in Ordnung") to suggest automatic wars were imminent.[936] The SPD rejected the development of autonomous weapon systems, while the Green and Left advocated for also abstaining from current armed drones.[937]

The speakers mainly interpreted the shift towards more machine-autonomy as not good. At the same time, these discussions revealed a passive attitude and lacked references to responsible agents. This passiveness and lacking agency created an impression of policymakers being overwhelmed and unsure how to act. They rarely mentioned the agents who were pushing for R&D in this area, thus omitting the attribution of responsibility. Politicians described the process

930 Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28126; P. Schäfer, ibid., ibid., 28127-8; see also C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/186," 2016, 18477.

931 Transl. by author. Mützenich, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27111; Arnold, ibid., ibid., 27116-7; Bartels, ibid., ibid., 27121-2; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28127-8; Arnold, ibid., ibid., 28126; Weber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3866.

932 Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/9316: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Tom Koenigs, Volker Beck (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/8861 – Entwicklung und Planung unbemannter Systeme in der Bundeswehr," 2012, 1; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/9414: Antrag der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Omid Nouripour, Katja Keul, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN Die Beschaffung unbemannter Systeme überprüfen," 2012, 1; Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27121-2; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13235: Antrag der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Volker Beck (Köln), Marieluise Beck (Bremen), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN: Keine bewaffneten Drohnen für die Bundeswehr – Internationale Rüstungskontrolle von bewaffneten unbemannten Systemen voranbringen," 2013, 2; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/2685: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Dr. Tobias Lindner, Doris Wagner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/2243 – Planungen des Bundesministeriums der Verteidigung zum Einsatz waffenfähiger bzw. bewaffneter Drohnen," 2014, 7-8.

933 Transl. by author. P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31351.

934 Transl. by author. Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4056.

935 Transl. by author. P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31351.

936 Transl. by author. Siebert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29772; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4064.

937 Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29763; van Aken, ibid., ibid., 29770; Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4056; Hellmich, ibid., ibid., 4061.

towards more automatization as a "trend" ("Trend")[938] or a "foreseeable tendency" ("absehbare Tendenz").[939] Several times they simply spoke of "the development"[940] in an uninvolved way. SPD MP Weber gave the impression German politicians were mere spectators, not decisionmakers, when she pointed out they would see "how the autonomy of these weapons will develop" ("wie sich die Autonomie dieser Waffen entwickeln wird").[941] MP Christine Buchholz's abbreviated causal chain, "combat drones lead to an automatization of war",[942] also illustrates the absence of agents, as it assigns causal power to the technology. By not naming the responsible agents, politicians were not able to shame them in order to build up public pressure to stop the automatization. From 2017 on, politicians barely talked about the development of LAWS anymore and discussed their regulation, as if it already existed. This dissertation, however, focuses on policy responses to armed drones, not LAWS. As we will see, speakers had very different opinions on how best to respond to the proliferation of armed drones (see 5.3.3).

5.3.2 Financial Considerations of Drone Acquisition

An important aspect of procurement are finances. For politicians, who see drones as part of a necessary technological progress, having to invest money would be a self-evident step. Since the parliament votes to approve the national defense budget, financial costs matter for military procurement. Lower costs can positively influence acquisition decisions. Military drones were widely recognized as cheap in the early years of the debate. In 2013, the financial blow of the Euro Hawk project shook this assumption to the core. Now, politicians who considered AMALE-drones as a dangerous weapon and would not want to spend any money on them anyways, used the Euro Hawk to attack the claim that drones would (at least) be cheap. Even more so, the drone opposition used the failure of this drone project to criticize German defense procurement as flawed in general.

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938 Transl. by author. Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29765-6.

939 Transl. by author. LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12437: Antrag der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," 2013, 1-2.

940 Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27116-7; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13235: Antrag der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Volker Beck (Köln), Marieluise Beck (Bremen), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN: Keine bewaffneten Drohnen für die Bundeswehr – Internationale Rüstungskontrolle von bewaffneten unbemannten Systemen voranbringen," 2013, 1-2; van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29770.

941 Transl. by author. Weber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3866.

942 Transl. by author. In original: "Kampfdrohnen führen zu einer Automatisierung des Krieges" (C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/186," 2016, 18477.)

5.3.2.1 Saving Costs

According to analysts, military drone technology would not only be cheaper to purchase than fighter jets, but they could also lower the costs for staff.[943] Accordingly, German drone advocates could have strengthened their discursive position by elaborating more on how armed and unarmed military drones could save costs, for instance in the modernization of the German forces. The public pressure to reduce the annual costs of military operations abroad was not as strong in Germany as it was in the US or in the UK. Still, it is surprising that this aspect was so little present German political debates.

In the early years, some Bundestag speakers did frame drones as a less costly aircraft option. In 2009, the CDU/CSU-SPD government remarked drones in general (without specifying whether armed or unarmed) seemed suited for fulfilling military tasks which were rather cost-intensive ("kostenintensiv") to carry out with other means.[944] Then, the Conservatives recognized they were less expensive than manned airplanes.[945] In 2012, Klaus-Peter Willsch, a CDU/CSU MP and chairperson of the parliamentarian airspace group, said that Germany should try to generate a return on its R&D investments by selling drones.[946] This was unusual in the German discourse, where openly promoting arms sales for profit was not the norm. In 2013, Conservatives also argued not arming drones right away was "uneconomic" ("unwirtschaftlich").[947]

Other parties thought differently. Not only did they argue that *operating* military drones was more costly than manned aircraft, they also claimed that military drone *acquisition* was too expensive.[948] Already in 2012, the Greens evaluated combat drones were neither "financeable nor sensible" ("weder finanzierbar noch sinnhaft").[949] The Left feared "additional cost explosions" ("weitere Kostenexplosionen").[950] They criticized the government (CDU/CSU and FDP) would soon spend one billion euros on military drone projects without knowing where they

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943 Kaag and Kreps, *Drone Warfare*, 24-5; Byman, "Why Drones Work," 32; Strawser, *Killing by Remote Control*, 14.

944 Transl. by author. FGG, German Bundestag, "Drucksache 16/13941: Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung. Bericht des Koordinators für die deutsche Luft- und Raumfahrt," 2009, 20.

945 de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27109; Siebert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29772.

946 Willsch, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/191," 2012, 23057.

947 Transl. by author. Siebert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27115; Siebert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29772.

948 Green MP Brugger for instances claimed hoping new weapon technologies would make war less expensive was illusory (Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4056.).

949 T. Lindner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/191," 2012, 23047; compare Nouripour, ibid., ibid., 23054; Green PG cited in Defense Committee Report, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11083: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss)," 2012, 5.

950 Transl. by author. Höger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/207", 17th leg. period, 207th sess., November 21, 2012, 25291.

could legally operate or what mission scenarios they were needed for.[951] Even FDP MPs were not yet convinced all questions had been answered for investing such large sums.[952] The discussion about the costs of military drones peaked in 2012–2013. In 2013, SPD MP Arnold cautiously acknowledged that drones were "relatively inexpensive" ("verhältnismäßig preiswert").[953] At the same time, he was apprehensive of low drone prices triggering a "massive diffusion" ("massenhafte Verbreitung") worldwide.[954]

To strengthen their financial arguments, drone advocates could have used the Bundeswehr reforms, which aimed to reduce costs.[955] Yet, they missed out on creating a compelling overarching narrative. The conservative-liberal government (2009–2013) had carried out a reform of the German armed forces, significantly reducing the troops size from 240,000 to 185,000 soldiers and suspending compulsory national military service. While the government did mention, among others, that it aimed to "adjust the tasks and capabilities of the Bundeswehr to the changing security policy environment […] and create a solid financial foundation for the future",[956] they did not systematically link this issue with the acquisition of armed drones. Instead, the government focused their responses on operational parameters, such as the reduced number of staff in the area, timing of decision-making, and the command-and-control process.[957] These arguments were similar to those in the US and British official discourses. Yet, unlike in those countries, German speakers did not overly praise military drone technology as an integral part of a fiscally sound reforms to the Bundeswehr. A possible reason is that Germany simply lacked the negative experiences that the US, and partly also the UK, had made with extensive military deployments overseas. Thus, it also lacked the public pressure resulting from escalated financial costs of a protracted war.

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951 Hänsel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/201," 2012, 24528; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28128.

952 Hoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/191," 2012, 23051; Erdel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30650.

953 Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28126.

954 Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27116.

955 Bundeswehr, "Constant Change: Reforms of the Bundeswehr," *Bundeswehr.de*, https://www.bundeswehr.de/en/about-bundeswehr/history/reforms-bundeswehr; Spiegel Online, "Conscription in Germany to End Next Summer," *Der Spiegel*, November 23, 2010, https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/military-reform-conscription-in-germany-to-end-next-summer-a-730660.html.

956 Transl. by author. In original: "Aufgaben und Fähigkeiten der Bundeswehr den sich verändernden sicherheitspolitischen Rahmenbedingungen anzupassen […] und ein solides finanzielles Fundament für die Zukunft zu schaffen" (FGG, German Bundestag, "Drucksache 17/9316: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Tom Koenigs, Volker Beck (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/8861 – Entwicklung und Planung unbemannter Systeme in der Bundeswehr," 2012, 3.).

957 FGG, ibid., ibid.

After 2013, the argument that "drones are saving costs" disappeared. At the same time, the public drama surrounding the expensive "Euro Hawk debacle" ("Euro-Hawk-Debakel") erupted, strongly impacting the discursive ecosystem.[958] The Euro Hawk was a large, unarmed ISR drone. Defense Minister de Maizère finally stopped the project in 2013, because it turned out the system did not fit the local airspace regulations and was consequently not allowed to fly. Opposition speakers discursively framed the Euro Hawk as a waste of millions of euros due to excessive costs with no final product.[959] The prestigious MOD project became known as a highly expensive "disaster" ("Desaster")[960] and impacted the debate about armed military drones, as I shall now discuss.

5.3.2.2 Wasting Money

Drone opponents instrumentalized the well-known Euro Hawk disaster to their advantage. Through discursive grafting, they linked the negative connotations associated with the expensive project failure of the (unarmed) Euro Hawk drone project with other (potentially armed) drone initiatives. Despite the best efforts of the Conservatives to downplay the scandal, the Euro Hawk remained in the parliamentary drone discourse for years. The opposition kept bringing it up, for example the estimated costs for its storage.[961] The Left kept discursively linking other military drone projects to the Euro Hawk, both explicitly by speaking of the "Euro-Hawk successor" ("Euro-Hawk-Nachfolger") or using phrases from the Euro Hawk debate to criticize the financial risks of new drones.[962] To them, military drone projects were a waste of taxpayer money.[963] As Gregor Gysi, then leader of the Left PG in the Bundestag, remarked, the CDU/CSU-FDP government took over a hundred million euros of taxpayer money for developing the "spy system" ("Spionagesystem") for the Euro Hawk, instead of having Airbus covering it. He concluded this was a "pointless project" ("sinnloses Projekt") because the German

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958 Transl. by author. Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/240," 2013, 30139; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31351-2.

959 Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29767; Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/56", 18th leg. period, 56th sess., October 8, 2014, 5170-1.

960 Transl. by author. Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29767; Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/240," 2013, 30138; Bartels, "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31347; Brugger, ibid., ibid., 31354-5.

961 See for instance T. Lindner, ibid., "Drucksache 18/10773: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 19. Dezember 2016 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 18th leg. period, December 23, 2016, 27; Neu, ibid., "Drucksache 18/11682: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 20. März 2017 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 18th leg. period, March 24, 2017, 18; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/3055: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Michel Brandt, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/2502 – Verkauf der zu Abhörzwecken beschafften Drohne EURO HAWK", 19th leg. period, June 28, 2018, 2.

962 C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/23," 2014, 1785.

963 P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/240," 2013, 30130; Gysi, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30644; Höger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31499.

state paid for it but received nothing in return.[964] Conservatives, by contrast, tried to normalize the Euro Hawk failure as regular bumps in the road during prototype development.[965] The opposition, however, concluded the Minister of Defense had failed.[966]

Even more so, the Euro Hawk expanded the discussion. Now, the debate was not only anymore about putting weapons on drones, but about generally flawed German defense procurement practices and bad governance. Among others, opposition speakers criticized the tight web of relationships between the arms industry, Bundeswehr leadership, and the German MOD.[967] For the Left, the situation was clear. By calling for armed drones for the German forces they would become the "aide of the arms lobby" ("Gehilfe der Rüstungslobby"),[968] as Left MP Koch summarized. Similarly, the Greens labelled the German drone procurement practices "costly and aimless" ("kostspielig und planlos") and called the system broken.[969] For example, after the Euro Hawk project had wasted billions of euros, nobody had held the involved companies responsible.[970] Several times speakers pointed out that people central to the procurement process did not fulfill their roles properly.[971] Left speakers also painted a negative picture of the bureaucratic structures, quality control, and corporate culture in German defense procurement institutions.[972] Moreover, politicians argued past defense contracts were inadequate; a result of a poorly performing government.[973] Similar arguments about inadequate defense contracts reappeared in discussions about the Heron 1 successor in 2016.[974]

Armed drone procurement also appeared in budget debates. In 2016, the Left and Greens, both in the opposition, criticized the government (CDU/CSU and SPD) for spending too much money on military drones in the first place. They stressed how many million euros would go into drone projects, repeated how previous (unsuccessful) defense projects always ended up

964 Transl. by author. Gysi, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30644.
965 Hahn, ibid., ibid., 30651; Brandl, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31362.
966 Wieczorek-Zeul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31354.
967 P. Schäfer, ibid., ibid., 31352; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/14776: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Jan van Aken, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/14576 – Beteiligung der Bundesregierung an der Entwicklung der EADS-Drohne „Future European MALE"", 17th leg. period, September 19, 2013, 7.
968 Transl. by author. Koch, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/195," 2012, 23446.
969 Transl. by author. Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31356; Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/32," 2018, 3051.
970 Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/32," 2018, 3051.
971 Nouripour, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/240," 2013, 30135; Brinkmann, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30651.
972 Nouripour, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/240," 2013, 30135; van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/252," 2013, 32604; Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/56," 2014, 5185; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/2729: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Katja Keul, Agnieszka Brugger, Dr. Tobias Lindner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/ DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/2396 – Konsequenzen aus dem Rüstungsprojekt „Euro Hawk"", 18th leg. period, October 7, 2014, 1.
973 Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/56," 2014, 5171.
974 Leutert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/202," 2016, 20222.

costing even more, and criticized plans by the CDU/CSU-SPD government to raise defense expenditures.[975] If the government canceled all drone projects, it would save millions of euros in return.[976] In 2018, the Greens again reminded the audience the arms industry had received billions of euros for "expensive new developments" ("teure neue Entwicklungen") but ultimately failed, just as Airbus had failed with the Euro Hawk.[977] In a nutshell, they painted the government's defense finance decisions in a poor light.

Consequently, the failure of the Euro Hawk program emerged as a pivotal element in shaping both the political context and the discourse surrounding German military drone programs. It reinforced the representation of drone projects as secret affairs, lacking democratic accountability. This exemplifies the opposition's strategy of framing armed drones within a larger narrative, thereby increasing the visibility and significance of the issue.

5.3.3 Reactions to Drone Proliferation

The political options of acquiring and using armed drones sit within a larger structure of context and meanings: What does it mean for Germany to get armed drones given everything that is going on? This dissertation assumes that acquisition policy is not an isolated national action, but that it interacts with and responds to the international environment. That is why the previous chapter examined debates about (potential) uses of armed drones abroad (see Chapter 4), and this subchapter will now deconstruct ideas about military drone proliferation as articulated in

975 C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/152", 18th leg. period, 152nd sess., January 28, 2016, 1427; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/7725: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Christine Buchholz, Sevim Dağdelen, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/7426 – Auswahlentscheidung zur Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen," 2016, 6; C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/186," 2016, 18477; Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/32," 2018, 3051; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/3185: Änderungsantrag der Abgeordneten Heike Hänsel, Tobias Pflüger, Dr. Gesine Lötzsch, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der zweiten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/1700, 19/1701, 19/2413, 19/2424, 19/2425, 19/2426 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2018 (Haushaltsgesetz 2018)," 2018, 2.

976 Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/10420: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Sven-Christian Kindler, Ekin Deligöz, Anja Hajduk, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN zu der dritten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 18/9200, 18/9202, 18/9824, 18/9825, 18/9826 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2017 (Haushaltsgesetz 2017)", 18th leg. period, November 22, 2016, 8; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/5905: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Sven-Christian Kindler, Ekin Deligöz, Anja Hajduk, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN zu der dritten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/3400, 19/3402, 19/4624, 19/4625, 19/4626 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2019 (Haushaltsgesetz 2019)," 2018, 12.

977 Transl. by author. Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/32," 2018, 3051.

the Bundestag. By attributing meaning to armed drone proliferation dynamics, speakers interpreted what is at stake for Germany (missing out or contributing to instabilities) and framed possibilities for action – should Germany join the military drone trend and/or regulate it more?

5.3.3.1 Joining In – Industrial Capability-Building as a Policy Option

This section sheds light on the industrial dimension of the security dilemma posed by the growing diffusion of armed drones, as discussed in the Bundestag debates. Efforts to build up a domestic drone capability may not determine whether to arm drones or not. Still, as the literature review showed (see 1.1), many European states saw drones not only as significant military assets but also wanted a competitive drone industry to supply their domestic market or export abroad.[978] So even if German decision-makers currently refrained from the decision to arm German drones, they might not want to miss out on this military-industrial trend and the economic opportunities. Especially in highly developed countries, governments created indigenous programs, seeking to build a domestic drone industry for securing drone capability long-term.[979] That is why capability-building was a relevant policy option for armed drone adoption. As the analysis shows, these issues were intimately linked. When discussing capability-building from an economic competitiveness angle, the speakers simultaneously contributed to constructing the wider discursive context of military armed drone policy.

Drone advocates were concerned that Germany might fall behind in drone technology development; they wanted to maintain the international competitiveness of the German aerospace and defense industry. Ideas about external pressures in a system of international competition informed these claims. In 2009, even the opposition was interested in the competitiveness of Germany drone companies.[980] The CDU/CSU-SPD government responded the German aerospace industry was not behind, but that it would have to make sure it remained competitive in the new

978 Schulzke, *The Morality of Drone Warfare*, 72-3.

979 Gilli and Gilli, "Emerging Technologies: UAVs," 752-4.

980 Green PG, German Bundestag, "Drucksache 16/12404: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Alexander Bonde, Irmingard Schewe-Gerigk, Dr. Wolfgang Strengmann-Kuhn und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/ DIE GRÜNEN. – Drucksache 16/12192 – Einführung und Bedeutung ziviler unbemannter Fahrzeuge," 2009, 5; Keul, ibid., "Drucksache 17/1389: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 12. April 2010 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 17th leg. period, April 16, 2010, 21; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/14053: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Jan van Aken, Herbert Behrens, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/13497 – Militärische Drohnen-Strategie der Bundesregierung: Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 13.

market of ISR drones.[981] In 2012, the Greens then complained the conservative-liberal government would ignore the risks of armed drones due to their "urge" ("Drang") to keep up with other states technologically.[982] During the 2013 Bundestag debates, the CDU/CSU, FDP, and SPD used this very argument. Germany must follow suit and also become an armed drone state because drones are the future of the civil and military aviation, as well as for the aerospace and defense sectors. Now was the time for the Germany military to keep up, because in the future every "well- and modern equipped army will have and use this technology", as CDU MP Andreas Schockenhoff asserted.[983] This sense of urgency made their framing more compelling.

After the 2013 election, the coalition parties, the CDU/CSU and the SPD, promoted German drone R&D as well as production within a European collaboration, also to become more independent from third parties.[984] As CDU/CSU defense policy spokesperson Henning Otte argued, leasing MALE-drones from Israel was only a temporary solution before indigenous systems were available ("Übergangslösung").[985] As MP Hahn put it, developing these systems at home rather than buying off-shelf platforms from third parties allows "to understand and control" the technology ("zu verstehen und beherrschen").[986] In 2012, the CDU/CSU and the FDP reminded the audience that their coalition treaty had called the expansion of "independent national capabilities" ("eigenständige nationale Fähigkeiten") for UAVs "indispensable" ("unabdingbar").[987] The Conservatives warned Germany could not afford to forgo drone technology. That is why Germany and Europe should use their capabilities in this area; not least to gain independence from others when it comes to acquiring these capabilities.[988] European drone cooperation was considered pivotal. In 2018, CDU MP Anita Schäfer reminded the audience of how high the stakes of the Eurodrone were in her eyes. If the Eurodrone project failed, Germany would be

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981 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 16/12404: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Alexander Bonde, Irmingard Schewe-Gerigk, Dr. Wolfgang Strengmann-Kuhn und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/ DIE GRÜNEN. – Drucksache 16/12192 – Einführung und Bedeutung ziviler unbemannter Fahrzeuge," 2009; German Bundestag, "Drucksache 16/13941: Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung. Bericht des Koordinators für die deutsche Luft- und Raumfahrt," 2009, 23-4; 39.

982 Transl. by author. Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/207," 2012, 25302.

983 Transl. by author. In original: "Künftig wird jede gut und modern ausgestattete Armee diese Technologie besitzen und einsetzen." (Schockenhoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30640; see also Schockenhoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27073.)

984 Schockenhoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27073; Arnold, ibid., ibid., 27117; Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28126; Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4057; Eckhard Gnodtke, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/69", 19th leg. period, 69th sess., November 30, 2018, 8102.

985 Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3863.

986 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4065.

987 CDU/CSU PG and FDP PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/10825: Bericht* des Haushaltsausschusses (8. Ausschuss) zu dem Gesetzentwurf der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 17/10200, 17/10202 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2013 (Haushaltsgesetz 2013)", 17th leg. period, November 16, 2012, 6.

988 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125-6; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27120.

doomed to fall behind the United States, China, and Israel in technology, and would never be able to catch up again ("uneinholbar").[989]

Besides stressing the industrial competitiveness, speakers also framed European drone collaboration as key to Germany's role as a reliable partner. Minister de Maizière agreed Germany could not avoid the issue of MALE-drones, since allies like France already had them.[990] Similarly, the SPD implied Germany had to accommodate European R&D partners who wanted to develop armed drones. Armable platforms were a compromise to achieve this.[991] In 2013, the Greens criticized the CDU/CSU-FDP government for this "Germany must follow suit"-framing and reassured there was no "inevitability" ("Zwangsläufigkeit") for Germany to join in on every new weapon system.[992] In 2014, MP Brugger similarly called out the new CDU/CSU-SPD government for fearing to miss out on a technological development.[993]

Other opposition MPs were concerned the Eurodrone would make Germany a drone proliferator together with France, Spain, and Italy. The jointly developed drone would be ready for series production in the mid-2020s, expanding the scale of the produced platforms.[994] They reminded the audience that the rationale behind this project was that other EU states should also be able to acquire the Eurodrone, including its armament.[995] The Left, the SPD, and the Greens were skeptical of investing large sums in European drone R&D projects such as the Eurodrone.[996] In line with their larger anti-military drone party position, the Left presented abstention as a policy alternative to procuring armable or armed drones. Germany should pull out of drone projects, for instance the Global Hawk, like other states had done.[997]

The argument that investing in military drones would trigger other positive economic effects, such as securing industry jobs, was, surprisingly, not really part of the Bundestag discourse on military drones. Still, the term "industry policy" ("Industriepolitik") appeared repeatedly

989 Transl. by author. A. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3870.
990 de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31348.
991 Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4057.
992 Transl. by author. Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27113.
993 Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4056.
994 A. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3870.
995 Hunko, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4059.
996 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/10389: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Christine Buchholz, Katrin Kunert und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der dritten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 18/9200, 18/9202, 18/9813, 18/9824, 18/9825, 18/9826 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2017 (Haushaltsgesetz 2017) hier: Einzelplan 14 Geschäftsbereich des Bundesministeriums der Verteidigung", 18th leg. period, November 21, 2016, 2; see also Wieczorek-Zeul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29773.
997 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/5538: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Jan van Aken, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/5224 – NATO-Drohnen im Programm Alliance Ground Surveillance", 18th leg. period, July 10, 2015, 1.

throughout the years, with agents of various party affiliations using it.[998] As an "export nation" ("Exportnation"),[999] much of the country's economic strength and therefore jobs depend on maintaining a strong industrial base, including in the defense and aerospace sector, and exporting industrially produced goods such as machines on a large scale. Yet, the AMALE-drone advocates missed out on expanding their causal story by stating how investments in drone capability-building would lead to more jobs, a greater industrial knowledge base and spill-over effects into other businesses such as the steel industry. Only the Conservatives mentioned twice in 2013 how the drone sector could secure jobs.[1000]

Given that Germany is one of the world's biggest arms exporters, one might expect the export of armed drones to be a prominent topic. However, it was not. The Left principally drove the discussion on national drone exports, issuing many requests for information and even advocating for the outlawing of arms exports.[1001] The lack of this subject hints at a norm to not talk about arms sales in parliament, at least not in an overly positive way. By comparison, politicians discussed international export control initiatives for armed drones more frequently. Germany primarily exported small drones like the LUNA model at the time.[1002] Accordingly, debates about national export guidelines focused on principles, not specific deals.

All in all, German politicians spoke soberly about defense R&D and production of drones without evoking any notions of patriotism or national pride. This might surprise some readers because, although German defense policy is very restrictive, the German defense industry is far from low-key. Every year German ranks among the top five defense exporters worldwide. The German discourse is very different from the British or American one, where politicians have

998 Transl. by author. LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/14053: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Jan van Aken, Herbert Behrens, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/13497 – Militärische Drohnen-Strategie der Bundesregierung: Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 13. See also Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 16/12404: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Alexander Bonde, Irmingard Schewe-Gerigk, Dr. Wolfgang Strengmann-Kuhn und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/ DIE GRÜNEN. – Drucksache 16/12192 – Einführung und Bedeutung ziviler unbemannter Fahrzeuge," 2009, 5; Kossendey, ibid., "Drucksache 17/1389: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 12. April 2010 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2010, 22; Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27117.

999 See for example Hoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27113.

1000 Hahn, ibid., ibid., 27120; Brandl, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31362.

1001 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12725: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/12437 – Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr", 17th leg. period, March 13, 2013, 1; van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29771; Groth, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/251," 2013, 32563; van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/252," 2013, 32605.

1002 See Höger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/229", 17th leg. period, 229th sess., March 15, 2013, 28662; van Aken, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13046: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 8. April 2013 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2013, 23.

taken public pride in being a "front rank defence player",[1003] providing "world-class technology"[1004] or a country whose drone strike technology can "eliminate the cancerous tumor called an al-Qa'ida terrorist" with "surgical precision".[1005] In Germany, even conservative policymakers merely stated in a technocratic way that there are German and European "competencies" ("Kompetenzen").[1006] Compared to British or American drone advocates, their tone was far less enthusiastic or patriotic. One explanation can be found in Germany's history. During the Nazi regime, some of the leading German defense companies, such as Krupp, made massive profits by collaborating with the Nazi regime and arming Hitler's forces.[1007] After World War II, military skepticism permeated German society (see 6.1). The lack of pride in the national defense industry might reflect this broader skepticism.

Although defense companies were the main agent in this narrative, members of the government parties only went as far as listing some of these companies as project partners, without elaborating on their significance. They attempted to maintain a certain distance. For example, in a 2013 debate about equipping the Bundeswehr with armed drones, MP Arnold, the SPD's parliamentary spokesperson on defense policy, acknowledged that due to the increasing importance of civil and military drones Germany had an "industrial policy interest" ("industriepolitisches Interesse") in the drone sector.[1008] Arnold cautioned industry agents who did not keep up were soon "out of the running" ("aus dem Rennen"), yet without specifying whether he meant civil or military agents.[1009] The repeated refusal of openly naming defense companies in this context indicates a discomfort. Potentially, Arnold and others did not want to seem like they were advocating on behalf of defense players in the drone debate.

Drone opponents aimed to discredit the pro-drone capability-building framing, attacking it with their own narrative about a murky political web in which the conservative-liberal government and arms lobbies were entangled in. They explained how defense lobbies were influencing this government behind the scenes, thus delegitimizing the capability-development process. Lobbyism became a central topic in 2013, when three different MALE drone acquisition projects were present in the discourse: the Euro Hawk, the Heron 1 successor, and the Eurodrone. It was time for deciding on how to proceed with them. From the Greens perspective, past and current drone

1003 David Cameron, "Speech Given at BAE Systems by Prime Minister David Cameron", Innovation & Skills Department for Business, Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street, and the Rt Hon David Cameron, March 21, 2015.
1004 Michael Jack, "Strategic Defence Review (Green Paper)", House of Commons, February 3 2010, c315.
1005 Brennan, "The Ethics and Efficacy of the President's Counterterrorism Strategy," 2012.
1006 Transl. by author. Hahn, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125-6.
1007 Sara Moore, *How Hitler Came to Power*, 2 ed. (Bloomington, Ind.: AuthorHouse, 2008).
1008 Transl. by author. Arnold, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27117.
1009 Transl. by author. Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28126.

policies had been guided by "promises of the arms industry" ("Versprechungen der Rüstungsindustrie").[1010] The Greens argued that the European drone industry had lulled the German government into its scheme.[1011] Due to "drone fever" ("Drohnenfieber"), the conservative-liberal coalition would have a compromised sense of responsibility.[1012] They portrayed the government as spineless. Instead of catering to the desires of the arms lobby, the government should stand up to this powerful interest group.[1013] Comparable to the Euro Hawk debates, they accused the government of bad governance in a way that tainted and delegitimized any drone policy they would propose. On several occasions throughout the years, opposition speakers from the Left Party and the Greens argued that the defense lobby and industry were the ones who benefitted the most from armed and unarmed drone projects.[1014]

5.3.3.2 Stopping or Reversing

Concerns about ongoing armed drone diffusion driving an arms race have been just as prominent in German Bundestag debates (see 5.2.1) as they have been in the academic literature (see 1.1.1). The regulation of these weapon systems would be a policy solution to the problem of a drone arms race. Proposing a solid regulatory framework also had the potential to mitigate worries about arms races or counter arguments of drone-skeptics. In this way, ideas about regulation and arms control could even have served drone advocates such as the CDU/CSU and the FDP to contribute to the acceptance of armed drone adoption as a policy option. Yet, only framings by the SPD, the Greens, and the Left presented arms control as a solution to the arms race.

Despite the diffused notion of arms control being relevant and possible, the preferred approaches differed. The Conservatives, who were in government during the entire examined time period, did not favor a preventive approach. They focused on talking about ex post diffusion

1010 Transl. by author. Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31357.
1011 In Germany, proving lobbying efforts and their results has long been difficult. Prior to the Lobbying Register Act, which came into effect on January 1st, 2022, opposition parties relied on individual parliamentary requests to ask about such meetings.
1012 Transl. by author. Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31356-7.
1013 P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/240," 2013, 30130.
1014 Höger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/207," 2012, 25291. See also Hunko, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4059; similarly see Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/32," 2018, 3051.

management, such as transparency- and confidence-building measures.[1015] By contrast, the Greens, the Left, and the SPD advocated for preventive arms control and rules for export in order to limit proliferation and the arms race. Some speakers, especially from the Left Party, even called for banning armed drones entirely.

Pro-drone speakers from the CDU/CSU and the FDP promoted the idea that regulation required participation in the military drone trend. Giving the argument about the need for arms control a different spin, in 2012 and 2013 Martin Lindner, the Vice Chairman of the FDP PG, and Bernd Siebert, a CDU/CSU MP, argued Germany would have to "stay on the field" ("auf dem Spielfeld bleiben")[1016] to be able to take part in shaping drone regulation. The FDP argued that one should not cut off this new technology, while the possibilities of their use may not yet be foreseeable.[1017] Rather than practicing abstention, as demanded by the Left Party, Germany could only ensure a responsible development of this technology, and shape the international rules of drone, if it participated in the current developments.[1018] In 2018, the CDU/CSU extended this argument to LAWS. Germany would need to foster know-how in machine autonomy to create countermeasures against LAWS for worst-case scenarios.[1019] Their approach resembled more of an ex-post diffusion management than proliferation countermeasures. Even though government officials as well as CDU/CSU and FDP MPs had a position on arms control, it lacked a function in their overall narrative. They could have provided a more thorough regulation plan for building trust among moderate drone-skeptics. Yet, the Greens and the Left were strictly against armed drones back then, so it may not have been worthwhile anyways. Thus, arms control did not help pro-drone speakers to make drone use emerge as a political option in the discourse, but it did for a long time play an important role in the counter-narrative by the drone opposition.

1015 Link, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12440: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 18. Februar 2013 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2013, 5; Link, "Plenarprotokoll 17/224," 2013, 27832; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/2685: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Dr. Tobias Lindner, Doris Wagner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/2243 – Planungen des Bundesministeriums der Verteidigung zum Einsatz waffenfähiger bzw. bewaffneter Drohnen," 2014, 8; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/12762: Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung Bericht der Bundesregierung über ihre Exportpolitik für konventionelle Rüstungsgüter im Jahr 2016 (Rüstungsexportbericht 2016)", 18th leg. period, June 15, 2017, 14; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/1380: Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung Bericht der Bundesregierung zum Stand der Bemühungen um Rüstungskontrolle, Abrüstung und Nichtverbreitung sowie über die Entwicklung der Streitkräftepotenziale (Jahresabrüstungsbericht 2017)," 2018, 58.

1016 M. Lindner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27091-2.

1017 FDP PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11083: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss)," 2012, 4; Hoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/191," 2012, 23051; Hoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27113.

1018 M. Lindner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27091-2; Siebert, ibid., ibid., 27114-5.

1019 Gnodtke, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/69," 2018, 8102.

Discursive frames prescribe the "right" action; the policy solution for a given problem.[1020] For the Greens, the Left, and the SPD, arms control could remedy or even solve armed drone proliferation problems and arms build-ups. Thus, their framing of arms control fulfilled the "solvability"-criterion for an effective cognition-oriented frame (see 3.1.2). By contrast, neither government officials nor CDU/CSU or FDP politicians framed arms control as a solution for a policy problem. Especially in 2013 and, less so, in 2014, the Greens, the Left, and the SPD advocated for preventive arms control and rules for export in order to limit proliferation and the arms race. Unlike the Greens and the Left, the SPD did not explain why proliferation was a security threat, but they still strongly advocated for Germany becoming more active in making sure arms control processes and treaties would include armed military drones.[1021] As Figure 4 showed, international armed drone diffusion began to increase significantly in 2015 (see 5.2.1). This surge in drone proliferation might have decreased the likelihood of (preventive) arms control, which would explain why drone-skeptical speakers from the Greens and the SPD did not talk about arms control as much anymore from this time on.

To describe the surge in armed drones, the Left, and to a lesser extent the Greens, drew on the concept of arms build-up ("Aufrüstung"), commonly understood as the increase in military potential.[1022] For the Left, the absence of effective arms control mechanisms was a "dangerous gap" ("gefährliche Lücke").[1023] The Left also took the political game one step further. By calling out the governments of the 17th and 18th legislation period for driving the German arms build-

[1020] Barnett, "Israel's Road to Oslo," 25; Payne, "Persuasion, Frames," 39.

[1021] Mützenich, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27111; Mützenich, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/224," 2013, 27832; SPD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13192: Antrag der Fraktion der SPD Für eine umfassende Debatte zum Thema Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 2; SPD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13655: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Rolf Mützenich, Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels, Rainer Arnold, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der SPD – Drucksache 17/11102 – Haltung der Bundesregierung zum Erwerb und Einsatz von Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 7-8; Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31359; Hellmich, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4060-1.

[1022] Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/9316: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Tom Koenigs, Volker Beck (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/8861 – Entwicklung und Planung unbemannter Systeme in der Bundeswehr," 2012, 1; Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27113; Gehrcke, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/224," 2013, 27831; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/1828: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Dr. Dietmar Bartsch, Roland Claus, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der dritten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 18/700, 18/702, 18/1023, 18/1024, 18/1025 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2014 (Haushaltsgesetz 2014)", 18th leg. period, June 23, 2014, 3; LEFT PG, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/120", 18th leg. period, 120th sess., September 9, 2015, 11671.

[1023] Transl. by author. LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13898: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der Beratung der Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Rolf Mützenich, Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels, Rainer Arnold, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der SPD – Drucksachen 17/11102, 17/13655 – Haltung der Bundesregierung zum Erwerb und Einsatz von Kampfdrohnen", 17th leg. period, June 11, 2013, 2.

up with their armed drone policy plans, they directly assigned responsibility.[1024] While these claims politicized the discourse in terms of opposition-government dynamics, the Left also showed a consistent narrative and had a clear causal story.

Some drone opponents championed another policy option in the area of international regulation: an international drone ban ("Ächtung"). For the Left, arms control agreements were only a first step towards the actual goal, an international drone ban (see below). They repeatedly demanded it.[1025] Among other benefits, a ban would make sure that opponents would not get any armed drones either.[1026] The Left made various ambitious suggestions for what the ban should cover, including the armament drones, their employment, and the production. [1027] At least in 2012, the Greens and the SPD, both opposition parties at the time, were not uninterested in the idea of banning armed drones either. Still, their speech instances were far more reserved.[1028] The Conservatives rarely responded to these demands. When they did, they argued without any armed drones it would not be possible to "take out" ("ausschalten") terrorist leaders without civilian

[1024] Gehrcke, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/224," 2013, 27831; LEFT PG, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/120," 2015, 11671; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/9857: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Christine Buchholz, Wolfgang Gehrcke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/9508 – Verwendung von bewaffneten Drohnen der MALE-Klasse ab Frühjahr 2019," 2016, 1-2.

[1025] LEFT PG cited in Defense Committee Report, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11083: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss)," 2012, 5; Hunko, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27109; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12437: Antrag der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," 2013, 1-2; Gysi, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30645.

[1026] Liebich, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27091.

[1027] Hunko, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4059; Petition Committee, ibid., "Drucksache 18/4990: Bericht des Petitionsausschusses (2. Ausschuss) Bitten und Beschwerden an den Deutschen Bundestag. Die Tätigkeit des Petitionsausschusses des Deutschen Bundestages im Jahr 2014", 18th leg. period, June 9, 2015, 59; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/6811: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Christine Buchholz, Katrin Kunert, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der dritten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 18/5500, 18/5502, 18/6113, 18/6124, 18/6125, 18/6126 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2016 (Haushaltsgesetz 2016) hier: Einzelplan 14 Geschäftsbereich des Bundesministeriums der Verteidigung", 18th leg. period, November 24, 2015, 5; Hunko, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20872-3; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/3144: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Tobias Pflüger, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der dritten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/1700, 19/1701, 19/2413, 19/2424, 19/2425, 19/2426 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2018 (Haushaltsgesetz 2018) hier: Einzelplan 14 Geschäftsbereich des Bundesministeriums der Verteidigung " 2018, 4; LEFT PG, German Bundestag, "Drucksache 19/5845: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Tobias Pflüger, Christine Buchholz und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der dritten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/3400, 19/3402, 19/4613, 19/4624, 19/4625, 19/4626 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2019 (Haushaltsgesetz 2019)," 2018, 5.

[1028] Green PG cited in Defense Committee Report, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11083: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss)," 2012, 5; SPD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11102: Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Rolf Mützenich, Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels, Rainer Arnold, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der SPD. Haltung der Bundesregierung zum Erwerb und Einsatz von Kampfdrohnen," 2012, 4.

losses.[1029] However, the government (CDU/CSU and SPD) explained banning a weapon system was only an option if its operation violated international law.[1030] Over time, the debate shifted away from banning armed drones to demanding an international ban on LAWS.[1031]

The Left believed in German agency and that a German decision to ban drones would have international weight. If a combat drone ban was the objective it would be important that Germany changed its drone policy accordingly.[1032] The Left argued that Germany should advocate for other European states not to get armable or armed drones either and push for a moratorium across the EU.[1033] These policy alternatives illustrate the belief that Germany could have significant political influence internationally.[1034] By comparison, while in favor of German arms control efforts, SPD MP Wolfgang Hellmich admitted that whether Germany said yes or no to armed drones, this decision would not halt the procurement, armament, and use of drones around the globe.[1035]

Reversing the proliferation of both unarmed and armed drones through disarmament was another policy option discussed. Among the progressive parties, it is an established practice to name arms control and disarmament together.[1036] Yet, arms control and disarmament are two different concepts and policies. While the former seeks to regulate the diffusion, development, and use of arms, the latter traditionally refers to the reduction or abolition of existing military

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1029 Transl. by author. Jüttner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/243," 2017, 24920.

1030 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/213: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/124 – Anstehende Entscheidung zur „europäischen Drohne" auf dem EU-Gipfel im Dezember 2013," 2013, 10.

1031 See for example, Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27117; Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28126; Wieczorek-Zeul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31354; Brunner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20883; T. Lindner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/212," 2017, 21345; Weber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3866; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/3219: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Katja Keul, Agnieszka Brugger, Dr. Tobias Lindner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 19/2816 – Regulierung von Autonomen Waffensystemen", 19th leg. period, July 4, 2018, 1-2.

1032 C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/243," 2017, 24922.

1033 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/1988: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Michel Brandt, Ulla Jelpke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/1406 – Internationale Regulierung bewaffneter oder bewaffnungsfähiger Drohnen," 2018, 1-2; LEFT PG cited in Defense Committee Report, ibid., "Drucksache 19/2582: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Heike Hänsel, Andrej Hunko, Sevim Dağdelen, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/1831 – Keine Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen – Rüstungsbegrenzung stärken," 2018, 3.

1034 See also C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/243," 2017, 24922.

1035 Hellmich, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4060.

1036 Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11956: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Volker Beck (Köln), Marieluise Beck (Bremen), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/11769 – Abrüstungs- und Rüstungskontrollpolitik," 2012, 1691; Mützenich, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/224," 2013, 27832; P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28128; SPD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13192: Antrag der Fraktion der SPD Für eine umfassende Debatte zum Thema Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 2.

weapons. From 2014 on, there have been speech instances by the SPD, the Greens, and the Left where these two concepts were conflated. Politicians talked about arms control but (falsely) labelled the described actions disarmament. Out of all parties, the Left used the concept of disarmament not only most frequently, but most accurately.[1037]

5.4 Conclusion

From a theory perspective, the use of armed drones as a political option sits within a wider structure of ideas about what it means for the future to (not) acquire combat drones (see Chapter 2). That is why I shed light on how German policymakers talked about possible courses of action in relation to getting armed drones. They presented a tableau of policy options regarding procurement (unarmed, armed or armable systems) and proliferation (capability-building and/or regulating). The analysis again revealed two broad groups – one advocating and one opposing AMALE-drones, advancing two narratives: The "necessary progress"-narrative of the advocates and the "perilous procurement"-narrative of AMALE-drone opponents.

In the first part of this chapter, which analyzed the procurement policy options for armed drones, two issues stood out: Armament for German military drones, and financial aspects of drone acquisition. While the issue of armament was, unsurprisingly, highly controversial, there was not much movement over the years. After the FDP was voted out of the parliament, only the CDU/CSU remained as a lonely advocate. Meanwhile, the Greens and the Left Party remained strictly opposed to arming drones. Caught somewhere in the middle, the SPD did slow down the decision-making process and, ultimately, delayed it. Still, the conservative-social democrat government coalition eventually settled on the compromise of "armable" drones. Another finding was, potentially, more surprising. The Greens and the Left had managed to drive the debate away from actual armament issues towards matters of governmental transparency, by accusing the government of having (secretly) decided to arm German drones already. They forced the other side to directly engage with these allegations, who had to try convincing the public that this was, in fact, not true. The opposition repeatedly presented new arguments and angles to increase the pressure on the government, who, in turn, ended up in the defense; at least initially. They were particularly strong in 2013, when several of their claims peaked (see Table 12).

[1037] Höger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/207," 2012, 25291; Wieczorek-Zeul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29773; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/12799: Antrag der Abgeordneten Wolfgang Gehrcke, Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Inge Höger, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Abrüstung jetzt und hier beginnen," 2017, 4.

Year	Claims by Drone Advocates	Claims by Drone Opponents
2009	*New*: MTCR covers armed drones *New*: Drones are cheaper	*New*: Inquiries on drone industry competitiveness
2010	/	/
2011	/	/
2012	*New*: Armed drones are an option, given an ethical debate *New*: No decision on armament yet *New*: Arms control	*New*: Inquiries on drone armament decision *New*: It is easy to arm drones later on *New*: Drones are not cheaper *New*: International drone diffusion *New*: Automatic functions of drone technology *New*: Arms control, potentially drone ban
	Peak: Costs of military drones	**Peak**: Costs of military drones
2013	*New*: Not arming now wastes money *New*: Germany must follow suit because drones are the future of aviation *New*: Support for German and European R&D	*New*: SPD slows down decision making *New*: Dangerous arms race or arms spiral *New*: Drones are not cheap (Euro Hawk)
	Peak: No decision on armament yet **Peak**: Bright future of technological progress **Peak**: Costs of military drones	**Peak**: Government has already decided to arm **Peak**: Defense lobby influences government **Peak**: International drone diffusion **Peak**: Fully automatic warfare with drones **Peak**: Broken military procurement system **Peak**: Costs of military drones **Peak**: Preventive arms control and export rules
2014	/	*New*: Left accuses government of hidden agenda
	Peak: No decision on armament yet	**Peak**: Government has already decided to arm **Peak**: International drone diffusion

2015	/	*New*: Autonomy debates more on LAWS, less on drones or arms race
2016	*New*: Only "armability", no arms	*Reappearance*: Broken procurement system
2017	/	/
2018	*Reappearance*: Not arming now wastes money *Reappearance*: Only "armability", no arms	*Reappearance*: Government has already decided to arm, despite "armability" *Reappearance*: Drones are not cheap (Euro Hawk)

Table 12: The Parliamentary Discourse over Time: Claims about Procurement and Proliferation
Source: Author's own work

Aided by the highly publicized Euro Hawk scandal in 2013, drone opponents dominated the debate about financing drones in a similar way. The public was very familiar with this negative example of drone procurement. Opposition speakers engaged in discursive grafting by transferring and attaching the already existing meanings of the failed (unarmed) Euro Hawk to other (potentially armed) drone projects, arguing they might become just as treacherous financially. For drone opponents criticizing government practices was a low-hanging fruit, but it was effective: They did not only manage to flip the previous "drones are a good financial deal"-claim but turned the subject of military drone procurement into a larger story about flawed German defense procurement system and bad governance practices. Thus, the failed Euro Hawk project was important for the German armed drone debate – not only as part of the political context, but also for the inner-discursive dynamics. It reinforced the impression of drone programs being cloaked in secrecy and diminishing democratic accountability. It also illustrated the general tactic of drone opponents to talk about armed drones as part of larger phenomena, giving the issue more spotlight and weight. Furthermore, these findings illustrate that the discourse was no neutral exchange of subject matter arguments but a political debate in which agents acted based on their roles and identities as opposition or government parties, respectively.

The chapter also demonstrated how speakers expressed ideas about what is going on in the world with regard to drone proliferation. In this process of sense-making, the diffusion of military drones and evaluations of future prospects were central. It depicted how differently speakers portrayed and judged future scenarios in an optimistic or pessimistic light; whether drones would present technological progress or lead to dangerous arms races and robotized automatic warfare. In 2012, when drones were still relatively rare, the Greens and the SPD temporarily sympathized with the idea of banning armed drones but far less than the Left, for whom it was

a key demand for years. When the drone controversy was at its peak in 2013–2014, the subject of the international diffusion of military drones also peaked in the debate. After 2014, it diminished in relevance again. Similarly, concerns about a dangerous arms race were prominent among drone-skeptical speakers between 2013–2015, but faded after. When drone diffusion began to pick up in 2015, the prospect of arms control became less likely. These developments coincided with a discursive shift from armed drones to LAWS in the later years of my observation period. The SPD and the Greens talked less extensively about the implications of drone proliferation and shifted the focus towards LAWS, including respective arms control demands. It suggests the diffusion of AMALE-drones was slowly becoming normalized, eclipsed by the rise of LAWS, which became a main concern in the discourse on new technologies in warfare.

Based on these assessments about what was occurring, the parties recommended policy actions in two major areas: joining the drone trend or drone regulation. On the one hand, the drone advocates sought to build up an indigenous drone-capability in order to keep up with other states and militaries, informed by a desire to compete internationally so Germany would not miss out. In their narrative, proliferation was a driver for getting drones. However, this chapter did not consider the assessments of military security threats or foreign policy landmarks in the discourse (for this see Chapter 4 and 6). For the Left, the Greens, and the opposition SPD, the arms lobby and defense industry had influenced these pro-drone calls for capability-building.

At the same time, there was a generally shared assumption that the regulation of weapons technology is possible and worthwhile, although the approaches differed. Drone advocates stood for an ex-post diffusion management since proliferation did not worry them. Drone opponents were very vocal in demanding to intensify regulations, especially preventative arms control. Both stances used fear and insecurity as motivation for their respective policy options. While the drone advocates mobilized the fear of missing out, the opponents built on worries about proliferation and arms races increasing insecurity. On a more abstract level, both views offered a general interpretation of the proliferation of armed drones and how Germany should respond to this development, thus creating a wider structure of meaning for armed drone use.

Looking at the effect of the arms control debate, it was more significant to the drone opposition for building a causal story than to the pro-drone side. Even though the government also had a position on it (ex-post diffusion management) it lacked a function in their overall narrative. Thus, arms control debates did not help the drone advocates to make drone use emerge as a political option. It did, however, stabilize the counter-position promoted by armed drone opponents for a long time.

Overall, the drone opponents were more dominant in the discourse again, just as they were in the debate on the military uses of combat drones (see 4.3). They demanded that Germany should not adopt armed drones at home and boost arms control internationally to stop dangerous drone races and potential robot wars. As they argued, the government would more likely do what the defense lobby wanted, not what was best for the people, plus they would waste taxpayer money in the process. The drone opposing camp dismantled the pro-drone "drones are cheaper"-argument and chased them with a series of critiques and accusations. At the same time, AMALE-drone advocates often kept countering claims of drone opponents instead of promoting their own speaking points. They withdrew from making active discourse contributions. Instead, they resorted to making defensive justifications.

The drone advocates did not have a late start this time as they did in the military use debate (see Chapter 4). Still, as explained above, they had less argumentative space available than drone opponents because there were less appropriate pro-military sentiments and images available in the German discourse than in other countries, such as the UK and the US. In the military use debate drone advocates were able to draw on the universally understood "saving soldiers"-argument. Here, the "strengthening the defense industry"-claim lacked a fertile discursive and normative ground that public pride in the national defense industry can provide for such claims.

Similarly, speakers seemed to want to avoid appearing too close to defense companies or disclosing too many details about armament options. After all, opponents of drones were quick to raise public concerns about the influence of the defense lobby and poor government practices. In the debate, drone advocates could have strengthened arguments about the positive effects of capability-building for Germany as a business location. While the drone opponents painted a vivid picture of potential consequences of getting drones, the pro-drone narrative fell flat of fleshing out what positive effects drone capability-building could have for the German economy, for example job creation, business growth, and technical know-how. All in all, drone advocates had limited options for representations and frames due to Germany's unique social and historical context, which set the stage for discussions about all things military, including defense procurement and the proliferation of new military technologies. At the same time, the observed time period bears some important shifts in how politicians recognized Germany's role in the world, which we can trace in the debate about armed drones. This is what the next chapter will examine.

6 The Foreign and Security Policy Context for Germany's Armed Drone Policy

In order to understand how Germany's armed drone policy developed from early 2009 to the end of 2018, it is essential to deconstruct how Bundestag speakers discursively (re)produced a foreign policy and security baseline for it. In line with discourse theory, such a baseline provides a framework of meaning for policymakers, helping them to make sense of what is going on and what they should do with regard to armed drones. What role should Germany (not) play in the world, especially in the face of asymmetric armed conflicts?[1038] This chapter does not specifically identify issues with a common ground or contentious issues. Instead, it focuses on the broader foreign and security policy context. It connects to the preceding two chapters by contextualizing previously identified themes, including concerns about "slipping" into undesirable war practices, the meaning of responsible foreign policy, trust in the government and the military, and solidarity with soldiers.

This chapter identifies two overarching foreign and security policy narratives that have emerged from the German drone debate: The "responsibility"- and the "restraint"-narrative (Table 13).

	Drone advocates	**Drone opponents**
Narrative	Responsibility	Restraint
Core	Standing behind the soldiers	Militarization concerns
Perspective	Trust	Caution
Agents	Soldiers, Bundeswehr, allies	Germany, US
Policy	More military operations	Less military operations

Table 13: Narratives "Germany's Foreign and Security Policy"
Source: Author's own work

While both sides sought to act responsibly, many German policymakers used the term "responsibility" in the sense of taking on more responsibilities in international (military) engagements. Furthermore, the "responsibility"-side wanted to improve the military, for example through the use of armed drones. They wanted to tailor Germany's drone policy to the needs of soldiers, the Bundeswehr, and international allies, and called on the public to have trust in the government and the military. In contrast, the "restraint"-side tended to be skeptical of armed drones

[1038] Breuning, "Role Theory Research," 28; Geis, Müller, and Schörnig, "Liberale Demokratien und Krieg," 176.

because of their general preference for less military operations. They were wary of destabilization and warned that armed drones were part of a creeping militarization. A key agent in their narrative was the US, which they used as an example of poor drone practices. In their eyes, the US lacked restraint in the use of force, but they demanded that Germany should uphold it.

In methodological terms, the previous two chapters mainly applied description and interpretation, whereas this chapter focuses on contextualization. Drawing on the concept of the "discursive ecosystem", I analyze how the interplay between discourse and context created possibility shifts for policy options. As described in the theory chapter, the concept of a discursive ecosystem allows to account for the space where ideational structures (e.g., historical and sociopolitical) and material elements (e.g., parliamentary structure, security-related events) interact with the discourse on armed drones. The first subchapter focuses on ideational structures. The second subchapter focuses on foreign and security policy challenges, such as impulses and events, that can even constitute "external shocks".[1039] In this way, I examine how the discursive ecosystem gradually changed until 2019, paying particular attention to the mid-2010s. Two events played a particularly important role in the changing discourse and as such deserve brief mention:

1) In 2013, revelations surfaced about the US secretly using military bases in Ramstein and the US AFRICOM in Stuttgart to conduct drone strikes abroad within the GWOT. It caused opponents of drones to shift their focus from the alleged illegality and immorality of US drone strikes to criticizing this scandal and contemporary US-German relations more broadly. Having dominated the debate in previous years, their vocal opposition to drone strikes as such diminished. This represents a notable thematic shift in the discourse, similar to the emergence of LAWS (see 5.2.2).

2) The use of ISR drones in Mali changed the way policymakers talked about German ISR drones in the years around 2016. It shows that unarmed systems had been largely de-scandalized. Not only did ministers speak positively about ISR drones in Mali but they also explained the German engagement in Mali in more detail than they had done for Afghanistan. Speakers now also stopped conflating armed and unarmed drones.

The chapter illustrates how drone-related speech instances have repeatedly intersected with major debates in German foreign and security policy. These debates include the extent to which Germany should engage in military missions, if at all, and what it means to "support our troops".

[1039] As described in detail in the theory chapter, external shocks are politically significant disruptions that can act as catalysts for change, such as normative shifts or new courses of action (see 2.3.3).

They also include discussions about the questions whether a stronger military would mean Germany is becoming more belligerent, whether NATO's actions are righteous and just, and about the nature of the US-German relationship. The chapter proceeds in four steps. The first part discusses what it means to talk about military issues in a country with a culture of military skepticism. It then presents the two main narratives centered on the question of whether their country should seek to assume more international responsibility or practice military restraint (6.1). The second part analyzes three impulses of foreign and security policy challenges that influenced the discursive ecosystem and interacted with the parliamentary drone debates, albeit to varying degrees. Not all of these impulses were driven by agents from the international level, such as the scandals over US drone strikes from bases in Ramstein and Stuttgart and the Russian annexation of Crimea. Some were also national decisions, such as the deployment of German ISR drones to Mali (6.2). Before the epilogue in Chapter 7, the main analysis ends with some final remarks on how policymakers have continuously discussed drone debates without making an actual decision on drone armament (6.3). The fourth subchapter summarizes my findings. It concludes that both the new debate about Germany resuming more international responsibility, and the empirical foreign and security policy impulses contributed to making AMALE-drones less scandalous over time. The conditions for armed drones to become a political option had slowly emerged (6.4).

6.1 Discussing the Right Path: More Responsibility or more Restraint?

In what follows, I will address the larger historical and socio-political context of German foreign and security policy and present important ideational structures that situate my analysis. In Germany, the drone debate was surrounded by unresolved questions and tensions within the national foreign and security policy context. When the drone controversies peaked in 2013–2014, not only was the international arena in turmoil, but Germany was also undergoing a process of reorientating and (re)defining its' international role. In 2015, Foreign Minister Steinmeier admitted that he had the impression Germany had not yet found its place in the new world; a world that was itself still in the process of creating a new order.[1040] These discourses provided the background for the parliamentary debates on armed drones, overlapping in meaning and sometimes even obstructing the decision-making.

[1040] Frank-Walter Steinmeier, "Vorwort von Bundesaußenminister Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier," *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* 8, no. 1 (2015).

This subchapter begins with a brief overview of how the emergence of a new domestic debate on German foreign and security policy in the mid-2010s affected Germany's historically skeptical approach to military operations. Although this new debate centered on calls for Germany to take more (military) responsibility in the international security arena, public opinion remained skeptical of military operations abroad. In parliament, pro-drone framings of economic power were far more common than those of military power. When depictions of drones included military agents, most drone advocates focused on soldiers rather than the Bundeswehr as an institution (6.1.1). The second section explores the two main narratives examined in this chapter, which relate to the new debate discussed above. They essentially answered the question of whether Germany should take on more international responsibility, including the use of force, or exercise more military restraint. As the analysis shows, the CDU/CSU and the Left Party were the main protagonists in the drone debate on these issues. They promoted opposing positions and framings. In contrast, the SPD and the Greens had mixed positions, with the former leaning toward responsibility and the latter toward restraint (6.1.2).

6.1.1 A New Debate? German Foreign and Security Policy in the mid-2010s

The post-World War II German strategic culture had a "focus on deterrence and war-prevention, rather than on compellence and kinetic operations",[1041] as Adrian Hyde-Price remarked. Given the tensions of the Cold War, defense spending was high. Since the 1960s, defense spending in West Germany has ranged between five and six percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), while in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), it has been about six to seven percent, partly because the GDR's economy was weaker.[1042] Nevertheless, West Germany had practiced military non-interventionism and the GDR had similarly avoided combat missions abroad. Peace was an active political goal, especially for the peace movement, which was prominent within civil society and the political left on both sides of the Wall.[1043] Especially in the West German public, a certain degree of military-skepticism had prevailed for decades. After the end of the Cold War and national reunification, Germany's foreign and security policy grad-

[1041] Adrian G. V. Hyde-Price, "The "sleep-walking giant" awakes: resetting German foreign and security policy," *European Security* 24, no. 4 (2015): 612.

[1042] Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, "Über den Verteidigungshaushalt und weitere Fragen der Ökonomischen Sicherstellung der Landesverteidigung der DDR im Kalten Krieg," in *Probleme der Rüstung und ihrer ökonomischen Sicherstellung in den Jahren des Kalten Krieges und in der Gegenwart* (2004), 45.

[1043] On the German peace movement see for example *Militär und Gesellschaft in Ost- und Westdeutschland 1970-1990*, ed. Jörg Echternkamp, 1st ed. (Berlin: Bundeswehr Centre of Military History and Social Sciences & Christoph Links Verlag, 2021).

ually evolved. Germany reduced its overall total military spending. However, it gradually expanded and increased its military contributions for out-of-area operations.[1044] This shift was controversial. Many politicians fiercely contested the contributions to and hence involvement in the Second Gulf War (1990–1991), military operations in Bosnia (1992–1995), Kosovo (1998–1999), and Afghanistan (2001–2021).[1045]

Even the use of the term "war" has held a highly negative connotation in the German language.[1046] When discussing Bundeswehr operations in Afghanistan, politicians have often avoided using this controversial term, especially in the early years of deployment. Since German politics and strategic culture in the post-World War II era emphasized military restraint as the appropriate practice, politicians long hesitated to openly discuss issues of war and combat.[1047] The language they used to talk about the Afghanistan mission, especially in the early years, illustrates how strong this hesitation was. Germany agreed to send troops to Afghanistan in late 2001. But politicians refused to call this armed conflict a war.[1048] Instead, the government communicatively framed the mission as peace support or stabilization mission.[1049] Finally, in 2009 – eight years later – Defense Minister zu Guttenberg spoke of "warlike conditions" ("kriegsähnliche Zustände") in some parts of Afghanistan.[1050] The public had to wait another year before zu Guttenberg spoke of "war", after three German soldiers had died in an ambush.[1051] Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier noted in 2014, "[t]he military engagements in Kosovo and Afghanistan marked a historic step for a nation that had previously sought to ban the word "war" from its vocabulary entirely."[1052] In the drone debates, the some MPs have

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1044 Rainer Baumann and Gunther Hellmann, "Germany and the Use of Military Force: 'Total War', the 'Culture of Restraint' and the Quest for Normality," *German Politics* 10, no. 1 (2001): 68.

1045 Hans-Peter Kriemann, *Hineingerutscht? Deutschland und der Kosovo-Krieg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2021).

1046 Valerio Vignoli, Falk Ostermann, and Wolfgang Wagner, "Ideological Talk, Strategic Vote: German Parties' Positions on the Military Intervention in Afghanistan in Parliament," *German Politics* 33, no. 4 (2024): 793.

1047 Donald Abenheim and Carolyn Halladay, "Stability in Flux: Policy, Strategy, and Institutions in Germany," in *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-military Relations*, ed. Florina Cristiana Matei and Thomas C. Bruneau (London: Routledge, 2013), 304.

1048 Zapfe and Rid, "Mission Command without a Mission: German Military Adaption in Afghanistan," 197.

1049 Vignoli, Ostermann, and Wagner, "Ideological Talk, Strategic Vote: German Parties' Positions on the Military Intervention in Afghanistan in Parliament," 786. referencing Daniel Jacobi, Gunther Hellmann, and Sebastian Nieke, "Defending Germany at the Hindu Kush: A Case of Failing Security Communication," *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* 4 (2011).

1050 Transl. by author. Solms-Laubach, "Afghanistan-Einsatz: Warum spricht Guttenberg jetzt von Krieg?"; and dpa Zeit Online, "Guttenberg hält Einsatz in Afghanistan für "kriegsähnlich"," *Die Zeit*, November 3, 2009, https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2009-11/guttenberg-afghanistan-krieg?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F.

1051 Solms-Laubach, "Afghanistan-Einsatz: Warum spricht Guttenberg jetzt von Krieg?". Compare also Zapfe and Rid, "Mission Command without a Mission: German Military Adaption in Afghanistan," 197.

1052 Frank-Walter Steinmeier, "Germany's New Global Role. Berlin Steps Up," *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 4 (2016): 109.

also talked about "war", at least in more recent years (2017–2018) – unlike the government.[1053] When asked to provide a legal assessment of the use of drones, the government argued that international law no longer uses the term "war" ("Krieg") anymore but rather "armed conflicts" ("bewaffnete Konflikte").[1054] A certain hesitancy to speak of war remained.

Of all the parties, the Left Party stood out for using the term "war" in drone-related speeches, often with negative connotations, for example to warn of the revival of a belligerent Germany. This kind of discursive framing was in line with their general pacifist, anti-war position, and their fundamental opposition to military engagements.[1055] In 2009, for example, a Left Party MP demanded that the government should finally tell the truth: that Germany was involved in a war. Later they not only used the term "drone war",[1056] but also spoke of the "Afghanistan War" ("Afghanistan-Krieg").[1057] In line with their anti-military stance, the Left condemned the drone projects as being on the wrong track, e.g. the track of "war politics" ("Kriegspolitik").[1058] As the Left Party MP Paul Schäfer stated, "we do not want the drone war to be waged from German soil", referencing a widely shared German foreign policy stance.[1059] The Left publicly suspected that German politicians wanted drones (both unarmed and armed) because they wanted to engage in more wars.[1060] Green MPs also used the term "war" in reference to US

1053 Juratovic, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 18/212," 2017, 21343. Marcus Faber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39", 19th leg. period, 39th sess., 14 June 2018, 3868

1054 Transl. by author. FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/11023: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Niema Movassat, Dr. Alexander S. Neu, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/10618 – Die US-Basis Ramstein als wichtiger Knoten im weltweiten Drohnenkrieg," 2017, 3.

1055 Vignoli, Ostermann, and Wagner, "Ideological Talk, Strategic Vote: German Parties' Positions on the Military Intervention in Afghanistan in Parliament," 800.

1056 Dağdelen, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 18/97," 2015, 9224; Ulrich, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20879; Höger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/215," 2017, 21566.

1057 Gehrcke, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/23", 17th leg. period, 23rd sess., February 24, 2010, 2024. See also LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/10389: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Christine Buchholz, Katrin Kunert und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der dritten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 18/9200, 18/9202, 18/9813, 18/9824, 18/9825, 18/9826 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2017 (Haushaltsgesetz 2017) hier: Einzelplan 14 Geschäftsbereich des Bundesministeriums der Verteidigung," 2016, 2.

1058 Transl. by author. Gysi, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30645.

1059 Transl. by author. In original: "Wir wollen auch nicht, dass der Drohnenkrieg von deutschem Boden aus geführt wird" (P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31350.) This is a reference to a quote associated with former German SPD chancellor Willy Brandt. Furthermore Art. 26 of the German Constitution declares the preparation for a "war of aggression" as "unconstitutional" ("Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany", Bundesamt für Justiz, March 22, 2025.

1060 Höger, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27119; Gysi, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30644; van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/252," 2013, 32604; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/10389: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Christine Buchholz, Katrin Kunert und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der dritten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 18/9200, 18/9202, 18/9813, 18/9824, 18/9825, 18/9826 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2017 (Haushaltsgesetz 2017) hier: Einzelplan 14 Geschäftsbereich des Bundesministeriums der Verteidigung," 2016, 2.

drone strikes in Afghanistan, but they did not go as far in their interpretations of how Germany would seek to wage war with drones.[1061]

Despite its increased involvement, Germany did not completely abandon its military non-interventionism, but continued to frequently abstain from international interventions. For example, the Schröder II government (2002–2005), formed by the Social Democrats and the Greens, abstained from the US-led war against Iraq in 2003. Nevertheless, the deployment of Bundeswehr troops in out-of-area operations led Klaus Brummer and Kai Oppermann to proclaim that Germany was now a "normal" power that would engage in international affairs and use force if necessary.[1062] At the same time, an analysis of Bundestag debates on international military operations from the end of WWII to the Libya crisis (2011) found, that while these war experiences changed some ideas, norms, and practices of German strategic culture, the general preference for civilian crisis prevention and conflict management remained; even at a time when a growing number of conflicts in the Middle East and Africa escalated.[1063] Germany also abstained from offensive military campaigns in Libya (2011), against ISIL in Syria (2014), and in Mali (2014) (see 6.2.3), although some of its key international partners such as the US and France led those operations.[1064] In particular, the decision of the conservative-liberal Merkel II government (2009–2013) not to support the UN Security Council vote on Resolution 1973 on Libya led several commentators to describe Germany as a "free-rider", who avoids helping its partners to bear the weight of building international stability.[1065]

In the mid-2010s, however, the German foreign and security policy discourse underwent a "significant shift" or even a "reset".[1066] The government responded to the growing international challenges the country was facing, such as the Euro Crisis, the so-called "refugee crisis", Brexit, as well as the conflicts in the transatlantic relationship, troubles in Eastern Ukraine, and conflicts in the Middle East and Africa (for a detailed discussion of the latter three challenges, see

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1061 Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/148," 2011, 17681; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/155," 2012, 18572; Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/17," 2014, 1269.

1062 Klaus Brummer and Kai Oppermann, "Germany's Foreign Policy after the End of the Cold War: "Becoming Normal?"," in *Oxford Handbook Topics in Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

1063 Antti Seppo, *From Guilt to Responsibility and Beyond: The Evolution of German Strategic Culture after the End of the Cold War* (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2021). As summarized in Linda Bachg and Ingo Peters, "Kontinuität durch Wandel: Literaturbericht zur Deutschen Außenpolitik zwischen Krim-Krise und „Zeitenwende" (2014—2022)," *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 30, no. 2 (2023): 83.

1064 Jamie Gaskarth and Kai Oppermann, "Clashing Traditions: German Foreign Policy in a New Era," *International Studies Perspectives* 22, no. 1 (2021): 89.

1065 Kai Oppermann, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place? Navigating Domestic and International Expectations on German Foreign Policy," *German Politics* 28, no. 3 (2019): 483; Stephen F. Szabo, "Germany: Hegemon or Free Rider?," *German Politics and Society* 37, no. 2 (2019); Hyde-Price, "The "sleep-walking giant" awakes," 602.

1066 Hyde-Price, "The "sleep-walking giant" awakes."; Oppermann, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place?."

6.2). A prelude to this new discourse was Federal President Joachim Gauck's October 2013 speech, in which he reflected on the extent of Germany's international engagement, and whether it was commensurate "with the weight that our country carries". He also wondered whether Germany was "fully living up to its responsibility towards its neighbours"?[1067]

At the Munich Security Conference, on February 1st, 2014, President Gauck, Foreign Minister Steinmeier (SPD), and Defense Minister von der Leyen (CDU) then jointly proposed a reinterpretation of Germany's international role, towards taking on more responsibility. In his speech, Steinmeier stated: "Germany must be ready for earlier, more decisive and more substantive engagement in the foreign and security policy sphere."[1068] From now on, Germany would contribute "practical assistance, also of a military nature" in crisis situations.[1069] Speaking about the use of military force, Steinmeier emphasized the need to let go of the "culture of restraint" ("Kultur der Zurückhaltung") so as not to foster "a culture of standing aloof" ("eine Kultur des Heraushaltens").[1070] Von der Leyen added: "Having the means and abilities means we also have the responsibility to engage".[1071] Evidently, "responsibility" was one of the central concepts of this joint initiative. It also became an important concept in the drone debate at the time (see 6.1.2).

The three state leaders also argued that Germany should not be afraid to use military force if necessary. In 2014, Minister von der Leyen remarked in a parliamentary speech that not every armed conflict or genocide could be prevented through diplomacy and economic cooperation but that sometimes "military engagement" ("militärisches Engagement") was "what we urgently need" ("was wir dringend brauchen").[1072] Especially left-leaning members of the SPD criticized the initiative. For example, Mützenich, then Deputy Chairman for Foreign, Defense and Human Rights Policy, said that calling for more military operations in times of numerous conflicts was "incomprehensible" ("unverständlich") and that he did not see "any reason to change the way we deal with military operations."[1073] In 2015, briefly before becoming Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, SPD MP Bartels broadened the proposal. He

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1067 Joachim Gauck, "Speech by Federal President Joachim Gauck to Mark the Day of German Unity, 3 October", Federal President's Office, 2013.

1068 Transl. by Foreign Office. In original: "." (Frank-Walter Steinmeier, "Speech by Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier at the 50th Munich Security Conference", Federal Foreign Office, 2014.)

1069 Ibid.

1070 Transl. by Foreign Office. Ibid.

1071 Transl. by author. In original: "Wenn wir über die Mittel und Fähigkeiten verfügen, dann haben wir auch eine Verantwortung, uns zu engagieren." (Ursula von der Leyen, "Speech by Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen at the 50th Munich Security Conference", Federal Ministry of Defense, 2014, 5.)

1072 Transl. by author. von der Leyen, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4055.

1073 Annett Meiritz, "Scharfe Kritik an Gaucks Ruf nach Militäreinsätzen," *Spiegel Online*, June 15, 2014.

advocated for an integrated approach to conflict management and crisis resolution, with cooperation between the military, diplomacy, development, and the police.[1074]

Given the announcements of a policy change in 2014, analysts wondered whether the debate about a new German foreign policy would ebb, or if it would actually transform how Germany acted internationally.[1075] There were several initiatives. In terms of policy changes, the government offered to destroy the Syrian chemical weapons at a German plant, raised the number of German soldiers for the EU operation in Mali, and contributed aircraft capabilities in the Central African Republic as well as against ISIL. It also provided the Peshmerga groups in Iraq with weapons and ammunition to support their fight against ISIL.[1076] During the Ukraine crisis in 2014, Germany showed leadership in shaping the EU's economic sanctions against Russia (see 6.2.2).[1077] Regarding the Foreign Office and MOD, there was a comprehensive policy review at the former and the latter's Defense White Paper 2016 declared Germany was ready to take on responsibility and lead.[1078] Hyde-Price found these policy changes were "low-key", "low-risk", and with a "minimal use of military capabilities", but they were also "symbolic of a broader change in approach" towards become more active internationally; also regarding military contributions.[1079]

However, these changes in the foreign policy discourse of the political elite did not correspond to changes in public opinion. As opinion polls show, skepticism about a greater international security role for Germany and German involvement in military operations continued to prevail.[1080] A 2009 survey, for example, found that nine out of ten people trusted the Bundeswehr as an institution, but some forty percent disapproved of the Bundeswehr's involvement in stabilization missions in Africa or in the Middle East.[1081] Forty-four percent disapproved of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan in 2009.[1082] In 2011, two-thirds of respondents said they would

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1074 Transl. by author. Bartels, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 18/100," 2015, 9573.

1075 Gunther Hellmann, Daniel Jacobi, and Ursula Stark Urrestarazu, "Einleitung: „Neue" deutsche Außenpolitik?," *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* 8, no. 1 (2015): 7.

1076 Hyde-Price, "The "sleep-walking giant" awakes," 604; Oppermann, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place?," 492.

1077 Szabo, "Germany: Hegemon or Free Rider?," 113.

1078 At the Foreign Office, the comprehensive process of the "2014 Review: Understanding Tomorrow's Foreign Policy" aimed to address conceptual and strategic deficits of the ministry (Annegret Bendiek, "The "2014 Review": Understanding the Pillars of German Foreign Policy and the Expectations of the rest of the World," in *SWP Working Paper* (Berlin: SWP, 2015).) The White Paper stated in German: "Deutschland ist bereit […] Verantwortung zu leben und Führung zu übernehmen" (Federal Ministry of Defense, "White Paper on Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr", Federal Ministry of Defense, 2016, 22.).

1079 Hyde-Price, "The "sleep-walking giant" awakes," 612.

1080 Szabo, "Germany: Hegemon or Free Rider?," 112; Oppermann, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place?," 483.

1081 Thomas Bulmahn, *Sicherheits- und verteidigungspolitisches Meinungsklima in Deutschland - Ergebnisse der Bevölkerungsbefragung Oktober/November 2009 Kurzbericht* (Strausberg: Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der Bundeswehr, 2010), 20; 30.

1082 Ibid., 35.

support an immediate withdrawal of German troops from Afghanistan.[1083] In 2014 and 2015, a majority of respondents said they did not agree with Germany taking on more international responsibilities. Only 37 percent in 2014 and 40 percent in 2015 said that Germany should become more active in times of international crises.[1084] As Oppermann noted, "[t]he mismatch between the foreign policy views of decision-makers and the general public has thus become bigger, not smaller" in the mid-2010s.[1085] With the government in favor of more engagement but the majority of the public skeptical, the parties sought to mobilize strongly for their respective positions, resulting in a high degree of politicization.[1086] In 2018, the Bundeswehr's participation in the follow-up mission in Afghanistan (Resolute Support) received similarly weak public support as ISAF did previously, with only about a third of the population being in favor of it (36 percent). Support for the mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was even lower (33 percent).[1087] In addition to historical reasons for the German public to be skeptical of the military and conflict interventions in particular, the German military had also not been very visible in the public and thus remained a somewhat separate entity.[1088]

In the drone debate, speakers seemed more comfortable with emphasizing Germany's role as an economic power than military power. This observation is consistent with Stephen Szabo's argument that Germany is primarily a geo-economic power, not a military power like the

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1083 Statista Research Department, "Sollen die deutschen Soldaten sofort aus Afghanistan abgezogen werden?," *Statista*, September 16, 2011, https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/5393/umfrage/afghanistan-weiterer-aufenthalt-oder-rueckzug-der-bundeswehr/

1084 Oppermann, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place?," 486. Citing from Körber-Stiftung, *Einmischen oder zurückhalten? Ergebnisse einer repräsentativen Umfrage von TNS Infratest Politikforschung zur Sicht der Deutschen auf die Außenpolitk* (Hamburg: Körber-Stiftung, 2014), 2-3; Körber-Stiftung, *Einmischen oder zurückhalten? Ergebnisse einer repräsentativen Umfrage von TNS Infratest Politikforschung zur Sicht der Deutschen auf die Außenpolitik, Aktualisierung 2015* (Hamburg: Körber-Stiftung, 2015).

1085 Oppermann, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place?," 487.

1086 Ibid.; referencing Brummer and Oppermann, "Germany's Foreign Policy after the End of the Cold War: "Becoming Normal?"," 16-19.

1087 Heiko Biehl, "Einstellungen zu den Auslandseinsätzen der Bundeswehr," in *Sicherheits- und verteidigungspolitisches Meinungsbild in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland - Ergebnisse und Analysen der Bevölkerungsbefragung 2018*, ed. Markus Steinbrecher, Heiko Biehl, and Timo Graf (Potsdam: Bundeswehr Centre of Military History and Social Sciences, 2018), 180-82.

1088 In 2018, only one in five people said they had noticed the Bundeswehr in their daily lives in the past twelve months (Markus Steinbrecher, "Wahrnehmung der Bundeswehr in der Öffentlichkeit," in *Sicherheits- und verteidigungspolitisches Meinungsbild in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland - Ergebnisse und Analysen der Bevölkerungsbefragung 2018*, ed. Markus Steinbrecher, Heiko Biehl, and Timo Graf (Potsdam: Bundeswehr Centre of Military History and Social Sciences, 2018), 101.) Recently, politicians have tried to change this. In 2020, for example, the government introduced free train rides for soldiers in uniform, in part to encourage soldiers to wear their Bundeswehr uniforms when traveling, thereby increasing their visibility to the public (Elizabeth Schumacher, "German Soldiers to Get Free Train Travel," *Deutsche Welle*, August 16, 2019, https://www.dw.com/en/german-soldiers-to-get-free-train-travel/a-50057011.). In 2024, Germany introduced a national Veterans' Day, which did not exist before (Nadine Schmidt and Sophie Tanno, "Germany Sets Aside Unease Over its Military to Celebrate First Veterans' Day," *CNN*, June 15, 2024, https://edition.cnn.com/2024/06/15/europe/germany-first-veterans-day-intl/index.html.).

US.[1089] Especially in the early years of the drone debate, roles with an exclusive military focus and no economic elements were thinly represented. The pro-drone camp combined Germany's established and less controversial economic power with a military perspective, especially in the 2013 and 2014 debates on military drone R&D. In 2013, CDU/CSU MP Hahn borrowed the term European "lean-on power" ("Anlehnungsmacht") from defense discussions, arguing that Germany could not afford to miss out on drone technology R&D.[1090] An FDP speaker referred to its established role as an "export nation" ("Exportnation"), arguing that if it exported drones for military purposes, it would have to have a framework for drone strikes.[1091] In 2014, Hahn further claimed that Germany had a special responsibility as a "large economic power" ("große Wirtschaftsnation") – and that the procurement of drones entailed a dual responsibility; "internally" ("nach innen") to the country and "externally" ("nach außen") to its military allies.[1092]

Pro-drone speakers mainly referred to soldiers, not to the institution of the Bundeswehr as a whole. As discussed in Chapter 4, the main pro-drone military framing that peaked in 2013–2014, was that drones would protect German soldiers (see 4.3.3). It conveyed a nation that cared for and about its citizens in uniform. At the same time, this framing was more about domestic politics than the international sphere. Pro-drone politicians presented military drones as highly valuable for the armed forces (4.1.1). For example, in 2014, various speakers included military drones in their demands for the best possible equipment.[1093] Still, they did not consistently embed armed drones in a larger framing about modernizing the Bundeswehr or about making it more powerful. CDU/CSU speakers only occasionally emphasized that modern armed forces, just like the Bundeswehr, would have drones. When doing so, they did not specify whether the systems would be armed or unarmed.[1094]

Remarks about the Bundeswehr as an institution were modest in the drone debate, with little praise but openly admitted deficits. There were positive attributes for the forces in the drone debates, but more subtly expressed than in the UK or US discourses, where government officials burst with pride over well-prepared armed forces. In 2010, for example, the British Foreign Secretary William Hague confidently announced that drones were one of the "tools they need"

1089 Stephen F. Szabo, *Germany, Russia, and the Rise of Geo-Economics* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

1090 Transl. by author. Hahn, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125. The term originated from a German initiated NATO-Paper, describing the idea of smaller states leaning on larger states (see Claudia Major and Christian Mölling, "The Framework Nations Concept: Germany's Contribution to a Capable European Defence," *SWP Comments* 52 (2014).)

1091 Transl. by author. Hoff, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27113.

1092 Transl. by author. Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4065.

1093 Arnold, ibid., ibid., 4057; Hahn, ibid., ibid., 4065; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/100," 2015, 9560; Faber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3867.

1094 Siebert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27115; Schockenhoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30640.

for Britain to stay "a first rate military power […] well into the future."[1095] Here Hague reproduced the national self-identification as a world-leading military nation, suggesting that armed drones would extend that legacy. In Germany, only some drone-related speech instances displayed pride – in the restraint of military force.[1096] By contrast, both government and opposition speakers openly admitted the deficits of the Bundeswehr. In 2012, the government mentioned that the reform of the Bundeswehr, which included a greater use of UAVs, should eliminate "structural deficits" ("strukturelle Defizite").[1097] In 2013, a Conservative MP spoke of "particularly unpleasant developments" ("besonders unschöne Entwicklungen") during missions due to unsuitable equipment – something that armed drones could remedy.[1098] That same year, opposition MP Bartels (SPD) painted a devastating picture of the atmosphere in the Bundeswehr and accused Defense Minister de Maizière of allowing frustration, irritation, and chaos.[1099] For him, the implementation of the Bundeswehr reform was an even bigger problem than the "drone disaster" ("Drohnendesaster") of the Euro Hawk.[1100]

As this section illustrated, the drone debate itself was not the place for grand discussions about Germany's future foreign and security policy, despite the fact that it peaked at a time when a public conversation about foreign policy (re)orientation took place. An "international role" entails "notions of actors about who they are, what they would like to be with regard to others, and how they should interact in (international) social relationships".[1101] Still, the drone debate was neither about Germany fulfilling a grand mission with a visionary role nor about increasing its military power. The German discourse hence differed from the US and UK where politicians justified counterinsurgency missions and drone strikes by bringing peace and democracy, winning the hearts and minds of locals, and protecting their citizens from future terrorist attacks.[1102]

1095 William Hague, "International Security in a Networked World", Speech at Georgetown University Washington D.C., November 17, 2010; Bernard Jenkin, "Defence in the World", House of Commons, March 15, 2010, cc671f.

1096 Gädechens, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4063; Manderla, ibid., ibid., 4065-6; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/3787: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Heike Hänsel, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/3329 – Betrieb von Drohnen der Luftwaffe auf dem israelischen Flughafen Tel Nof," 2018, 14.

1097 Transl. by author. FGG, ibid, "Drucksache 17/9316: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnes Brugger, Tom Koenigs, Volker Beck (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 17/8861 – Entwicklung und Planung unbemannter Systeme in der Bundeswehr," 2012, 3.

1098 Transl. by author. Hardt, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31358.

1099 Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/252," 2013, 32608.

1100 Transl. by author. Bartels, ibid., ibid.

1101 Harnisch, Frank, and Maull, "Introduction," 1.

1102 An exception was MP Bartels, whose 2013 statement about "stopping evil" ("das Böse zu stoppen") resembled the Anglo-American rhetoric (Bartels, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29766.)

Instead, the German debate was overshadowed by a widening gap of opinions between the policy elite and the general public on whether Germany should play a more active (military) role in the international security arena.

6.1.2 Clashing Narratives: Responsibility or Restraint

As described above, "responsibility" and "restraint" were two often discussed principles in German foreign and security policy in the 2010s. In the Bundestag drone debate, there were narratives centering on each respectively. Promoters of the "responsibility"-narrative supported the idea of more German military engagement, if necessary, in order to be a responsible partner nation. They wanted to improve Germany's military defense capabilities, for example with armed drones. The goals of their drone policy were to meet the needs of soldiers, the Bundeswehr, and allies, and to appeal to the public's trust in the government and the military. The "restraint"-side was more skeptical of armed drones, reflecting their inclination to have less military in general. Worried about international instability, they warned that armed drones would contribute to the militarization of Germany.

In this chapter subsection the CDU/CSU and the Left Party stand out. Not only did they heavily link armed drones with the aforementioned principles in parliamentary debates, but they also contributed the most speech instances on this matter, with clear discursive framings. Importantly, they also took opposing positions within the debate. That is why the two narratives strongly correspond to the positions of these parties, which, however, did not change much over time but remained relatively fixed. Their extreme positions were based on diverging views of military employment. In Bundestag roll-call votes, the CDU/CSU voted most consistently in favor of military missions. In contrast, the Left Party opposed them strictly, due to their anti-militarist positions. Members of the Greens and SPD were more supportive, with their anti-interventionist MPs experiencing a "disciplining effect of being in government".[1103]

Accordingly, different parties advanced different narratives: CDU/CSU speakers were the only consistent supporters of drones as the FDP was not in parliament between 2013 and 2017. They tried to portray themselves as the advocates of German soldiers. The SPD, skeptical of abandoning military restraint entirely and divided over the issue of AMALE-drones, also supported the idea of Germany taking on more international responsibilities. The Greens contributed to the restraint-narrative, but much less in the drone debate than the Left Party, and even less so in the years leading up to 2019. Indeed, the mixed positions of the SPD and the Greens show

[1103] Wolfgang Wagner, "The "Bundestag" as a Champion of Parliamentary Control of Military Missions," *Sicherheit und Frieden (S+F) / Security and Peace* 35, no. 2 (2017): 62-3.

the extent to which the two concepts are not logically mutually exclusive; responsibility can mean restraint, and restraint can still be part of responsible behavior.

6.1.2.1 The "Responsibility"-Narrative

As described above, the Grand Coalition (CDU/CSU and SPD) advocated a more active and involved international role for Germany, stressing the need for greater readiness, determination, and substance in German foreign and security policy (see 6.1.1). In parliamentary debates on armed drones, "responsibility" was a prominent term, which policymakers alluded to repeatedly in the mid-2010s, especially in 2013 and 2014. However, how speakers interpreted this term differed. For CDU/CSU politicians, it was an expression of responsibility ("Ausdruck von Verantwortung") to prepare militarily – by acquiring armed drones – as long as the world was not a "peaceful" ("friedlich") place.[1104] Responsible policy would also mean planning ahead in military procurement.[1105] In 2013, while still in parliament, the FDP highlighted the importance of researching and developing drone technology responsibly.[1106] The advocates thus touched on what responsibilities meant for military (procurement) developments, but did not specify what a more active German military role might look like with drone technology.

Even in the aftermath of Islamist terror attacks in Germany, pro-drone speakers rarely claimed that the Bundeswehr needed drone strikes for defending Germany or the German people against terrorist threats from the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, or later ISIL. There had been several terrorist attacks in Germany, mainly by Islamic fundamentalists, in which people had been injured or killed. The first attack took place at the Frankfurt airport in 2011. In 2016, there were a series of attacks, including at a music festival in Ansbach, on a train in Würzburg, and at a Christmas market in Berlin.[1107] As Fuhrmann and Horowitz found, countries that have experienced terrorist attacks are more likely to have armed drone programs.[1108] Whether or not this causal relationship holds up in Germany is not the question of this study. In any case, analyzing the text data from the parliamentary debates on drones did not reveal any direct references to the terrorist attacks. References to the security of the country and German citizens remained surprisingly scarce. Only MP Otte (CDU/CSU) claimed that his party supported the acquisition of armed drones "for the protection of our soldiers, the security of our country, and our citizens".[1109]

1104 Otte, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4058.
1105 Hahn, ibid., ibid., 4065.
1106 M. Lindner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27091; Hoff, ibid., ibid., 27113.
1107 For details see the Global Terrorism Database, "Country: Germany," ed. College Park National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland (2024).
1108 Fuhrmann and Horowitz, "Droning On."
1109 Transl. by author. In original: "zum Schutz unserer Soldaten, für die Sicherheit unseres Landes und unserer Bürgerinnen und Bürger." Otte, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 18/42," 2014, 4059.

Instead, speakers from the CDU/CSU emphasized the responsibility of MPs towards the soldiers, who armed drones could help to protect.[1110] It would be more responsible to send a machine into a dangerous situation than a human being.[1111] Even when equipped with drones, soldiers would continue to do a very responsible job.[1112] They moreover constructed a bond between themselves as MPs and the soldiers, using the issue of troop support to characterize and separate themselves (the in-group that shared language and experiences) from the opposition (the out-group). By representing and characterizing these two groups of actors, pro-drone speakers engaged in identity building. Their speakers occasionally referred to soldiers as "comrades" ("Kameraden").[1113] By alluding to the moral and formal duty of their elected position, they created drama in their statements.[1114] From their point of view, MPs should support armed drones because MPs vote to send soldiers into battle ("Parlamentsvorbehalt").[1115] It would be the job of MPs to make sure that soldiers could do their job in turn.[1116]

The drone advocates not only emphasized their support for the troops, but suggested that anyone who opposed armed drones did not care about German soldiers. Chapter 4 already introduced the key pro-drone argument that armed drones could save and protect German soldiers (see 4.3.3). It was a very powerful emotional claim, particularly prevalent in 2013 and 2014. Fulfilling the "comprehension" criterion of framing, speakers presented armed drones as a solution to the problem of soldiers being in potentially life-threatening situations during missions. Pro-drone speakers accused the opposition of not believing in German soldiers or allies and of being "irresponsible" ("unverantwortlich").[1117] Unlike the CDU/CSU and FDP, the Left Party, the Greens, and the SPD, while in the opposition, worried that armed drones might lower the threshold for soldiers to use force (see 4.3.4 and 4.3.5). Drone advocates interpreted these concerns as a lack of trust in the soldiers. Politicians who did not agree with getting armed drones would be actively denying the soldiers this important protective equipment.[1118] In 2014, CDU/CSU

1110 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125; Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4058; Gädechens, ibid., ibid., 4062; Weber, ibid., ibid., 4064.

1111 Siebert, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27115.

1112 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29765.

1113 Willsch, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/191," 2012, 23057; Gädechens, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4062.

1114 Similarly, de Maizière and Hahn used the more specific and legally connoted term "duty of care" ("Fürsorgepflicht"). (Transl. by author. de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27110; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/100," 2015, 9560.)

1115 de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31349; Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4058; Manderla, ibid., ibid., 4065-6.

1116 Willsch, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/191," 2012, 23057; Silberhorn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/252," 2013, 32606.

1117 Transl. by author. Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30652. See also Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/225," 2013, 28125.

1118 Arnold, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4057; Gädechens, ibid., ibid., 4063; Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3863.

MP Otte even implicitly accused an opposition speaker of putting the protection of terrorists ahead of the protection of German soldiers.[1119] In 2018, CDU/CSU and FDP speakers claimed the Left Party was trying to "paralyze" ("lähmen") the Bundeswehr by not wanting to equip it at all.[1120] CDU/CSU MPs also repeatedly accused the Left Party and the Greens of anti-Americanism for criticizing US drone strikes and targeted killings.[1121] This rough tone in the debate potentially hindered more constructive discussions.

While the SPD and the Greens supported Germany taking on greater responsibility in the world, they did not link this general proposition to the specific topic of armed drones in parliamentary debates. Still, they alluded to the concept of responsibility. For the SPD and the Greens responsibility meant being aware of the potential (negative) consequences of a course of action. For example, SPD MP Mützenich wondered whether the acquisition of combat drones was responsible arms control and security policy.[1122] Green MP Brugger described "chasing" ("hinterherrennen") of armed drone technology as irresponsible.[1123] However, when expressing these concerns and hesitations, they could have linked them to the idea of Germany's growing international leadership; of daring to take more decisive action to shape international events. Speakers could have presented Germany's role as a committed, multilateral actor or leading norm entrepreneur for responsible drone arms control (compare 5.3.3). In 2014, Mützenich argued it would be a mistake to assume more international engagement was synonymous with more military deployments.[1124] Consequently, for the SPD, highlighting non-military opportunities for more German involvement could have been particularly effective.

6.1.2.2 The "Restraint"-Narrative

Although the Left Party emphasized the restraint narrative more than the Greens did in parliamentary debates on drones, the Greens still contributed to domestic discourse on foreign and security policy. Following the joint proposal by Gauck, Steinmeier, and von der Leyen, Green foreign affairs spokesperson Omid Nouripour criticized what he interpreted as a general call for more military operations and emphasized the need for case-by-case decisions.[1125] Alluding to

[1119] Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4058.
[1120] Transl. by author. Faber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3867. Hahn, ibid., ibid., 3871.
[1121] Wadephul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20873; Hahn, ibid., ibid., 20883.
[1122] Mützenich, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27111. Mützenich discussed drone arms control in more detail in a journal article published in 2014 (see Rolf Mützenich and David Bieger, "Wege des völkerrechtlichen Umgangs mit Kampfdrohnen," *Sicherheit und Frieden (S+F) / Security and Peace* 32, no. 2 (2014).)
[1123] Transl. by author. Brugger, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27114.
[1124] Rolf Mützenich, "Weshalb wir in der Außenpolitik statt einer deutschen Kultur der Zurückhaltung eine europäische Kultur der Verantwortung brauchen," *IPG-Journal* (2014).
[1125] Meiritz, "Scharfe Kritik an Gaucks Ruf nach Militäreinsätzen."

national history, Brugger argued that Germany had "good reasons for a culture of restraint" and stressed that military operations should not become the norm.[1126] Green party leader Cem Özdemir, however, complemented Gauck for pointing out Germany's international responsibility in the areas of democracy and human rights.[1127] Both areas were central to the Greens' political agenda at the time and also informed many of their contributions to the drone debate. Underpinning these principles was their understanding of responsibility towards the people in the countries concerned. For example, the Greens reminded the German government that it should uphold its responsibility to the people of Afghanistan beyond 2014, when ISAF would end.[1128] On several occasions, their speakers criticized US drone strikes for harming local communities, especially by killing civilians (see 4.3.2). In the drone debate, they thus demonstrated a sense of responsibility to the local population in the conflict zone.

The Left Party also called for restraint. As its name suggests, the Left Party sits on the far left on the political spectrum in the Bundestag. Some of its foreign and security policy assumptions are therefore outside the political center, and its demands may seem more extreme than those of other parties. Speakers depicted Germany as an active military agent but in a negative way, and warned against militarization. Current drone or drone-related policies would fuel the drone arms race and lead to new military engagements. A more active Germany would thus worsen its security situation. According to the Left in 2012, the government would be turning the Bundeswehr into an "intervention army" ("Interventionsarmee")[1129] by wanting armed drones. Two years later they argued that with armed drones, Germany was preparing itself for future "military adventures" ("militärische Abenteuer")[1130]. In 2016, the Left diagnosed that the trend toward armament would represent a foreign policy in which "war becomes a means of politics

1126 Transl. by author. In original: "Es gibt in Deutschland gute Gründe für eine Kultur der Zurückhaltung." (ibid.)
1127 Referenced in Hyde-Price, "The "sleep-walking giant" awakes," 604.
1128 Green PG, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 18/17," 2014, 1357.
1129 Transl. by author. LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11569: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Inge Höger, Harald Koch, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der dritten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 17/10200, 17/10202, 17/10813, 17/10823, 17/10824, 17/10825 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2013 (Haushaltsgesetz 2013)", 17th leg. period, November 19, 2012, 1; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13898: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der Beratung der Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Rolf Mützenich, Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels, Rainer Arnold, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der SPD – Drucksachen 17/11102, 17/13655 – Haltung der Bundesregierung zum Erwerb und Einsatz von Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 2.
1130 Transl. by author. Dağdelen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/33," 2014, 2768-9.

again" ("Krieg wieder zum Mittel der Politik wird").[1131] For them, disarmament was the preferred policy option (see 5.3.3). They condemned von der Leyen's plan of arming up the Bundeswehr for "new wars" ("neue Kriegseinsätze"),[1132] which would make Germany into a "military power" ("Militärmacht") again.[1133] Hence the Left was the only party that raised the issue of military power at all. For the other parties, military power was no significant talking point. Overall, it did not appear as a desirable policy objective in the German drone debate.

In 2018, they suggested Germany was returning to "great power ambitions" ("Großmacht-Ambitionen").[1134] As the Left Party MP Dağdelen criticized, Germany was behaving like a "vassal state" ("Vasallenstaat") to the US by supporting American drone strikes; attacks, which the Left considered to be illegal and immoral.[1135] These terms pinpointed their messages about the presumed new role of Germany. When Left speakers discursively framed armed drone acquisition as a "return" to these kinds of interventionist actions, they could draw on what is probably the most prominent historic memory of aggressive interventionist German military culture: Nazi-Germany during WWII. Since there has been no comparably strong collective memory for a positive military conflict engagement yet, the narrative repertoire of the drone opposing side had a discursive disadvantage. German politicians had a difficult time convincing the public of the good military interventions could bring about. Politicians in the US and the UK by contrast could draw on their victory against Nazi Germany.

Expanding these military-skeptical claims beyond the national realm, the Left and the Greens furthermore disapproved of what they perceived as efforts to militarize the EU. By contrast, governing parties welcomed closer European defense cooperation. The Greens found that having EU institutions discuss how Europe would finally get her own drone was prioritizing the wrong issues.[1136] As the Left MP Andrej Hunko remarked, spending EU funds on weapons and drones would break Article 41 of the EU Treaty, which deals with financing EU foreign and

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1131 Transl. by author. LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/9857: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Christine Buchholz, Wolfgang Gehrcke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/9508 – Verwendung von bewaffneten Drohnen der MALE-Klasse ab Frühjahr 2019," 2016, 2.

1132 Hänsel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/170", 18th leg. period, 170th sess., May 12, 2016, 16706.

1133 C. Buchholz, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/152," 2016, 1427.

1134 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/2993: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Heike Hänsel, Michel Brandt, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der Abgabe einer Regierungserklärung durch die Bundeskanzlerin zum Europäischen Rat am 28./29. Juni 2018 in Brüssel und zum NATO-Gipfel am 11./12. Juli 2018 in Brüssel", 19th leg. period, June 26, 2018, 3.

1135 Transl. by author. Dağdelen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/99", 18th leg. period, 99th sess., April 22, 2015, 9440. see also Neu, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/97," 2015, 9223.

1136 Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/3," 2013, 149.

security policy.[1137] For them, the political power of the EU was more important than the prospective military power. Instead of developing drone systems and giving them to European governments, the EU should promote international disarmament and an armed drone ban.[1138]

Furthermore, the Left, which traditionally opposes Germany's membership in the NATO, also criticized the military alliance in relation to armed drones. Germany has been a member of NATO since 1955.[1139] Embedding national security contributions in multilateral efforts and organizations ("never alone") remains a main pillar of German foreign and security policy to this day. Hitting close to the (not) "sliding into US-style warfare" framing, Left MP Schäfer warned the "strategy of targeted killing via unmanned murderer robots" should not become the strategy of the military alliance.[1140] The government parties ignored most of these verbal attacks. After the Ramstein scandal (see 6.2.1), the Left Party used this case to claim the German government would be "submissive to the NATO" ("NATO-Gefügigkeit").[1141]

By comparison, speakers from the CDU/CSU, SPD, and FDP seized the opportunity to avow their support for NATO. In 2016, a CDU/CSU MP emphasized Germany would "of course" ("selbstverständlich") continue to need to cooperate with the US in NATO.[1142] SPD politicians emphasized Germany's NATO-membership was one of the "cornerstones" ("Grundpfeiler") for sustaining security and peace in Germany.[1143] If anything, Germany would have to work with and within NATO to find solutions for contemporary security challenges.[1144] Still, instead of merely responding to the critique of the Left Party (again), they could have elaborated their own pro-NATO claims by justifying the acquisition of armed drones with better security burden-sharing within the alliance. In this way they could have also constructed a link to Germany resuming more international responsibility. In 2018, an FDP speaker explained Germany needed armable drones to be a reliable partner in NATO or the UN. Still, this claim entered the

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1137 Hunko, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20996.

1138 Hunko, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4059; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/1988: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Michel Brandt, Ulla Jelpke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/1406 – Internationale Regulierung bewaffneter oder bewaffnungsfähiger Drohnen," 2018, 1-2.

1139 On October 3rd 1990, the soldiers of the former Eastern German Armed Forces, of the National People's Army ("Nationale Volksarmee") were absorbed into the Bundeswehr and hence integrated into NATO.

1140 Transl. by author. In original: "Strategie des Targeted Killing durch unbemannte Mordroboter" (P. Schäfer, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/191," 2012, 23053.)

1141 LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/2993: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Heike Hänsel, Michel Brandt, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der Abgabe einer Regierungserklärung durch die Bundeskanzlerin zum Europäischen Rat am 28./29. Juni 2018 in Brüssel und zum NATO-Gipfel am 11./12. Juli 2018 in Brüssel," 2018, 3.

1142 Transl. by author. Wadephul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20874.

1143 Transl. by author. Hitschler, ibid., ibid., 20876; Juratovic, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/212," 2017, 21343.

1144 Juratovic, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/212," 2017, 21343.

debate rather late, and it was not very prominent.[1145] The opposition's protest against German support for US drone strikes may have blocked this path.

Evidently, the parties lacked a shared understanding of what responsible behavior meant for German military engagements. Drone-related speech instances rather referred to the term "responsibility" as a buzzword. This was partly due to parties disagreeing on a key question: To whom is Germany responsible – to the people in the countries of conflict, to the people at home, to German soldiers, or to NATO-allies like the US and France, who expect Germany to punch its weight? At least in the immediate drone debates, there were no uniform answers.

6.2 A Challenging Context: Three Foreign and Security Policy Impulses

As outlined in the theory chapter, new impulses within the discursive ecosystem, or more drastically, external shocks, can trigger shifts in parliamentary debates (see section 2.3.3). Unexpected events or new political challenges can provide unexpected windows of opportunity for political speakers to "interpret events, frame the discourse, and construct a new consensus" to make sense of the new situation, potentially leading to policy change.[1146] In this subchapter, I will highlight three major foreign and security policy challenges that acted as impulses within the discursive ecosystem and shaped the context of the drone debate.

The first challenge was the shocking revelations in 2013–2014 about American drone strikes being launched from US bases in Germany, namely in Ramstein and Stuttgart. These strikes were one of the most prominent issues in the entire drone debate (6.2.1). The second challenge was Russia's invasion and annexation of the Crimean peninsula in Ukraine in 2014. This subchapter shows how the events in Ukraine served as a backdrop for discussions about the utility of drones in counterinsurgency versus national defense scenarios (6.2.2). The third challenge was the escalation of armed conflicts in the Middle East (e.g., Syria) and Africa (e.g., Libya, Somalia, Yemen, Mali) involving Islamist fundamentalist extremists, which led Germany to increase its military and civilian efforts to counter these threats. Nevertheless, it was only the case of Mali that was widely discussed by policymakers, as Germany had been operating unarmed Heron drones there since 2016. Drone debates as linked to Mali were less controversial and less dramatic than previous ones. This was a turning point in the discourse and contributed

[1145] FDP PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/3179: Änderungsantrag der Abgeordneten Christian Lindner, Christian Dürr, Ulla Ihnen, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP zu der zweiten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/1700, 19/1701, 19/2413, 19/2424, 19/2425, 19/2426 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2018 (Haushaltsgesetz 2018)," 2018, 2.

[1146] Farrell, *The Norms of War*, 13. See also ibid., 15

to normalizing military drones further (6.2.3). The analysis shows, however, that these impulses interacted to varying degrees with the Bundestag debate on armed drones. An impulse not directly linked to current German practices of armed drone use – e.g., the Russian invasion – was less present in the debate than Ramstein and Mali, which had a direct connection to German drone operations (Table 14).

	Appearance	**Effects on debate**	**Missed chance**
US drone strikes through Ramstein and Stuttgart	Strong	Shift from "bad" strikes to flawed US-German relations opened up debate	To continue loading meanings into concept of drone strikes
Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula	Weak	Mentioned value of drones for Germany as a NATO partner and for collective defense	To widely recognize interstate wars as a possible scenario for armed drones
Asymmetric conflicts and Islamist Terrorism	Strong (Mali)	Normalized unarmed German ISR drones	To construct the German role in global counterterror efforts
	Moderate (Libya, Syria, Somalia, Yemen)	Provided other cases of US drone strikes	

Table 14: Interaction of Foreign and Security Policy Impulses with the Drone Debate
Source: Author's own work

Moreover, I found that the debate was limited by a narrow capacity for big-picture thinking. Despite the Russian attack on Ukraine, the drone debate failed to imagine armed drones as a capability for interstate warfare. Discussions of asymmetric conflicts lacked a vision of what Germany's international role in global counterterrorism efforts could and should look like. Only in the case of Ramstein was the debate broadened to focus on US-German relations in general – to the detriment of drone opponents who missed the opportunity to advance their negative framings of drone strikes on this occasion.

6.2.1 United States Drone Strikes Through Bases in Ramstein and Stuttgart

Since the end of WWII, the US has been one of Germany's most important partners and allies. The US had helped rebuild West Germany's postwar economy and helped shaping its democratic system. During the Cold War, hundreds of thousands of American troops were stationed at US military bases in West Germany. Thus, US-German relations remain a central pillar of German foreign policy to this day. They were also the dominant interstate relationship in the

entire drone debate.[1147] For years, the opposition had rigorously scandalized drone strikes by referring to targeted killings by the US government (see Chapter 4). In late May 2013, two leading German media outlets reported that the US was using air bases in Germany for its international drone strike operations.[1148] Due to the NATO Status of Forces Agreement, the US has military bases in Germany, such as in Ramstein and at AFRICOM in Stuttgart. US targeted killing through drone strikes had already strongly shaped the German drone discourse (see Chapter 4). Now, the scandal caused enormous waves in the drone debates in the Bundestag. Among others, MPs were concerned that US drone strikes from these bases were violating international law on German soil.[1149] When the public learned that US drone strikes were going through bases in Germany, the opposition turned its attention to this new scandal. These speech instances contained many of the components of the "restraint"-narrative. However, the debate moved away from meanings that constructed drone strikes as such as inherently bad, and instead increasingly focused on the broader US-German relationship. This shift opened up discursive space for alternative – less negative – meanings of armed drones and drone strikes.

Once again, the opposition dominated the debate on US-German relations. The governments' initial response was to deny the allegations, arguing that the US government, including President Obama himself, had assured them that this was not the case.[1150] These assertions did not

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[1147] Within the entire drone debate references to other states or partner nations were rare, with France and the UK appearing on the margins of the debate. See for example, LEFT PG, German Bundestag, "Drucksache 18/2684: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Jan van Aken, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/2241 – Beschaffung bewaffnungsfähiger Drohnen nach Ende der „gesellschaftlichen Debatte"", 18th leg. period, September 29, 2014, 4; Katrin Suder, ibid., "Drucksache 18/4296: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 9. März 2015 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2015, 43; Greens, ibid., "Drucksache 19/6318: Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Dr. Frithjof Schmidt, Katja Keul, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN Umsetzung des politischen Prozesses in Mali und Ausrichtung des deutschen Engagements in der Sahelzone", 19th leg. period, December 7, 2018, 6. FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/10364: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Inge Höger, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/7991 – Erfahrungen aus 14 Jahren „Krieg gegen den Terror" – Eine Bilanz in Irak, Afghanistan, Pakistan," 2016, 35.

[1148] Fuchs, Goetz, and Leyendecker, "US-Streitkräfte steuern Drohnen von Deutschland aus"; Stefan Buchen et al., "Panorama - US-Drohnenkrieg läuft über Deutschland," *Das Erste*, May 30, 2013, https://www.ndr.de/fernsehen/sendungen/panorama/archiv/2013/US-Drohnenkrieg-laeuft-ueber-Deutschland,ramstein109.html.

[1149] Brugger, German Bundestag, "Drucksache 17/13991: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 10. Juni 2013 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 17th leg. period, June 14, 2013, 4; Keul, ibid., "Drucksache 18/36: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 4. November 2013 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 18th leg. period, November 8, 2013, 14; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/237: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Agnieszka Brugger, Omid Nouripour, Katja Keul, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/129 – Hinweise auf völkerrechtswidrige Praktiken der USA von deutschem Staatsgebiet aus und die diesbezüglichen Kenntnisse der Bundesregierung," 2013, 10; 12.

[1150] FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13991: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 10. Juni 2013 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2013, 4; Pieper, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/3," 2013, 127; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/237: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten

convince the drone critics, nor did they silence them. In the years that followed, the Left Party and the Greens continued to stress that the Americans were carrying out drone attacks on people in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia from German soil.[1151] They demanded transparency, an end to these drone strikes, and the closure of AFRICOM in Stuttgart.[1152]

For drone advocates hoping to present armed drones as a good idea, the revelations about secret US drone strikes going through bases in Ramstein and Stuttgart were the final nail in the coffin – at least temporarily. It was not a claim that directly attacked the option of Germany using armed drones in combat scenarios, as, for example, a scandal about German ISR drone operations in Afghanistan would have done, but it was part of a larger military drone context. Opposition speakers seized the opportunity to interpret these scandalous events and to feed their overarching narrative of armed drone operations as secret, prone to abuse, and bad governance. Before, the opposition had suggested that future German armed drone operations abroad could follow in the footsteps of the Americans (see 4.3.5). Now the issue hit even closer to home, with the US using its German bases to carry out drone strikes in other countries.

But by focusing so much on criticizing US-German relationship, the opposition neglected to hammer home its previously central critique: That US targeted killings were illegal, brutal, and unjust (see 4.3). Ramstein and AFRICOM continued to be prominent issues in US-German relations in 2015. In discussions about Rammstein, the Left and the Greens urged the government to act, just as they had done when talking about the risks of drone proliferation (see Chapter 5). They wanted Germany to become politically active and believed that this action could make a difference. Since the US could not carry out its drone strikes without Germany, they argued, Germany could stop them.[1153] Moreover, Germany would be in a position of power but if it chose choose to do nothing, it exposed itself as a "vassal state" ("Vasallenstaat") to the US,

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Agnieszka Brugger, Omid Nouripour, Katja Keul, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 18/129 – Hinweise auf völkerrechtswidrige Praktiken der USA von deutschem Staatsgebiet aus und die diesbezüglichen Kenntnisse der Bundesregierung," 2013, 10; 12.

1151 Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/25," 2014, 1993; van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/36," 2014, 3080.

1152 Hänsel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/24," 2014, 1901; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/998: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Frithjof Schmidt, Omid Nouripour, Agnieszka Brugger, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN. zu der Beratung des Antrags der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 18/857, 18/994 – Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an der EU-geführten Ausbildungsmission EUTM Somalia auf Grundlage des Ersuchens der somalischen Regierung mit Schreiben vom 27. November 2012 und 11. Januar 2013 sowie der Beschlüsse des Rates der Europäischen Union 2010/96/GASP vom 15. Februar 2010 und 2013/44/GASP vom 22. Januar 2013 in Verbindung mit der Resolution 1872 (2009) des Sicherheitsrates der Vereinten Nationen", 18th leg. period, April 2, 2014, 3; Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/26," 2014, 2061.

1153 Neu, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/97," 2015, 9222-3; Wagenknecht, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/130", 18th leg. period, 130th sess., October 15, 2015, 12559.

as the Left Party had put it.[1154] Nevertheless, out of all the parties, the Left and the Greens articulated the strongest belief in German agency.

The government, the CDU/CSU, and the SPD responded to this criticism with counter-frames that portrayed the US as a valuable, historical partner and ally.[1155] Ralf Brauksiepe, Parliamentary State Secretary at the MOD, reminded the Left Party MP Dağdelen that she only had the right to call her country a vassal state because "our American friends" ("unsere amerikanischen Freunde"), together with their allies, had liberated the Germans from the Nazi dictatorship.[1156] In 2016, the government gave a glowing review of US-German relations summarizing that for decades the US had been a "guarantor of security and stability in Europe"; a partnership "deeply rooted in our society" with the presence of US troops as a "historically grown expression of the alliance solidarity within NATO."[1157] The SPD talked a lot about Ramstein, using the opportunity to criticize US drone warfare and call for a ban on targeted killings. But they also rejected the Left's proposal to close Ramstein.[1158] The US was aware of the German reservations and acknowledged them.[1159] These counter-frames kept the conversation going and distracted the opposition from going back to talking about the harmful effects of drone strikes.

Besides Ramstein and AFRICOM, the disclosure of the US National Security Agency spying on Germans, including Chancellor Merkel's cellphone, during the National Security Agency (NSA) scandal, intensified anti-American sentiments. As Kundnani noted, "[m]any Germans now say that they no longer share values with the United States, and some say that they never did."[1160] Inquiries by the Left suggested the US refused to share relevant information; despite Germany's requests.[1161] In turn, several speeches by the government, and governing party politicians between 2013 and 2018 strongly emphasized the trustful relationship between the US

[1154] Transl. by author. Dağdelen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/99," 2015, 9440. See also Neu, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/97," 2015, 9223.

[1155] Wadephul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20874; Hitschler, ibid., ibid., 20876.

[1156] Transl. by author. Brauksiepe, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/99," 2015, 9440.

[1157] Transl. by author. In original: "Garant unserer Sicherheit und Stabilität in Europa, […] tief in unserer Gesellschaft verankerte Partnerschaft […]. Die Präsenz von US-Streitkräften […] ist dabei historisch gewachsener Ausdruck der Bündnissolidarität innerhalb der NATO" (FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/11023: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Niema Movassat, Dr. Alexander S. Neu, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/10618 – Die US-Basis Ramstein als wichtiger Knoten im weltweiten Drohnenkrieg," 2017, 2-3.)

[1158] See for example Juratovic, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/212," 2017, 21343-4.

[1159] Hitschler, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20878.

[1160] Hans Kundnani, "Leaving the West Behind: Germany Looks East," *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 1 (2015): 111.

[1161] See for example Hunko, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4038; Movassat, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/99," 2015, 9439; Hunko, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/178", 18th leg. period, 178th sess., June 22, 2016, 17564; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/2318: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Christine Buchholz, Matthias Höhn, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/2078 – Neubau eines US-Drohnenrelais in Sigonella und Abbau der baugleichen Anlage in Ramstein", 19th leg. period, May 24, 2018, 4.

and Germany. The government had a "trustful dialogue" ("und vertrauensvollen Dialog") with US partners,[1162] they were "trustfully cooperate" ("vertrauensvoll zusammenarbeiten"),[1163] "intensive, trustful conversations" ("intensive, vertrauliche Gespräche"),[1164] and "trustful exchanges" ("vertrauensvoller Austausch").[1165] In the absence of evidence to the contrary, it would be worthwhile to "invest in trust" ("in Vertrauen zu investieren") in the meantime.[1166] The extent to which government speakers stressed the idea of trust suggests that they hoped to remedy a loss of public confidence in their close ally as a result of the Ramstein and AFRICOM scandals.

6.2.2 Russia's Annexation of the Crimea and "Classic" National Defense

When the Russian Federation invaded and annexed the Ukrainian Crimean Peninsula in 2014, Germany suffered a "strategic shock".[1167] The Crimean Crisis triggered a shift in the broader international security policy context with a renewed focus on national defense scenarios in 2014 and the following years. In response, the Grand Coalition government concerted the European states on imposing strict economic sanctions, and led several diplomatic efforts. Yet, they also refused to send lethal weapons to Ukraine.[1168] Nevertheless, national defense became a higher priority in German politics. Following NATO's request, Germany increased its defense budget from 33 billion euros in 2013 to 36 billion in 2016.[1169] The alliance furthermore increased its

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1162 Transl. by author. Link, ibid., "Drucksache 17/13991: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 10. Juni 2013 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2013, 8; Böhmer, ibid., "Drucksache 18/1294: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 28. April 2014 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 18th leg. period, May 2, 2014, 4; M. Roth, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/178," 2016, 17564; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/11023: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Niema Movassat, Dr. Alexander S. Neu, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/10618 – Die US-Basis Ramstein als wichtiger Knoten im weltweiten Drohnenkrieg," 2017, 2-3.

1163 Brauksiepe, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/99," 2015, 9439. See also M. Roth, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/178," 2016, 17564; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/11023: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Niema Movassat, Dr. Alexander S. Neu, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/10618 – Die US-Basis Ramstein als wichtiger Knoten im weltweiten Drohnenkrieg," 2017, 2-3.

1164 Ederer, ibid., "Drucksache 18/5062: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 1. Juni 2015 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 18th leg. period, June 5, 2015, 11.

1165 Niels Annen, ibid., "Drucksache 19/2766: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 11. Juni 2018 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung", 19th leg. period, June 15, 2018, 45.

1166 Hitschler, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/209," 2016, 20878.

1167 Kundnani, "Leaving the West Behind: Germany Looks East," 108.

1168 Tuomas Forsberg, "From Ostpolitik to „Frostpolitik"? Merkel, Putin and German Foreign Policy Towards Russia," *International Affairs* 92, no. 1 (2016): 29-32; Hyde-Price, "The "sleep-walking giant" awakes," 610; Szabo, "Germany: Hegemon or Free Rider?."

1169 SIPRI, "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database - Germany," (Stockholm2024).

presence on its eastern flank with Germany, among others, contributing six additional Eurofighters to support NATO air policing.[1170] NATO furthermore revised its strategic doctrine.[1171] National and collective defense had been the only scenario during the Cold War. After counterinsurgency missions had emerged on the spectrum of military scenarios in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s, the page was now slowly turning back to "classic" defense again.[1172]

The Russian attack on Ukraine did not directly appear in the drone debates. During the period under review, debates focused on the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa, regions where the US and other states used drone strikes. Armed drones had been used in these regions as part of asymmetric conflicts in order to target terrorists (compare 6.2.3).[1173] The Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula was in a different part of the world. Still, the Ukraine crisis did have repercussions for the parliamentary drone discourse. For example, it raised awareness of the contribution of drones within the NATO alliance.

Already before the Ukraine crisis, speakers had occasionally claimed that drones could help to protect allied forces and partners. In the earlier years, politicians named partners such as ISAF-soldiers,[1174] American allies,[1175] and NATO-forces.[1176] It occurred in speeches by the CDU/CSU and the government 2009, 2013, 2014, 2016, and 2018, but without reaching the level of a distinct discursive frame. Drone advocates could have emphasized this aspect more, but the protection of allies rarely occurred compared to how armed drones served the safety of German troops. They also missed the opportunity to present drones as a successful example for NATO defense cooperation although member states had already formed a joint capability group on military drones to exchange information and experiences.[1177] Pro-drone speakers could have framed it as a role model project for fostering interoperability within NATO. In 2016, when the

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1170 Hyde-Price, "The "sleep-walking giant" awakes," 610.

1171 NATO, "Wales Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales," news release, September 5, 2014, https://www.nato.int/cps/cn/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm.

1172 Bundeswehr, "Mission and Tasks of the Bundeswehr," *Bundeswehr.de*, 2022, https://www.bundeswehr.de/en/about-bundeswehr/mission-and-tasks-bundeswehr.

1173 New America Foundation, "4. Who Has What: Countries that have Conducted Drone Strikes," 2019, https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/world-drones/who-has-what-countries-that-have-conducted-drone-strikes/.

1174 C. Schmidt, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 17/18", 17th leg. period, 18th sess., January 27, 2010, 1550.

1175 Schnurr, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27118.

1176 Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/237," 2013, 29766; ibid., "Drucksache 17/13655: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Rolf Mützenich, Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels, Rainer Arnold, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der SPD – Drucksache 17/11102 – Haltung der Bundesregierung zum Erwerb und Einsatz von Kampfdrohnen," 2013, 2.

1177 FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/14652: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Jan van Aken, Herbert Behrens, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/14323 – Forschungsprojekte der Bundesregierung und der Europäischen Union zur Entwicklung und Integration von Drohnen", 17th leg. period, August 29, 2013, 13.

German government published its first defense white paper in a decade, pro-drone speakers stated drone systems were part of the modern equipment Germany needed to be a reliable partner within NATO (and the UN for that matter).[1178] Occasionally, speakers even referred to the value of armed drones for collective defense ("Bündnisverteidigung").[1179]

Overall, collective and national defense scenarios appeared in the Bundestag drone debate, but counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations dominated. The war in Ukraine could have provided an opportunity to recognize interstate wars as a potential scenario for AMALE-drones. But both advocates, and opponents of drones had a limited focus and mainly talked about out-of-area and counterterrorism operations, sidelining other (potential) options. At that time, policymakers primarily considered armed drones as a technology for out-of-area operations. For these kinds of asymmetric scenarios, they were long seen as a "silver-bullet"-technology.[1180] However, they might have lost some of this status when more and more states started employing them, also in other conflict scenarios such as interstate war (see 7.1.1).

While national and collective defense may not have been as at the center of drone debates in the mid-2010s, the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula did appear to mute voices, who had suggested that AMALE-drones were out of the question for these kinds of scenarios. In 2013, speakers inquired whether armed drones were necessary for "classic" defense missions. For instance, FDP MP Erdel asked whether drones were a required part of the "NATO capability spectrum" ("Fähigkeitsspektrum der NATO") and whether it was necessary to acquire a certain drone armament for national defense purposes.[1181] The Left Party repeatedly disagreed. They claimed armed drones were not necessary for national defense but served, above all, out-of-area operations and for waging wars or intervening in conflicts worldwide.[1182] In 2014, statements of disbelief in the requirement of armed drones for national defense, previously advanced by speakers from the Left, faded.

1178 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4065; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/100," 2015, 9560; FDP PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/3179: Änderungsantrag der Abgeordneten Christian Lindner, Christian Dürr, Ulla Ihnen, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP zu der zweiten Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/1700, 19/1701, 19/2413, 19/2424, 19/2425, 19/2426 – Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2018 (Haushaltsgesetz 2018)," 2018, 2.

1179 Transl. by author. FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/13593: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Andrej Hunko, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/13468 – Entwicklung einer European MALE Kampfdrohne (EURODROHNE)," 2017, 2; Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3863.

1180 Sauer and Schörnig, "Killer Drones."

1181 Transl. by author. Erdel, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31352.

1182 Gysi, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30644.

6.2.3 Asymmetric Conflicts, Terrorism, and the Mali Mission

Although the Crimean Crisis caused Germany to refocus on national defense, the foreign and security policy of the 2010s shows a consistent focus on counterterror and counterinsurgency operations due to conflicts escalating in the Middle East (e.g., Syria) and Africa (e.g., Libya, Somalia, Yemen, Mali). Islamist terror groups were often involved. The international community responded to these challenges by setting up new international missions, led by the UN, NATO, the EU, and the African Union. Still, Germany refrained from military combat actions and focused on peacekeeping, stabilization, training, and humanitarian efforts instead. This policy line demonstrates the continuously restrictive approach to military action.

Syria, Libya, Somalia, and Yemen did not feature prominently in the German parliamentary drone debate, although German allies used drone strikes in these conflicts, especially the US and, to lesser extent, the UK.[1183] A possible reason for their rare presence was that Germany did not use any drones there. The Mali mission, by contrast, where Germany did employ unarmed Heron ISR drones, was key to the debate. It was framed as a legitimate, non-violent contribution to a peacekeeping mission. Together with the clearly communicated strategic need for intelligence gathering, Mali helped normalize Germany's use of unarmed drones compared to earlier, more controversial conflicts. Speakers now explained better why the government was deploying unarmed drones and what they were being used for. Still, these debates missed out on fleshing out Germany's international role in global counterterrorism efforts.

In the Middle East, the Syrian Civil War intensified in 2011, leading ISIL to gain a foothold in the region.[1184] The US and UK carried out airstrikes on Syrian territory, including through drone strikes.[1185] Germany abstained from these military actions. This was in line with domestic public opinion, where a large majority was against participating in the military intervention (82 percent).[1186] Instead, Germany joined the Global Coalition Against ISIL in 2015, contributing to reconnaissance, training, humanitarian aid, and stabilization.[1187] In the German drone debate,

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1183 Bergen, Sterman, and Salyk-Virk, "America's Counterterrorism Wars"; Drone Wars UK, "British Drone Operations against ISIS, 2014-2016 - Operational data, Continuing Issues of Concern," *Drone Wars UK*, 2017, https://dronewars.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/uk-armed-drone-operations-against-isis-in-iraq-and-syria-feb2017.pdf; Chris Cole, "Three-Month Snapshot Shows Expanding Use of Armed Drones," *Drone Wars UK*, April 6, 2018 2017, https://dronewars.net/2018/04/06/three-month-snapshot-shows-expanding-use-of-armed-drones/.

1184 Sean C. Reynolds and Mohammed M. Hafez, "Social Network Analysis of German Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 31, no. 4 (2019).

1185 Cole, "Expanding Use".

1186 Körber-Stiftung, *Einmischen oder zurückhalten? Aktualisierung 2015*, 16.

1187 Kate Connolly, "Germany Joins Anti-Isis Military Campaign," *The Guardian*, December 4, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/04/germany-joins-anti-isis-military-campaign.

Syria was largely missing. Instead, one of the repercussions of the Syrian Civil War, the "refugee crisis", was a major issue.

In Africa, several conflicts spiraled as well. In 2011, a NATO-led state coalition intervened militarily in Libya based on the UN Security Council Resolution 1973 (UNSCR 1973).[1188] The state collapsed, leaving behind a power vacuum, exploited by human traffickers, among others. Despite the US using drone strikes to fire at targets, Libya barely appeared in the German drone debate, possibly because Germany abstained from the military operation itself.[1189] Moreover, naval forces and conventional aerial strikes were at the center of the Libya intervention, whereas the US drone strikes were not as well-known to the public.[1190]

At the Horn of Africa, the Islamist group Al-Shabaab frequently carried out attacks in Somalia and neighboring countries.[1191] Although Germany supported the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISON) and contributed to several EU missions, the general security situation in Somalia appeared rarely in the drone debate. Particularly from 2015 on, Left speakers repeated claims from discussions about US drone strikes in Pakistan to portray the situation in Somalia: killed civilians, war crimes, and an ongoing spiral of violence.[1192] CDU MP Hahn contrasted these kinds of brutal depictions with a success story that drones had contributed to: Al-Shabab would have been chased away, their leadership weakened, and state structures were rising.[1193]

In Yemen, the conflict escalated in 2015 into a civil war between Houthi rebels and the Saudi-backed government, further complicated by the involvement of Al-Qaeda and ISIL. Similar to Somalia, Yemen rarely appeared in detail in German parliamentary drone debates. At times drone-skeptical speakers, especially from the Greens and the Left, mentioned Yemen together with Pakistan and Somalia (see 4.3 for examples), serving as additional cases for criticizing US

1188 United Nations Organization, "Resolution 1973 (2011)," (2011).

1189 Nick Turse, Henrik Moltke, and Alice Speri, "Secret War - The U.S. Has Conducted 550 Drone Strikes in Libya Since 2011," *The Intercept and la Republicca*, June 20, 2018, https://theintercept.com/2018/06/20/libya-us-drone-strikes/; see also Oppermann, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place?," 483.

1190 Turse, Moltke, and Speri, "Secret War".

1191 Claire Klobucista, Jonathan Masters, and Mohammed Aly Sergie, "2004 – 2022 Al-Shabaab in East Africa," *Council on Foreign Relations*, December 6, 2022, https://www.cfr.org/timeline/al-shabaab-east-africa.

1192 Dağdelen, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 18/94," 2015, 8987; Neu, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/97," 2015, 9222; Dağdelen, ibid., ibid., 9224; Dağdelen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/161", 18th leg. period, 161st sess., March 17, 2016, 15864; Dağdelen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/228," 2017, 22958; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/1847: Entschließungsantrag der Abgeordneten Heike Hänsel, Sevim Dağdelen, Dr. Alexander S. Neu, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. zu der Beratung des Antrags der Bundesregierung – Drucksachen 19/1596, 19/1833 – Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an der durch die Europäische Union geführten EU NAVFOR Somalia Operation Atalanta zur Bekämpfung der Piraterie vor der Küste Somalias," 2018, 2.

1193 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/94," 2015, 8991.

drone strikes in these countries.[1194] Still, unlike the US, Germany did not operate any large, drones in Somalia or Yemen – only unarmed Herons in Afghanistan and, since 2016, in Mali.

Mali presented a second case of unarmed drone employment for Germany and, importantly, a clean slate for the drone discourse, which turned out to be a turning point in the debate. In 2012 clashes between insurgents and the Malian government had escalated. Germany abstained from the French-led counterterror effort Operation Barkhane but supported the UN mission MINUSMA and EU Training Mission (EUTM) in 2013. The German engagement in Mali might not have been a shock to the German public, as the revelations about Ramstein were (see 6.2.1). Still, it provided an external impulse which interacted with the parliamentary drone debate. Debates on Mali differed greatly from debates referencing other drone affected countries such as Pakistan, Somalia or even Afghanistan. They included more explanations and were less emotionally charged. CDU/CSU speakers and government officials communicated more effectively to the public than before. Also, drone opposition voices were quieter now than they had been in discussions about Afghanistan or the like.

Speeches explained why Germany participated in the international mission in Mali and sketched out strategic objectives. In 2014, an SPD MP told the plenary that the Malian government had asked for help in controlling the situation in the north, with humanitarian assistance from the UN and drones, so that the state-building could continue.[1195] Establishing these facts helped to create legitimacy for the mission early on. Later, speakers explained that the stabilization mission included supervising the truce as well as supporting Mali in finding peace and reconciliation.[1196] Von der Leyen stated Germany would help out its partner nations France and the Netherlands. Moreover, German interests were at stake since this mission would restrain terrorism and because Mali was a key country in "refugee movements" ("Fluchtbewegungen").[1197] Refugees were a major domestic issue in the 2010s, which further underlined the urgent need for Germany to step up its efforts to help resolve the asymmetric conflicts. In 2015–2016, massive numbers of people fled war-torn Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq in hope of finding safety in other countries. In a significant effort dubbed the "refugee crisis" ("Flüchtlingskrise"), Germany took in more than a million refugees.[1198] Even though references to this crisis rarely appeared in the

1194 Ströbele, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/25," 2014, 1993; van Aken, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/36," 2014, 3080.
1195 Hellmich, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/42," 2014, 3731.
1196 Julia Obermeier, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/152," 2016, 14933.
1197 von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/149," 2016, 14696.
1198 Peter Hille, "'We Can Do This!' — Merkel's Words Five Years On," *Deutsche Welle*, August 31, 2020, https://www.dw.com/en/merkel-germany-refugees/a-54769229.

drone debate as such, it did feature very prominently in the broader political discourse at the time, possibly reducing the prominence of armed drones as a "hot topic".

German politicians across different parties suddenly began to differentiate between armed and unarmed drones in 2016; the year when the Heron TP arrived in Mali. Speakers explicitly used the term "ISR drones" ("Aufklärungsdrohnen") or stated the drones were to carry out ISR tasks in Mali.[1199] They explained that ISR drones should observe the connections between large cities.[1200] This new specification of terminology indicates a learning effect. By emphasizing early on that drones were exclusively used for ISR and nothing else, they limited the discursive space for speculation about armed operations. Once in Mali the Heron TP would provide reconnaissance for the "enormously big northern area" ("gewaltig großes nördliches Gebiet") requiring a reach of 200 to 900 km.[1201] Surveilling these vast areas with other aerial vehicles would be less effective. Thus, speakers explained drone use with the geographic particularities of Mali, unlike their predecessors, who could have justified drone use in Afghanistan with the inaccessibility of local mountain ranges such as the Hindu Kush.

A third difference, and potentially the result of the previous two points, was that the drone debate had lost some of the fervent drama from earlier years. There was significantly less use of provocative and emotional language especially compared to the drone controversy heydays in 2013. A central reason for this was the absence of drone strikes in Mali at the time of observation.[1202] Moreover, the Malian government had asked for drones specifically. By contrast,

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1199 von der Leyen, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 18/149," 2016, 14696; Obermeier, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/152," 2016, 14933; Ederer, ibid., "Drucksache 18/7510: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 8. Februar 2016 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2016, 18; von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/213," 2017, 21360; Vöpel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/215," 2017, 21518; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/11113: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Frank Tempel, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/10772 – Militärische Drohnen in deutschen Lufträumen und ihre Steuerung über Relaisstationen", 18th leg. period, February 9, 2017, 1; Gabriel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/228," 2017, 22907; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/1098: Antrag der Bundesregierung Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an der Multidimensionalen Integrierten Stabilisierungsmission der Vereinten Nationen in Mali (MINUSMA) auf Grundlage der Resolutionen 2100 (2013), 2164 (2014), 2227 (2015), 2295 (2016) und 2364 (2017) vom 25. April 2013, 25. Juni 2014, 29. Juni 2015, 29. Juni 2016, 29. Juni 2017, ergänzt durch Resolution 2391 (2017) des Sicherheitsrates der Vereinten Nationen vom 8. Dezember 2017," 2018, 6; von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/22", 19th leg. period, 22nd sess., March 21, 2018, 1876; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/1597: Antrag der Bundesregierung Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an der Militärmission der Europäischen Union als Beitrag zur Ausbildung der malischen Streitkräfte (EUTM Mali)", 19th leg. period, April 11, 2018, 6.

1200 von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/149," 2016, 14696.

1201 Transl. by author. von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/213," 2017, 21360; von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/22," 2018, 1876; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/5136: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Michel Brandt, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/4714 – Drohnen der Bundeswehr in Mali," 2018, 1.

1202 Eventually, the French were the first nation to use drone strikes in Mali in 2019.

the Pakistani government had asked the US to abandon their drone base in Shamsi, which had allowed drone critics to argue US drone strikes undermined the sovereignty of Pakistan.[1203] By contrast, it was uncontroversial when the unarmed Heron arrived in Mali in November 2016.[1204] Drone-skeptics simply missed munition for their rhetorical attacks. Minister von der Leyen even detected a lack of public interest in the Heron TP operation in Mali, because things were going so well.[1205] Indeed, many speakers spoke positively about ISR drones operating in Mali. CDU/CSU MP Hahn commented the extension of the mandate showed that Germany was more engaged now.[1206] Von der Leyen announced Germany was "ready to make a substantial contribution" ("bereit, einen substanziellen Beitrag zu erbringen") to MINUSMA and Gabriel recognized Germany was already doing so.[1207]

At the same time, speakers from government parties did not avoid giving a realistic assessment of the situation at stake, repeatedly characterizing the mission in Mali as "dangerous" ("gefährlich")[1208] and describing the threat situation as "serious" ("erhebliche Bedrohungsstufe").[1209] They believed that German ISR drones would be beneficial. For example, in 2016, von der Leyen claimed that they would "help the country" ("hilft dem Land").[1210] In drone debates centering on Afghanistan critics framed the security situation as disastrous, but AMALE-drone advocates rarely counter-argued the security situation would improve because of drone employment. Similarly in a discussion about Somalia in 2015, CDU/CSU MP Hahn emphasized successes in order to counter grim depictions of the situation by Left speakers: Thanks to the use of US drone strikes, Al-Shabab would have been chased away, their leadership weakened. Instead, state structures would begin to rise.[1211]

1203 Nachtwei, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 16/204," 2009, 23333. Heidrun Bluhm, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/145", 17th leg. period, 145th sess., November 30, 2011, 17255; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/12437: Antrag der Abgeordneten Paul Schäfer (Köln), Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," 2013, 1.

1204 von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/213," 2017, 21360.

1205 von der Leyen, ibid., ibid.

1206 Hahn, ibid, "Plenarprotokoll 18/149," 2016, 14703.

1207 Von der Leyen transl. by author (von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/3," 2017, 143.) Gabriel, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/228," 2017, 22907.

1208 von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/149," 2016, 14696; Hahn, ibid, ibid., 14703; von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/3," 2017, 143.

1209 Ederer, ibid., "Drucksache 18/7510: Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 8. Februar 2016 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung," 2016, 18.

1210 von der Leyen, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/149," 2016, 14696.

1211 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/94," 2015, 8991.

6.3 Final Remarks: Debating Does Not Equal Decision-Making

Following the discourse analysis presented in the previous chapters, the question remains: Has this lengthy and elaborate drone debate actually resulted in tangible policy action? After all, a debate is not the same as actual decision-making. Constructive debates are important for democratic processes, but they are the journey, not the final destination. They should be used to thoroughly explore an issue, weigh pros and cons, identify policy options, and make an informed decision in the light of policy objectives. The fact that German policymakers had extensively debated armed drones for a decade, extensively, without actually making a decision for or against this weapon system was so puzzling that it inspired this research. My analysis showed that it was a standard practice for years to not to distinguish clearly between armed and unarmed drones. But more than that, policymakers on both sides of the aisle created a parallel debate about what kind of debate they needed to have before deciding anything. They debated debates. This mostly happened when a policy decision on armed drones seemed imminent, in 2012–2013 and 2018. It occurred across the benches.

Debating the debates took on different forms in the discourse. The debates constituted an object of negotiation, a platform for blame, and a precondition for action in the parliamentary debate on drone policy. Speakers presented their preferences for the focus of the drone debate in terms of different partisan priorities. In doing so, they negotiated over what kind of topical framing the debate should have. The Left Party wanted to discuss legal, ethical, and security aspects.[1212] Meanwhile, the Greens opted for a focus on ethics and peace policy.[1213] The SPD highlighted arms control and international law.[1214] For the CDU/CSU military and security policy were a priority.[1215] Similarly, the FDP emphasized security policy and future Bundeswehr capabilities.[1216] As was to be expected in a parliamentary debate, it was also a platform for accusing other parties of obstructing the debate, especially for conservative MPs. Manderla (CDU/CSU),

[1212] Hunko, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4059; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/7725: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Christine Buchholz, Sevim Dağdelen, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/7426 – Auswahlentscheidung zur Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen," 2016, 2.

[1213] Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/207," 2012, 25302.

[1214] Mützenich, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27111-2.

[1215] Willsch, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/191," 2012, 23057; Schockenhoff, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27073; de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31350.

[1216] FDP PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11083: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss)," 2012, 4; Strack-Zimmermann, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/64," 2018, 7377.

for example, accused the opposition of promoting hysterical panic ("hysterische Panikmache"),[1217] Hahn of "demonizing" ("Dämonisierung") the term "drone",[1218] and Willsch of facilitating "tabooings" ("Tabuisierungen").[1219]

Moreover, the debate about armed drones was a prerequisite for policy decisions. In the early years, speakers emphasized the need for public debates on arming drones.[1220] The 2014 coalition agreement between the CDU/CSU and the SPD then announced that the government would "carefully examine" ("sorgfältig zu prüfen") questions of international and constitutional law, security policy, and ethics related to armed drones before deciding to arm them.[1221] This clause essentially raised the requirement of a debate to the status of a veto. The SPD used it to block the armament shortly before the 2017 federal elections, arguing that the debate had not been sufficient. The 2018 coalition agreement then reaffirmed this requirement.[1222] During parliamentary debates this year, the Left Party and some Greens argued that the debate had not yet been sufficiently conducted.[1223] Conservative and Liberal speakers, and even one Green MP, disagreed, complaining that the debate had been taking place for years.[1224]

Concerns about the government's secret procurement of armed drones were a major reason for the opposition to demand a debate back in 2013.[1225] But overall, debating debates was, to some extent, symbolic of a number of interrelated issues for both sides. Both camps thought they

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1217 Manderla, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/45," 2014, 4066.

1218 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/242," 2013, 30652.

1219 Willsch, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/191," 2012, 23057.

1220 Bartels, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/71," 2010, 7617; Nouripour, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/191," 2012, 23054; Brugger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/207," 2012, 25302; Green PG cited in Defense Committee Report, ibid., "Drucksache 17/11083: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss)," 2012, 5; de Maizière, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/246," 2013, 31348; FGG, ibid., "Drucksache 18/340: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan van Aken, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/171 – Nutzung des Spionagesystems ISIS und Subventionierung des Rüstungskonzerns EADS," 2014, 10.

1221 CDU, CSU, and SPD, "Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD - Deutschlands Zukunft gestalten," 2013, 178.

1222 CDU, CSU, and SPD, "Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD - Ein neuer Aufbruch für Europa: Eine neue Dynamik für Deutschland Ein neuer Zusammenhalt für unser Land," 2018, 159.

1223 See for example, LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/2582: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Heike Hänsel, Andrej Hunko, Sevim Dağdelen, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/1831 – Keine Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen – Rüstungsbegrenzung stärken," 2018, 1; Pflüger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3867-8; T. Lindner, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/45," 2018, 4747; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/3787: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Heike Hänsel, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/3329 – Betrieb von Drohnen der Luftwaffe auf dem israelischen Flughafen Tel Nof," 2018, 3.

1224 Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3869; A. Schäfer, ibid., ibid.; Klein, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/45," 2018, 4742.

1225 Mützenich, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 17/219," 2013, 27111; LEFT PG, ibid., "Drucksache 17/14571: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan Korte, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/14018 – Deutsche Beteiligung am NATO-Programm „Alliance Ground Surveillance"", 17th leg. period, August 15, 2013, 1-2; Katrin Göring-Eckardt, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 18/5", 18th leg. period, 5th sess., December 18, 2013, 249.

could win. On the one hand, the pro-drone camp hoped to eventually convince others. It was a pretext for CDU/CSU politicians, who never really gave up on armed drones, to keep debating until they got their way, as the Green MP Keul noted in 2018.[1226] On the other hand, the no-drone camp continued to fuel the debate in order to maintain a public stage for their critical representations and anti-drone arguments, and not to let the German government forget that a forced decision could backfire. *De facto*, the drone-skeptical camp was successful, as the Bundeswehr did not receive any AMALE-drones during the observation period. From a policy-making perspective, however, the process barely moved forwards. Ultimately, all the debates culminated in the avoidance of a final decision. One reason for the lack of progress (in one form or another) was uncertainty about what role Germany should play in future armed conflicts.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the third and final part of my discourse analysis. It showed how speakers discursively (re)constructed a foreign and security policy line that underpinned the armed drone policy; and where they missed out on doing so. The results of the analysis were situated in historical and socio-political contexts. During the 2010s, the security landscape changed and demands for a more active Germany grew. The chapter found that the armed drone debate reflected an overarching tension in German foreign and security policy: Balancing the traditional principle of military restraint with the embrace of greater international responsibility, including military means.[1227] In their respective narratives, the drone-skeptical camp generally leaned toward less military interventions, while speakers who wanted Germany to live up to its international responsibility mainly supported the acquisition of armed drones. However, the categorization of a narrative as either pro-drone or drone-skeptical was less clear here than in the previous chapters, with the Social Democrats falling somewhere in between. Many German policymakers gradually reduced their discomfort with counterinsurgency missions and the use of military force. This development helped to facilitate the emergence of armed drone use as a potential policy option. Moreover, the chapter illustrated that various other policy issues were involved in the debate over armed drones, for example, the goals and procedures of counterinsurgency operations, Germany's relationship with NATO and the US, and the German contribution to international military engagements.

The first subchapter introduced the former taboo of using the term "war", which was vividly politicized and intensely contested. It took Defense Minister zu Guttenberg years to finally

[1226] Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3869.
[1227] Compare Abenheim and Halladay, "Stability in Flux: Policy, Strategy, and Institutions in Germany," 304-5.

speak of a "war" in Afghanistan. In the drone debate the Left and the Greens seemed to miss hardly any opportunity to use this loaded term. The new foreign and security policy debate launched by the Munich speeches in 2014 then promoted the idea that Germany should bear more responsibility and become more active internationally, also militarily. CDU/CSU and SPD state leaders such as Gauck, Steinmeier, and von der Leyen argued along this line since 2013–2014, but parliamentary SPD leaders such as Mützenich were still cautious of supporting the idea of more military interventions. Even more so, the Left Party and the Greens protested against this change and supported the "restraint"-narrative. The Left stood out for painting a vivid picture of Germany moving towards militarization, interventionism, and ultimately war. Pro-drone speakers rarely reinforced positive or patriotic framings of drones associated with the Bundeswehr or military power. Instead, their advocacy again focused on the soldiers, or they talked about economic power. Even more than in the previous chapters, the CDU/CSU and the Left Party were extreme political poles, who attacked each other.

The second subchapter focused on three foreign and security policy impulses that influenced the discursive ecosystem and interacted with the parliamentary drone debate. It illustrated how the parliamentary discourse (re)produced meanings as it interacted with the policy context. Throughout the entire decade under study, the most dominant interstate relationship was by far the one between Germany and the US. Interpretations of this relationship were highly contested in light of the "shocks" caused by the revelations of US drone strikes from bases in Ramstein and Stuttgart (AFRICOM) in the summer of 2013. The opposition began to shift its contributions toward criticizing the US-German relations in general. Thus, the discourse moved away from discussing what was happening in the battle zone itself. Opposition speakers no longer focused primarily on explaining why US targeted killings were unlawful, violent, and unjust. As a result, a discursive space opened up. In contrast, the governing parties, later joined by the FDP, stood up for Germany's close ally.

In terms of strategic scenarios, armed drones operated primarily in asymmetric scenarios during the period studied. The discourse reflected this fact. Nevertheless, national and collective defense scenarios became more relevant in Germany in 2014 after Russia annexed Crimea. The Russian attack altered the broader security discourse to pay more attention to classical national defense. Since policymakers at the time did not see armed drones as a very relevant weapon system for these interstate conflict scenarios, drones may have lost some of their extraordinary status as a "silver-bullet" technology in the broader security discourse. Such a loss of status did not appear explicitly in any of the parliamentary debates. Still, it is plausible that AMALE-drones began to look more like an ordinary technology limited to asymmetric scenarios. Indeed,

out of the two strategic scenarios, asymmetric counterterrorism and counterinsurgency dominated the 2009–2018 drone debate. Another impulse was the deployment of German ISR drones in Mali in 2016. Afghanistan had long dominated the drone debate, a long, complex mission began under very different circumstances. The Mali debates, on the other hand, showed a learning effect in terms of communication. The government now explained the mission, the goals, and the roles of the drones. Politicians also correctly distinguished between armed and unarmed drones. All in all, the drone debate had become far less dramatic and contentious than in the past. In comparison to debates about the military uses of armed drones, in terms of the wider foreign and security policy context, the opponents were less productive in advancing new claims – except the Left Party (see Table 15).

Year	Claims by drone advocates	Claims by drone opponents
2009	*New*: Defense Minister zu Guttenberg speaks of "warlike conditions" in Afghanistan	/
2010	*New*: Zu Guttenberg speaks of "war" in Afghanistan	/
2011	/	/
2012	*New*: Drones help eliminating "structural deficits" in the Bundeswehr	*New*: Left MPs claim armed drones would turn Bundeswehr into an intervention army
2013	*New*: Trustful relationship with US	*New*: Left MPs suspect government would want drones for engaging in more wars *New*: US uses bases in Rammstein and Stuttgart for conducting drone strikes abroad
	Peak: Combination of Germany's economic power with a military perspective **Peak**: Referencing "responsibility"	**Peak**: US uses bases in Rammstein and Stuttgart for conducting drone strikes abroad
2014	*New*: Detailed accounts of drone ISR in Mali	/
2015	**Peak**: Combination of Germany's economic power with a military perspective **Peak**: Referencing "responsibility"	**Peak**: US uses bases in Rammstein and Stuttgart for conducting drone strikes abroad
2015	/	*New*: Left MPs use the term "drone war"

2016	*New*: Cooperation with NATO *New*: Clear differentiation between "unarmed" and "armed" drones	*New*: Left MPs condemn turning Germany into a military power again, armed for new wars *New*: Clear differentiation between "unarmed" and "armed" drones
2018	**Peak**: US is a valuable partner and ally **Peak**: Detailed accounts of drone ISR in Mali	/

Table 15: The Parliamentary Discourse over Time: Foreign and Security Policy Context
Source: Author's own work

The chapter concludes that the new debate on German foreign and security policy provided an important context for normalizing military action, but it still lacked concrete visions for Germany's role. Advocates of a more involved Germany merely asserted *that* their country would become more engaged (because it had to) but without explaining to what end. Due to the national history and culture, discussing military matters in Germany was not without challenges. For example, the spectrum of available ideas and concepts in the discourse started much further to the left (e.g., anti-militarism, non-intervention, preventive drone ban) than in other countries. Also, it did not go as far to the right (e.g., military power, killing bad guys, patriotism, pride in the defense industry). Accordingly, pro-drone agents had a much narrower range of arguments at their disposal than drone-opponents.

At the same time, compared to conservative parties in other countries, the CDU/CSU had a moderate position on military issues. They long struggled to construct positive military framings for armed drones in parliamentary debates. Moreover, they had been the only strictly pro-drone party in the Bundestag after the 2013 election. The FDP's return to parliament in 2017 strengthened the pro-drone camp. Moreover, the AfD had entered parliament for the first time after this election, further extending the political spectrum to the far right. Although the AfD did not contribute significantly to parliamentary debates on drones until December 2018, it did so in the following years. The epilogue (Chapter 7) considers this and points to other relevant dynamics after the end of my observation period in December 2018.

7 Epilogue – The Fall of the Armed Drone Taboo 2019-2021

This epilogue is not part of the main discourse analysis but an additional section, covering developments which occurred when the dissertation was already mid-way finished. It briefly outlines drone-related empirical developments and discursive practices that took place after my studied time period (after December 2018) and describes the events leading up to the coalition agreement published in November 2021. In this treaty, the SPD, the Greens, and the FDP agreed to allow the German military to acquire and use armed drones in a transparent, restrained, and rule-based manner. After years of debates, the armed drone taboo had fallen for good. In 2021, Germany ultimately decided to adopt armed drones. Thus, the epilogue seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the German drone controversy as a whole.

The decision of the newly elected government may have come as a surprise to some – after all the SPD and the Greens had long been opposed to armed drones. Nevertheless, the previous chapters have outlined several trends in the parliamentary debates and the discursive ecosystem that paved the way for armed drones to become a political possibility between January 2009 and December 2018. In terms of the use of AMALE-drones, the "targeted-killing"-narrative had lost its dominance over time, and criticism of US drone strikes as violating international law and human rights diminished after 2015. Pro-drone government officials, on the other hand, began to illustrate how the military could use drones for close air support in 2013 and 2014, and introduced the "save and protect soldiers"-framing. This argument gained traction and persisted over time (see Chapter 4). At the height of the drone controversy, speakers had often raised concerns about the proliferation of drones and an arms race, calling for arms control. After 2015, these concerns also faded as the proliferation of armed drones sharply increased (see Chapter 5). Regarding Germany's international role, the mid-2010s saw a new debate. Germany gradually came to terms with taking on more responsibility, including in military operations abroad, such as in counterterror and counterinsurgency scenarios. At the same time, "classical" national and alliance defense in interstate wars also became more important in the foreign policy and security discourse. Before 2019 the use of AMALE-drone in such scenarios was, however, rarely imagined (see Chapter 6).

I argue that, since 2019, many of these trends have continued. However, there were also some important changes within the discursive ecosystem. External developments and events acted as impulses and even as shocks, providing additional support and new evidence for pro-drone arguments. One of these impulses was the international armed drone "boom". The number of states using drones strikes rose to twelve by the end of 2019. During President Donald Trump's time in office, US drone strikes increased significantly. Importantly, Azerbaijan introduced

drone strikes to an interstate conflict. Proliferation continued, as states such as Germany's allies Canada, and the Netherlands decided to get armed drones. Preventive arms control became increasingly out of reach. Regarding the discursive themes of responsibility and military restraint, the attacks on German soldiers stationed abroad were significant events. These attacks filled a gap in the German drone debate, which had lacked concrete evidence proving that armed drones would save soldiers.

In the parliamentary debate, the argument that German soldiers needed armed drones for protection thus became dominant. Advocates of drone armament used the recent attacks on German soldiers on missions abroad as evidence to substantiate and strengthen the protection argument. Most parties agreed that Bundeswehr operations would continue to be part of Germany's role in the world, including international crisis management as well as national and alliance defense scenarios. Together with three other political aspects, this discursive shift built up to the inclusion of armed drones in the coalition agreement. By the fall of 2017, the pro-drone AfD and the FDP had entered the parliament. The AfD extended the political spectrum towards the extreme right, broadening the range of policy positions and discursive possibilities.[1228] Moreover, it became increasingly clear that the SPD and the Greens, two out of the three former drone-opposition parties, were internally divided on the issue of armed drones. Eventually, they adjusted their party lines in favor of armed drones.

As described above, the epilogue complements the main analysis, but it also raises critical questions about the effectiveness of discourse analysis in capturing the dynamics of policy formation. After 2018, the arguments in the Bundestag debate barely changed. Rather than the discourse itself, it was the occurrence of empirical events within the discursive ecosystem which set in motion a process, ultimately opening a policy window and leading to policy formulation. This development highlights how significant external factors – beyond discourse – were in advancing the policy process, particularly towards the end of the drone controversy. These observations point to the limitations of discourse analysis both regarding discourse theory (drone debate had low productivity at the end) and analytical usefulness for scholars (at least when applied in its "pure" form) for fully understanding the emergence of a policy. At the same time, it demonstrates the benefits of studying policy changes from an integrated perspective.

The chapter proceeds as follows: First, I briefly outline international drone-related developments and events that occurred between 2019 and 2021, as they shaped the political context and provided examples of armed drone use (7.1). Second, I will present the discursive shifts and

[1228] Looking at the parliamentary dynamics in the drone debate, the AfD neither stood out from other parties, nor were treated differently. Still, the presence of the AfD altered the tone of the parliamentary debate on drones, as explained further below.

continuities in the drone debate in the Bundestag from January 2019 until the last plenary session before the parliamentary summer break in 2021, which preceded the national elections in the fall of 2021. Due to limited resources and space, I selected twelve Bundestag documents for examination: Four plenary debates and four policy proposals, each from a different opposition party, as well as the corresponding Defense Committee report and recommended resolution. Together, these documents provide a solid basis for comparing the positions, arguments, and framings with the findings of the previous chapters. It highlights that there was continuity in the parliamentary discourse on drones, with only a few small new facets (7.2). Third, I will situate the discursive developments in the domestic party-political context, focusing particularly on the SPD and the Greens. Finally, I will provide a brief summary of how the 2021 coalition agreement established the adoption of armed drones as a viable policy option, thereby marking the end of the long-standing German policy debate on the issue (7.3). In the conclusion, I briefly summarize my findings (7.4).

7.1 Developments and Events 2019-2021

Before analyzing the discursive developments after December 2018, this subchapter presents a brief discussion of international drone-related events. It serves to outline the security policy context at the time and facilitate a better understanding of certain discursive aspects. Not only did policymakers derive meanings from these events that influenced their representations of armed drones, but they also provided enabling and limiting conditions for certain arguments and framings.[1229] The subchapter summarizes key developments in international armed drone proliferation, such as the increase in drone strikes by the US and first users such as France and Azerbaijan (7.1.1). It then examines the disruptive events that have occurred to German armed forces in the military operation in Afghanistan where the Taliban attacked their camp (7.1.2).

7.1.1 The Adoption and Use of Armed Drones Continued

According to the New America Foundation, by the end of 2019 twelve countries had used drone strikes in combat. The list did not only include the US, Israel, and the UK, who were first movers, but now also Russia and France; both of whom carried out their first strikes in late 2019. Under President Trump drone strikes boomed.[1230] For example, there were forty US airstrikes via drones in Somalia in 2020 alone, compared to a combined total of forty-one in Somalia

[1229] Compare Epstein, *The Power of Words*; Price, *Chemical Weapons Taboo*, 7.

[1230] Jessica Purkiss, Jack Serle, and Abigail Fielding-Smith, "US Terror Air Strikes Double in Trump's First Year," *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, December 19, 2017, https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2017-12-19/counterrorism-strikes-double-trump-first-year.

during the Bush and Obama administrations.[1231] Furthermore, in January 2020 the US conducted a personality-strike on the Iranian military general Qassem Soleimani while he was in Iraq. These drone strikes were a novelty, because it was the first time that a state targeted another state actor in a third country, justifying the strike as national self-defense. Nine other people died in the attack.[1232] However, the Trump administration has presented Europe and Germany with several serious foreign and security policy challenges that may have made the surge in US drone strikes seem like a minor issue by comparison.[1233] When President Joe Biden took over office, it took him only a few months to revise American counterterrorism practices, including drone strikes and commando raids. This revision included limiting strikes in Afghanistan and Syria and requiring a mandatory White House approval for military and CIA strikes in Somalia and Yemen. While these initiatives introduced new restrictions and controls to US drone strikes, the Biden administration did not prohibit strikes in undeclared war zones as such.[1234] Yet, the US was reconsidering the use of armed drones in conflict theatres. Around the same time, German parties, specifically the SPD and the Greens, who had opposed armed drones before, began considering them an option (see 7.3.1).

Other significant incidents in the area of armed drone proliferation were the use of drone strikes by the French military in Mali and by Azerbaijan during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The former was significant because France is one of Germany's closest allies, the latter because it was the first drone strikes occurring in an interstate war. The Forces Armées Françaises had operated unarmed Reaper drones for years. In 2017, they announced they would equip them with armament and then carried out the first drone strikes against alleged jihadist targets in Mali in December 2019.[1235] More drone strikes followed as part of Operation Barkhane.[1236] During the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Azerbaijan launched drone strikes against soldiers from Armenia and from the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region.[1237] Unlike in the case of drones targeting terrorists, at Nagorno-Karabakh two states were battling each other. Azerbaijani drone

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1231 Kelsey D. Atherton, "Trump Inherited the Drone War but Ditched Accountability," *Foreign Policy*, May 22, 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/22/obama-drones-trump-killings-count/.

1232 Stephanie Nebehay, "U.N. Expert Deems U.S. Drone Strike on Iran's Soleimani an 'Unlawful' Killing," *Reuters*, July 6, 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-iran-un-rights-idUSKBN2472TW/.

1233 On some of these challenges see Gaskarth and Oppermann, "Clashing Traditions: German Foreign Policy in a New Era."; Oppermann, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place?."

1234 Charlie Savage and Eric Schmitt, "Biden Secretly Limits Counterterrorism Drone Strikes Away From War Zones," *The New York Times*, March 3, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/03/us/politics/biden-drones.html.

1235 Angela Charlton and Krista Larson, "France Says it Carries out First Armed Drone Strike in Mali," *The Associated Press*, December 23, 2019, https://apnews.com/general-news-91857c92f04187ce48ad5bf26ea3d4af.

1236 Denis M. Tull, "Operation Barkhane and the Future of Intervention in the Sahel: The Shape of Things to Come," *SWP Comment* 2021, no. 20 January (2021).

1237 Cheterian, "Technological Determinism or Strategic Advantage."; Kunertova, "Drones Have Boots," 576.

strikes destroyed the heavy military machinery of their opponent. Analysts recognized a different kind of asymmetry than before. The relatively cheap armed drones could easily destroy expensive ground equipment. Drone strikes were considered as tactically advantageous and even decisive for the outcome of the conflict.[1238] These trends have continued in the war that ensued after Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine in February 2022 (see 8.1.3).[1239]

The horizontal and vertical proliferation also continued. Around the globe there were several states who decided to acquire armed drones since 2019, including Germany's allies Canada and the Netherlands.[1240] Facing a constantly growing number of close allies acquiring armed drones, pressure was put on Germany to follow suit. Regarding R&D, the Eurodrone availability date was postponed to 2027. Since the Eurodrone would have been more expensive than American competitor models, especially the Reaper, disagreements caused a delay in signing the contract by over a year. The Bundestag finance committee approved it in 2021.[1241] In terms of vertical proliferation, research in machine autonomy continued, backed by advances in artificial intelligence. The arms race that the Left, the Greens, and the SPD had repeatedly warned about between 2013 and 2015 (see 5.3.1) was in full swing. In light of this continuous proliferation, preventive arms control became increasingly unlikely, and banning armed drones became unthinkable (compare 5.3.3).

7.1.2 Attacks on German Forces in Afghanistan

After the end of 2018, the Bundeswehr was still present in Afghanistan and Mali. In both countries the security situation was still volatile amounting in hundreds of civilian deaths. According to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) July 2019 had been the deadliest month in a decade.[1242] Human Rights Watch described 2019 in Mali as "the deadliest year for civilians since Mali's political and military crisis erupted in 2012".[1243] While most of the victims of the ongoing terrorists and militia attacks were local civilians, the Bundeswehr also be-

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1238 Robyn Dixon, "Azerbaijan's Drones Owned the Battlefield in Nagorno-Karabakh — and Showed Future of Warfare," *The Washington Post*, November 11, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world%2Feurope%2Fnagorno-karabkah-drones-azerbaijan-aremenia%2F2020%2F11%2F11%2F441bcbd2-193d-11eb-8bda-814ca56e138b_story.html.

1239 Kreps and Lushenko, "Drones in Modern War."

1240 New America Foundation, "Who Has What: Countries with Armed Drones," 2023, https://www.newamerica.org/future-security/reports/world-drones/who-has-what-countries-with-armed-drones.

1241 Clément Charpentreau, "Eurodrone Program Stalls as Spain Delays Approval," *AeroTime*, December 2, 2021, https://www.aerotime.aero/articles/29611-eurodrone-program-stalls-as-spain-delays-approval.

1242 Amnesty International, "Human Rights in Asia-Pacific: Review of 2019," (2020), 7.

1243 Human Rights Watch, "'How Much More Blood Must Be Spilled?' Atrocities Against Civilians in Central Mali, 2019," (2020), 1.

came a target. Two attacks in Afghanistan provided the discourse concrete examples of situations in which armed drones could help German soldiers to defend and protect themselves. In 2019 and 2020, Taliban militants repeatedly attacked Camp Pamir near Kunduz in northern Afghanistan, where German soldiers were stationed within the so-called safe haven at a camp of the Afghan National Army. They were training Afghan security forces as part of the NATO mission Resolute Support. On August 31, 2019, the Taliban fired at the camp. Fortunately, none of the eighty German soldiers present were injured. This attack received much attention in Germany, including in the armed drone debate, which had previously lacked hard proof for the operational necessity of armed drones. In earlier years, the debate had missed out on presenting hard cases of situations in which drones could have saved German soldiers in conflict zones (compare 4.3.1 and 4.3.3).

Several months after the incident, in December 2019, the new Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (CDU) visited the camp. After having talked to the soldiers, she stated there were very good reasons for arming drones. It would be understandable that the soldiers would want to be able to actively protect themselves. At the moment, they would have to call for support from allies, such as the US forces, and wait hours for them to arrive.[1244] When the attack happened, German soldiers had an ISR drone in the air. They were able to watch the Taliban fighters set up their missiles and firing them. A German colonel told the Sueddeutsche newspaper, "we knew we were being fired at. But we were defenseless". As the article commented, the situation would have been different had the drone been armed.[1245] In February 2020, there was another attack on Camp Pamir. Several mortar shells hit the camp this time. Again, no German soldiers were injured.[1246] Still, a debate gained momentum about whether German soldiers serving in conflict countries were sufficiently protected. Green MP and Disarmament Policy Spokesperson (2017–2021) Keul had argued in 2018 that she was unaware of any cases where an armed drone could have prevented harm to a soldier.[1247] This claim was now obsolete. In July 2020, a Ministry of Defense report recommended drone armament was "urgently required" ("dringend geboten").[1248]

1244 Reuters, "Kramp-Karrenbauer offen für stärkere Bewaffnung deutscher Soldaten in Kundus," *Reuters*, December 4, 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/afghanistan-deutschland-kramp-karrenbaue-idDEKBN1Y81CU/.

1245 Transl. by author. In original: "Wir wussten, dass wir beschossen werden. Aber wir waren wehrlos" (Mike Szymanski, "Entscheidung zu Kampfdrohnen für die Bundeswehr rückt näher," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, October 5, 2020, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/kampfdrohnen-bundeswehr-bundestag-1.5053600.)

1246 Mike Szymanski, "Unter Beschuss," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, February 9, 2020, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/bundeswehr-unter-beschuss-1.4790648.

1247 Transl. by author. Keul, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3868.

1248 Transl. by author. Federal Ministry of Defense, "Bericht des Bundesministeriums der Verteidigung an den Deutschen Bundestag zur Debatte über eine mögliche Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," (2020).

Briefly before the UN and NATO missions in Afghanistan ended in summer 2021, and only days before the withdrawal of German forces, the public spotlight turned to Mali. A jihadist suicide attack injured twelve German soldiers during a patrol; three of them severely. The car bomb exploded 180 km north of Gao, where the German soldiers were stationed as part of the MINUSMA mission.[1249] Yet, the attack was overshadowed shortly after by dramatic events in Afghanistan. After Germany and the coalition forces had left Afghanistan, the Taliban swept the country and surged back into power. Germany hurriedly evacuated national citizens and locally employed personnel before the Taliban rolled over Kabul. These events overshadowed foreign affairs and security policy discussions in the German Bundestag.

7.2 The Bundestag Drone Debate After 2018

After the 2017 national election, there had been a new constellation of agents in the German parliament. The FDP returned, and the AfD joined for the first time. This subchapter provides insights into the parliamentary drone debate from January 2019 until the parliamentary summer break in 2021. Due to spatial and temporal constraints, the analysis only includes twelve documents, precisely four plenary debates, four policy proposals, and the respective defense committee report and recommended resolution. Together these documents do not only capture a dialogue but also entail statements by each party. They reveal to which extent the new party constellation in parliamentary debates shifted some of the dynamics at play, working in favor of the pro-drone camp. The analysis demonstrates there were some new aspects in the debate (7.2.1), but the discursive continuities outweighed them (7.2.2). Now, however, many policymakers were fed up with the debate and increased the political pressure, pushing for a decision. At the same time, the pro-drone argument that AMALE-drones would protect German soldiers became more dominant than ever, as recent attacks on Bundeswehr soldiers abroad provided supporting evidence. Thus, the document analysis reveals how the tides had turned in the discourse. It foreshadows the coalition's fall 2021 decision in favor of armed drones, although non-discursive factors may have ultimately tipped the scale for the Greens and SPD (see 7.3).

7.2.1 Novelties: Flipped Frames and Harsher Language

As the previous chapters demonstrated (see Chapters 4–6), the drone advocates had become more dominant in the discourse over the years. This dominance remained. Consequently, new aspects mainly pertained to the content of the debate and the choice of words. With pro-drone

[1249] Deutsche Welle, "12 German Soldiers Injured in Mali Attack," *Deutsche Welle*, June 26, 2021, https://www.dw.com/en/12-german-soldiers-injured-in-mali-bomb-attack/a-58023964.

arguments dominating, the Greens and the Left were now in the defense. Instead of driving the debate with their own agenda as they had done in the early 2010s, they responded to arguments of drone advocates, trying to attack them, and flip their meanings. In the past, being a reliable ally had mainly been a talking point for AMALE-drone advocates (see 6.2.1). Now the Greens attempted to re-frame the concept of "reliable ally" in terms of peer pressure. They identified alliance dynamics as a driver for getting armed drones, since other states would want the Bundeswehr to contribute drone strikes to conflicts.[1250] The Greens furthermore emphasized once drone strikes were launched from Germany (whether in Ramstein or elsewhere), these locations would be legitimate military targets for potential attacks.[1251] In this way, they extended the previous interpretation of US drone strikes being launched through Ramstein constituting a foreign policy scandal (see 6.2.2), to constituting a serious national security risk.

In previous years, Left speakers had stated drones were an offensive weapon which would exist for targeted killing. Now drone advocates drove the agenda. The "drones protect soldiers"-argument was particularly strong. In line with previous speakers from his party, Left MP Pflüger used the concept of "myth" ("Mythos"), claiming it was untrue that armed drones only served to protect their own soldiers.[1252] Still, the Left went even further. Now they claimed the term "protection" would actually *hide* the fact that drone strikes served to take human lives.[1253] Pflüger also introduced a new concept, stating drone warfare had broken a "taboo" ("Tabu").[1254] However, drone strikes had been going on for years and occurred more and more frequently, indicating the taboo had long been broken. Hence, his claim lacked credibility.

Even more so, the drone opponents lost the interpretative authority over one of their key buzzwords for negatively framing armed drones: the term "killer robot" ("Killerroboter"). Now, it had become a fairly regular way to refer to LAWS. In the past, it was mainly the Left who used it in efforts of provoking discomfort and fear in the audience. Now, several different speakers used it casually.[1255] However, the LAWS debate was still largely separate from the armed

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1250 Green PG, German Bundestag, "Drucksache 19/25293: Antrag der Abgeordneten Katja Keul, Margarete Bause, Dr. Franziska Brantner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr", 19th leg. period, December 15, 2020, 3.

1251 Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/138", 19th leg. period, 138th sess., December 20, 2019, 17291; Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/140", 19th leg. period, 140th sess., January 16, 2020, 17566.

1252 Transl. by author. Pflüger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/138," 2019, 17290. See also LEFT PG cited in ibid., "Drucksache 19/16149: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Marcus Faber, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Grigorios Aggelidis, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP – Drucksache 19/15675 – Schutz der Soldatinnen und Soldaten der Bundeswehr durch die Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen stärken", 19th leg. period, December 18, 2019, 4.

1253 Pflüger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/202", 19th leg. period, 202nd sess., December 17, 2020, 25462.

1254 Transl. by author. Pflüger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/138," 2019, 17291.

1255 Jan Ralf Nolte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/144", 19th leg. period, 144th sess., January 31, 2020, 18044; Brunner, ibid., ibid.; Vogler, ibid., ibid., 18047.

drone debate. A conservative speaker even criticized an FDP policy proposal for an inadmissible mix up of armed drones with autonomous weapon systems.[1256] Just as in earlier years, the Greens and the Left repeated concerns about an automatization of warfare (compare 5.3.1).[1257] In the past, many German politicians had struggled with language indicative of any German involvement in violent battles, combat, or even warfare. The before-mentioned initial refusal of German state-leaders to speak of a "war" in Afghanistan illustrated this norm (see 6.1.1). Only the CDU/CSU had used military terminology in small portions (see 4.3.2). After the right-wing AfD entered parliament, this gradually changed. They introduced the language of combat and war into the Bundestag drone debate, resorting to buzzwords which had long been absent from the usual foreign affairs and security discourses in the German parliament. That is why they may sound slightly aggressive to the average German audience. Without hesitation, they emphasized the technological capabilities of armed drones as beneficial for "combat power" ("Kampfkraft") for soldiers on the "battlefield" ("Gefechtsfeld").[1258] In the past the Bundeswehr had been involved in "heaviest combat" ("schwerste Gefechte") in Afghanistan where armed drones would have been useful.[1259] Armed drones would be the suitable "measure for aerial warfare" ("Luftkriegsmittel"), because they combined ISR and target acquisition ("Wirkungsmöglichkeit").[1260] In a similar straightforward manner, they discursively constructed the Iranian military general Soleimani as an enemy, whose militias were "exporters of terror" ("Exporteure des Terrors"), and who was responsible for killing several thousand people in Syria.[1261] Through this characterization they implicitly justified the extralegal US drone strike that had killed Soleimani.

7.2.2 Discursive Continuities: "Protecting Soldiers" and "Targeted Killing"

Overall, the basic trends in the Bundestag drone debate remained but they became more intense, both in debate style and content. There were the usual partisan quarrels, but the tone of the

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1256 German Bundestag, "Drucksache 19/16149: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Marcus Faber, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Grigorios Aggelidis, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP – Drucksache 19/15675 – Schutz der Soldatinnen und Soldaten der Bundeswehr durch die Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen stärken," 2019.

1257 Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/25293: Antrag der Abgeordneten Katja Keul, Margarete Bause, Dr. Franziska Brantner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," 2020, 3; LEFT PG cited in ibid., "Drucksache 19/25321: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Tobias Pflüger, Heike Hänsel, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/22369 – Keine Ausrüstung der Bundeswehr mit bewaffneten Drohnen", 19th leg. period, December 16, 2020, 4.

1258 Transl. by author. Gerold Otten, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/138," 2019, 17287.

1259 Transl. by author. Otten, ibid., ibid.

1260 Transl. by author. Otten, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/202," 2020, 25458.

1261 Petr Bystron, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/140," 2020, 17567.

drone debate was even harsher than before. CDU/CSU and FDP suggested the Left wanted to get rid of the entire Bundeswehr.[1262] Also, the CDU/CSU accused the AfD of not really seeing an "added value" ("Mehrwehrt") in protecting soldiers in Afghanistan.[1263] Both the FDP and the AfD criticized the CDU/CSU for not having already introduced drone armament when they were in government.[1264] They criticized the CDU/CSU – or government as a whole – for contributing to delaying the decision for over a decade.[1265] Studies on the AfD in the Bundestag found that the climate and discussion among MPs have generally become rougher.[1266]

Regarding the status of the debate, the previous disagreement had turned into annoyance. Many speakers were fed up with the debate about the drone debate. Meanwhile, the Left and the SPD highlighted the importance of the debate or claimed the debate had not been sufficient yet.[1267] Out of all parties, the Left remained the closest to its previously established anti-drone framings,

1262 Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/138," 2019, 17285; Hahn, ibid., ibid., 17292.

1263 Transl. by author. CDU/CSU PG cited in ibid., "Drucksache 19/14499: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Rüdiger Lucassen, Gerold Otten, Jan Ralf Nolte, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der AfD – Drucksache 19/13527 – Beschaffung bewaffneter unbemannter Luftfahrzeuge", 19th leg. period, October 25, 2019, 3.

1264 Otten, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/138," 2019, 17287.

1265 AfD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/13527: Antrag der Abgeordneten Rüdiger Lucassen, Gerold Otten, Jan Ralf Nolte, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der AfD Beschaffung bewaffneter unbemannter Luftfahrzeuge", 19th leg. period, September 25, 2019, 2; FDP PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/15675: Antrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Marcus Faber, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Grigorios Aggelidis, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP Schutz der Soldatinnen und Soldaten der Bundeswehr durch die Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen stärken", 19th leg. period, December 4, 2019, 2; Otten, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/202," 2020, 25458.

1266 Christoph Butterwegge, Gudrun Hentges, and Gerd Wiegel, *Rechtspopulisten im Parlament Polemik, Agitation und Propaganda der AfD*, ed. Gudrun Hentges, et al. (Frankfurt/Main: Westend, 2018).

1267 Siemtje Möller, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 19/138," 2019, 17288; Pflüger, ibid., ibid., 17290; SPD PG, cited in ibid., "Drucksache 19/16149: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Marcus Faber, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Grigorios Aggelidis, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP – Drucksache 19/15675 – Schutz der Soldatinnen und Soldaten der Bundeswehr durch die Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen stärken," 2019, 3; LEFT PG, cited in ibid., ibid., 4; SPD PG, cited in ibid., "Drucksache 19/14499: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Rüdiger Lucassen, Gerold Otten, Jan Ralf Nolte, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der AfD – Drucksache 19/13527 – Beschaffung bewaffneter unbemannter Luftfahrzeuge," 2019, 3; SPD PG, cited in ibid., "Drucksache 19/28532: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Katja Keul, Margarete Bause, Dr. Franziska Brantner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 19/25293 – Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr", 19th leg. period, April 15, 2021, 3.

tactics, and arguments.[1268] In contrast, the pro-armament parties CDU/CSU, AfD, and FDP argued the debate had already taken place.[1269] For the FDP, the discussion had been taking place for too long; it was time to finally decide.[1270] The Greens parliamentary speakers, who had seen the debate as unfinished back in 2019, now said the debate was completed.[1271] They were against drones.[1272] In 2020 MP Keul called the SPD "silly" ("albern") for claiming the discussion had not yet been sufficient.[1273] FDP MP Faber even got angry at the SPD, whose resistance to armament while preferring to debate for a decade would "cost human lives" ("Menschenleben kosten").[1274]

The argument that armed drones would save and protect German soldiers was an important contribution to the discourse in 2012, which peaked in 2013–2014. Back then, this new argument framed drones as a solution to the "protection gap", in contrast to the views of drone-skeptics who believed drone strikes caused civilian casualties (see 4.3.1 and 4.3.3). Stressing the responsibility of MPs towards soldiers, CDU/CSU speakers had accused drone-skeptical politicians of denying the soldiers this central protective equipment (see 6.1.2). This trend continued after 2018, but intensified.

1268 In December 2019, MP Pflüger summed up many of their talking points in a single speech, arguing "drone warfare" ("Drohnenkriegsführung"), would essentially be "joystick" killing from safe distance, facilitating extralegal, arbitrary executions which are against international law, and would moreover lower the barrier to using "deadly force" ("tödliche Gewalt"). There was a high risk to kill civilians. (Transl. by author. Pflüger, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/138," 2019, 17290.)

1269 AfD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/13527: Antrag der Abgeordneten Rüdiger Lucassen, Gerold Otten, Jan Ralf Nolte, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der AfD Beschaffung bewaffneter unbemannter Luftfahrzeuge," 2019, 2; CDU/CSU PG, cited in ibid., "Drucksache 19/25321: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Tobias Pflüger, Heike Hänsel, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/22369 – Keine Ausrüstung der Bundeswehr mit bewaffneten Drohnen," 2020, 3; AfD PG, cited in ibid., ibid., 4; FDP PG, cited in ibid., ibid.; FDP PG, cited in ibid., "Drucksache 19/28532: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Katja Keul, Margarete Bause, Dr. Franziska Brantner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 19/25293 – Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," 2021, 3.

1270 Faber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/138," 2019, 17290; FDP PG, cited in ibid., "Drucksache 19/14499: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Rüdiger Lucassen, Gerold Otten, Jan Ralf Nolte, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der AfD – Drucksache 19/13527 – Beschaffung bewaffneter unbemannter Luftfahrzeuge," 2019, 3.

1271 Green PG, cited in ibid., "Drucksache 19/16149: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Marcus Faber, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Grigorios Aggelidis, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP – Drucksache 19/15675 – Schutz der Soldatinnen und Soldaten der Bundeswehr durch die Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen stärken," 2019, 4; Green PG, cited in ibid., "Drucksache 19/25321: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Tobias Pflüger, Heike Hänsel, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/22369 – Keine Ausrüstung der Bundeswehr mit bewaffneten Drohnen," 2020, 4.

1272 Green PG cited in ibid., ibid.

1273 Transl. by author. Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/202," 2020, 25463.

1274 Transl. by author. Faber, ibid., ibid., 25460.

Now, the protection of soldiers was nothing less than the key argument.[1275] Pro-drone speakers brought it up extensively. The CDU/CSU used the catch phrase "protect those who protect us" ("schützen die, die uns schützen"),[1276] and the new, positively charged term "protection-drones" ("Schutzdrohnen").[1277] Moreover, other speakers tried to counter it, making it the center of discussion in the drone discourse at that time. But the pro-drone speakers became slightly aggressive when openly accusing other parties of not caring about German soldiers, and of consciously choosing to endanger them instead. In particular CDU/CSU defense policy spokesperson Henning Otte (CDU/CSU), who had accused certain opposition representatives of denying German soldiers this protective equipment in 2018, became harsher in his attacks.[1278] In 2020, he provocatively requested MPs should raise their hand if they wanted to keep this "protection opportunity" ("Schutzmöglichkeit") from soldiers, who were "fathers and mothers, daughters and sons" ("Väter und Mütter, Töchter und Söhne").[1279] He emotionally accused the Greens and the Left of endangering "life and limb of the Bundeswehr soldiers" ("Leib und Leben der Bundeswehrsoldatinnen und -soldaten") by demanding not to arm German drones while "life and death" ("Leben und […] Tod") was at stake.[1280] By assuming a misuse would happen once armed drones were employed, they would "mistrust our soldiers" ("misstrauen unseren Soldatinnen und Soldaten").[1281] Even more so, the stubborn rejection of armed drones by the SPD, Left, and Greens was "treason" ("Verrat") against the Bundeswehr.[1282] The SPD took this accusation very seriously; otherwise they would not have defended themselves as strongly by reiterating they cared very much about soldiers and their safety.[1283] By comparison, the Left

[1275] See for instance FDP PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/15675: Antrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Marcus Faber, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Grigorios Aggelidis, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP Schutz der Soldatinnen und Soldaten der Bundeswehr durch die Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen stärken," 2019, 1; Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/138," 2019, 17286; Otten, ibid., ibid., 17287; Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/202," 2020, 25456; Otten, ibid., ibid., 25458; AfD PG, cited in ibid., "Drucksache 19/25321: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Tobias Pflüger, Heike Hänsel, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/22369 – Keine Ausrüstung der Bundeswehr mit bewaffneten Drohnen," 2020, 4.

[1276] Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/138," 2019, 17286.

[1277] Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/202," 2020, 25456.

[1278] Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/39," 2018, 3863.

[1279] Transl. by author. Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/138," 2019, 17285.

[1280] Transl. by author. Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/202," 2020, 25456.

[1281] Transl. by author. Otte, ibid., ibid.

[1282] Transl. by author. Otte, ibid., ibid., 25457. Compare FDP MP Faber, ibid., ibid., 25460.

[1283] See for example Möller, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/138," 2019, 17288; Möller, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/202," 2020, 25459.

dismissed the argument due to insufficient evidence.[1284] The "protection of soldiers"-argument was more dominant than ever.

Another trend which continued was the diminishing presence of the "targeted killing" talking point. From 2011 onwards, criticizing the US drone strikes used for targeted killings outside of officially declared warzones had been a priority for the opposition parties but then it gradually diminished after 2015 (see 4.3.1). After 2018, it did not return to its central position from those earlier years either. The absence of this talking point was certainly not a lack of relevant events (compare 7.1.1). As mentioned above, France had conducted extralegal drone strikes in Sahel. Still, the Left or the Greens could have used this fact even more.[1285] At the same time, there was also the case of the Iranian general, who the US killed by drone strike. On the one hand, mentioning it showed the US drone program was still a relevant reference for some Green and Left MPs.[1286] On the other hand, the case of the Iranian general did not take up as much room in the debate as it would have in the past. Despite showing only little ambition in stressing these points, the Greens had not changed their talking points much. They still argued armed drones had not been developed for protecting people but for executing suspects extralegally and without trial, were mainly used by intelligence agencies (not regular forces), and would ultimately result in high numbers of civilian victims, including children.[1287] By contrast, according to CDU/CSU MP Andreas Nick, military use of drone strikes was in accordance with international law if it met the proportionality criterion and differentiated combatants from non-combatants.[1288] The FDP asserted drone strikes would not be against constitutional law either.[1289] All parties would condemn killings that did violate international law.[1290]

The "protection"-argument furthermore benefitted from drone advocates finally using increasingly specific drone employment examples in the debate to illustrate operational scenarios.

1284 LEFT PG, cited in ibid., "Drucksache 19/25321: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Tobias Pflüger, Heike Hänsel, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/22369 – Keine Ausrüstung der Bundeswehr mit bewaffneten Drohnen," 2020, 4.

1285 Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/202," 2020, 25463.

1286 See Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/140," 2020, 17566; Dağdelen, ibid., ibid., 17570.

1287 Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/138," 2019, 17291; Green PG, cited in ibid., "Drucksache 19/14499: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Rüdiger Lucassen, Gerold Otten, Jan Ralf Nolte, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der AfD – Drucksache 19/13527 – Beschaffung bewaffneter unbemannter Luftfahrzeuge," 2019, 4; Green PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/25293: Antrag der Abgeordneten Katja Keul, Margarete Bause, Dr. Franziska Brantner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," 2020, 1-3.

1288 Andreas Nick, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/140," 2020, 17566.

1289 FDP PG, cited in ibid., "Drucksache 19/25321: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Tobias Pflüger, Heike Hänsel, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/22369 – Keine Ausrüstung der Bundeswehr mit bewaffneten Drohnen," 2020, 4.

1290 Ulrich Lechte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/140," 2020, 17569.

Minister de Maizière had already named armed aerial support for patrols as one scenario; an example which remained.[1291] Faber took this line of argument even further. If the Bundeswehr had armed drones, they could go on more patrols and had a better chance at "fighting the terror in these countries" ("den Terror in diesen Ländern zu bekämpfen"), thus also helping the civilian population.[1292] Besides protecting patrols, other scenarios entered the discourse. The Taliban's attacks on Camp Pamir in Afghanistan provided drone armament advocates not only with examples of a potential AMALE-drone use scenario, but it showed the public a concrete case in which German soldiers would arguably have been safer with armed drones. Unlike with the Kunduz airstrike under Klein, the German soldiers had not done anything wrong but were the victims in this situation. In a plenary debate, MP Faber told the audience that, when their camp was under fire, German soldiers had to retreat to a bunker for hours while waiting for others to fight back against the attacker. That could not be what Germany wanted, or what German soldiers wanted. In fact, they had the duty to equip the Bundeswehr well.[1293]

MP Hahn from the CDU/CSU provided three examples from the past, where German forces could have used armed drones in Afghanistan: The 2009 Kunduz airstrike, the Good Friday Battle 2010, and the recent camp attack.[1294] Social Democrat MP Siemtje Möller introduced another new potential scenario for armed drones to the debate, namely the protection of a village of an ethnic minority, attacked by a militia.[1295] Soldiers themselves would want armed drones for these kinds of scenarios.[1296] Moreover, the AfD referred to documents by the MOD as well as by the German Army Command ("Kommando Heer") to strengthen the impression that defense experts supported armament as well.[1297] By comparison, in previous years the drone opposition had mainly backed up their arguments by referring to media articles, which the governments routinely dismissed, claiming no official information confirmed these assertions.

1291 Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/138," 2019, 17285; Möller, ibid., ibid., 17288; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/202," 2020, 25464.

1292 Transl. by author. Faber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/202," 2020, 25460.

1293 Faber, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/138," 2019, 17289. See also Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/202," 2020, 25457.

1294 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/202," 2020, 25464.

1295 Möller, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/138," 2019, 17288. Nevertheless, the next year she mentioned the operational scenarios were still a question mark for the SPD which they wanted to clarify before making decision (Möller, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/202," 2020, 25460.).

1296 Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/202," 2020, 25464; Hahn, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/138," 2019, 17292.

1297 AfD PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/13527: Antrag der Abgeordneten Rüdiger Lucassen, Gerold Otten, Jan Ralf Nolte, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der AfD Beschaffung bewaffneter unbemannter Luftfahrzeuge," 2019, 2; AfD PG, ibid., ibid.

Eventually, in 2021, the CDU/CSU and AfD resumed: The operational scenarios are widely known, an armament was necessary.[1298]

Military strategic and institutional considerations were slightly more present in the debates than before, partly because of the AfD and the FDP. The pro-drone armament parties emphasized the Bundeswehr would require armed drones. The CDU/CSU underlined that Germany would need to be able to fulfil missions alongside partner nations.[1299] The AfD emphasized that the German military needed excellent equipment such as armed drones, because the Bundeswehr would guarantee the ability to act in the foreign policy sphere ("außenpolitische Handlungsfähigkeit").[1300] On the CDU/CSU's watch, they argued, the Bundeswehr was about to become a "third-class army" ("drittklassige Armee"), technologically outdated, underfunded, and understaffed "without the capability for combat" ("ohne Befähigung zum Kampf").[1301] FDP contributions evoked the larger strategic picture. Regarding procurement, the protection of soldiers was crucial so they could fulfill their missions in national and alliance defense as well as in international crisis management.[1302] Borrowing a CDU/CSU argument, the SPD pointed out that in times of turbulent international politics one could neither predict the future Bundeswehr scenarios, nor to what extent mobile force protection was necessary.[1303] Evidently, Bundeswehr operations abroad were still accepted, and these parties all assumed there would be more to come in the future.

Presentations of the US-German relations against the context of Ramstein were also still a preeminent issue in relation to armed drones. Parties such as the Left and the Greens had not changed their critical stances on US drone strikes from this airbase (compare 7.2.1). While the former insisted on shutting the base down, the Greens appealed to the conservative-social democrat government to not simply accept the American assurances, but to investigate what they were doing and talk to them.[1304] The SPD pointed out again that closing Ramstein would lead to losing thousands of jobs.[1305] They agreed that Germany, as a friend, must tell the US that it opposed extralegal drone strikes. At the same time, they advocated for renewing the alliance

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1298 CDU/CSU PG, cited in ibid., "Drucksache 19/28532: Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses (12. Ausschuss) zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Katja Keul, Margarete Bause, Dr. Franziska Brantner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 19/25293 – Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," 2021, 3. See also AfD PG, cited in ibid., ibid.

1299 Otte, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/138," 2019, 17286.

1300 Transl. by author. Otten, ibid., ibid., 17287.

1301 Transl. by author. Otten, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/202," 2020, 25458.

1302 FDP PG, ibid., "Drucksache 19/15675: Antrag der Abgeordneten Dr. Marcus Faber, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Grigorios Aggelidis, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP Schutz der Soldatinnen und Soldaten der Bundeswehr durch die Beschaffung von bewaffneten Drohnen stärken," 2019, 2.

1303 Möller, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/202," 2020, 25459.

1304 Keul, ibid., "Plenarprotokoll 19/140," 2020, 17565-6.

1305 Transl. by author. Brunner, ibid., ibid., 17568.

with the US and acting with prudence instead of putting a good, functional relationship at risk, especially one that created the "peace architecture" ("Friedensarchitektur") in Europe.[1306] Conservatives also reaffirmed the close US-German relations.[1307] Belonging to the West and being a NATO-Member were the "essential pillars of German security policy" ("Grundpfeiler deutscher Sicherheitspolitik") including US bases in Germany.[1308] In the past their assertions usually ended at this point. Now, they went further by stressing that the presence of US troops was a German and European security interest.[1309] CSU MP Reinhard Brandl made it quite clear that they relied on the US to defend them – people should thank the US for sending troops here, because without the US and NATO European countries would not be able to defend themselves if they had to.[1310] US-German relations had recovered from previous scandals. Moreover, openly admitting Germany depended on the US might have further supported calls for a drone armament, which could strengthen the German military and reduce that dependence.

7.3 A Decision After All – "Armed Drones" in the 2021 Coalition Agreement

After about ten years of controversial debates, it was ultimately the government coalition of the SPD, Greens, and FDP who decided to procure armed drones for the Bundeswehr. They stated this objective in the coalition agreement published in November 2021. The agreement, consequently, provides the end point for this epilogue and the analysis overall. Just like the first subchapter (7.1) this one will describe the political context by outlining important party-political developments since the previous election in 2017 as well as in the lead up to the coalition agreement 2021 with a focus on the Social Democrats and the Greens (7.3.1). It will then assess the armed drone policy section in the coalition agreement (7.3.2).

7.3.1 Party Politics and Drone Policy: The SPD and the Green Party Cave In

After the 2017 national election, the CDU/CSU and SPD remained in government, but the parliamentary set-up was very different. Instead of only having two opposition parties, the Greens and the Left, there were suddenly four. The FDP returned and the AfD joined for the first time.

1306 Brunner, ibid., ibid., 17569.
1307 A. Schäfer, ibid., ibid., 17571.
1308 Transl. by author. Nick, ibid., ibid., 17567.
1309 Nick, ibid., ibid., 17566.
1310 Brandl, ibid., ibid., 17571.

Due to an election result of 12.6 percent, the right-wing party even became the largest opposition party, 1.9 percent ahead of the FDP.[1311] Both the AfD and the FDP were strictly in favor of getting armed drones for the Bundeswehr, siding with the CDU/CSU who also still supported the armament of German drones, specifically the Heron TP drone. Thus, the Conservatives benefitted greatly from their presence with regards to drone policy.

As mentioned previously, statements by the AfD were, to say it in quantitative terms, statistically insignificant during my main observation period. One reason is that they were only in parliament towards the end of the studied time period. However, just looking at January 2019 to September 2021 they notably contributed to the discourse. First and foremost, they expanded the political spectrum to the right. Now, the overall spectrum of positions and discursive possibilities was broader, with the Left presenting the most pacifist and the AfD the most military-centric perspective. In turn the CDU/CSU was suddenly not the most extreme hard-security and pro-drone agent in the parliament anymore.

For the adoption of armed drones into the Bundeswehr as such, the party-political developments in the SPD and Greens were equally significant, if not more so. In the past, both parties had opposed armament. Until 2013, they had formed the drone-skeptical camp in parliament together with the Left. However, the SPD was rather silent on the issue after entering the coalition in 2013. Internal disagreements on the subject came to the fore, while the Greens lost their fervor compared to the early years. Still, despite being tired of the debate, MP Keul continued opposing armed drones until the parliamentary summer break in 2021. The Greens appeared to hold on to their position. It made their turn-around even more surprising. The pages had turned. In inner-party processes, which would not have been possible in the years before, both the SPD and Greens had been gradually revising their positions.

The SPD had a new, left leadership in 2020. Rolf Mützenich was the chair of the SPD PG, and Saskia Esken and Norbert Walter-Borjans were the new party-leaders. Mützenich had been a vocal opponent of armed drones in the early years of the drone debate. After the SPD had joined the government in 2013 and defense politicians became first-row spokespeople on the matter, the SPD stance on drone armament had gradually diluted. Nevertheless, it had been the SPD who prevented the armament by introducing the "debate"-clause in the coalition agreements and postponed the decision to the future. Even though there were different views on armament within the party, the disagreements mainly stayed behind closed doors and, if anything, led to the SPD remaining quiet on the issue, at least during plenary sessions. In the summer of 2020,

[1311] Elizabeth Schumacher, "Disappointing Victory for Merkel as Far Right Surges," *Deutsche Welle*, September 25, 2017, https://www.dw.com/en/german-election-results-disappointing-victory-for-angela-merkel-as-cdu-sinks-nationalist-afd-surges/a-40666430.

the SPD PG signaled to the press that the SPD had come around and was open towards arming drones.[1312]

This changed by winter 2020 when there was open conflict in the SPD. The left-leaning SPD party leadership had postponed the decision once more, arguing the use of offensive drone strikes in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict had posed new, unanswered questions.[1313] Politicians leaning towards drone armament publicly protested. MP Möller, later SPD defense spokesperson, candidly announced during a parliamentary debate she would be in favor of acquiring armament for drones.[1314] In contrast to her SPD defense MP colleagues, for example Arnold or Bartels, she excluded any kind of ambiguity on where she stood. SPD MP Fritz Felgentreu resigned from his role as defense policy Spokesman (2018–2020), with some MPs interpreting this step as a protest against the anti-drone party line.[1315] Indeed, he publicly explained this drastic step with this disagreement and the resulting dilemma for him as an AMALE-drone advocate.[1316] His resignation created a stir. The party-process continued. In spring 2021 the SPD created a drone working group which published a final report in October 2021. The report picked up supportive arguments from past parliamentary debates, such as supporting soldiers in international operations with the best possible equipment. It also outlined a strict framework with binding principles for a potential German armed drone use, among others the strict rejection of extralegal killings.[1317] Although drone-skeptical groups within the SPD continued to protest, the party was now closer to endorsing armed drones than ever before.

Metaphorically speaking, while the SPD blinked right and anticipated to take an exit from their previous path, the Greens did an outright political U-turn on armed drone policy. After all, the Greens had loudly opposed the acquisition of armed drones, with MP Ströbele being one of the

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1312 Hans Monath, "Ausrüstung der Bundeswehr: SPD unter „strengen Bedingungen" für Einsatz bewaffneter Drohnen," *Tagesspiegel*, June 28, 2020, https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/spd-unter-strengen-bedingungen-fur-einsatz-bewaffneter-drohnen-5368732.html.

1313 Hans Monath, "Streit um Bundeswehr-Ausrüstung: SPD will nun doch keine bewaffneten Drohnen," *Tagesspiegel*, December 15, 2020, https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/spd-will-nun-doch-keine-bewaffneten-drohnen-5737159.html.

1314 Möller, German Bundestag, "Plenarprotokoll 19/202," 2020, 25459.

1315 See for example Faber, ibid., ibid., 25461; Otte, ibid., ibid., 25456.

1316 Monath, "Streit um Bundeswehr-Ausrüstung: SPD will nun doch keine bewaffneten Drohnen". Regardless of this, as an SPD MP belonging to the pragmatic wing Felgentreu might not have been reelected anyways. As the *Tagesspiegel* newspaper commented, his as of recently left-leaning local party unit would not have nominated him again for a Bundestag mandate (Ulrich Zawatka-Gerlach and Georg Ismar, "SPD-Fraktion verliert Verteidigungsfachmann: Fritz Felgentreu kündigt seinen Abschied an," *Tagesspiegel*, June 11, 2020, https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/fritz-felgentreu-kundigt-seinen-abschied-an-5850124.html.)

1317 SPD, "Abschlussbericht der SPD-Projektgruppe zur Frage der Bewaffnung von Drohnen," (2021).

preeminent critics for years. Just in December 2020 the Greens had issued yet another parliamentary motion, in which they rejected the idea of armed drones for the Bundeswehr.[1318]

A main reason for this U-turn was a shift within the wider party structure. The power relations between the two wings changed. While the leftwing "Fundis" lost influence, the pragmatic "Realos" gained momentum, among others, through the party leaders Annalena Baerbock and Robert Habeck as well as their predecessor Cem Özdemir. Baerbock, who was also the Green chancellor candidate in the 2021 election, signaled she was open to examining the criteria for using arming drones in military operations.[1319] The Green party wanted to be in government. As Wolfgang Merkel observed in 2021, "[t]he modern Greens are comfortable with the idea of political power, and they know they need to dock in the political centre to get it".[1320] They showed the voters the party was ready for office, even making it one of their main campaign slogans: "We're ready because you are".[1321] A potential coalition partner was the CDU/CSU, who had supported drone armament from the beginning. The Greens prepared for this scenario. Moreover, the party membership doubled from about 61,500 in 2016 to more than 125,700 in 2021.[1322] Many of these new members were relatively young; on average just under 38 years old.[1323] A 2020 report found that Germans between 18 and 30 years tended to have more pragmatic approach to security politics and "are more likely than older people to support the use of force for explicitly identified purposes, such as fighting terrorism or opposing grave violations of human rights".[1324] This influx of young, pragmatic members might have further strengthened the pragmatic stance on military interventions within the party, including capabilities such as armed drones.

1318 Green PG, German Bundestag, "Drucksache 19/25293: Antrag der Abgeordneten Katja Keul, Margarete Bause, Dr. Franziska Brantner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN Keine Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," 2020.

1319 fok/AFP/Reuters/dpa, "Hauchdünne Mehrheit: Grüne weichen Nein zu bewaffneten Drohnen auf," *Der Spiegel*, June 13, 2021, https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/gruenen-parteitag-schliesst-einsatz-von-kampf-drohnen-nicht-mehr-aus-a-0e005293-1eb3-4075-8ea1-6b74bf6c84d2?sara_ref=re-xx-cp-sh.

1320 Philip Oltermann, "Germany's Surging Greens Step Up Election Race to Succeed Merkel," *The Guardian*, April 18, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/18/germanys-surging-greens-step-up-election-race-to-succeed-merkel.

1321 Sophie Garbe et al., "An Opportunity Lost: How Germany's Green Party Went from Top to Flop," *Der Spiegel*, September 23, 2021, https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/an-opportunity-lost-how-germany-s-green-party-went-from-top-to-flop-a-399962a1-480d-43eb-848d-ad4ed0c42a34.

1322 Statista Research Department, "Anzahl der Parteimitglieder der Grünen von 1990 bis 2022," January 22, 2025, https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/192243/umfrage/mitgliederentwicklung-der-gruenen/.

1323 RND, "Das siebte Jahr in Folge: Anzahl der Grünen-Mitglieder wächst weiter," *RND*, March 1, 2023, https://www.rnd.de/politik/gruene-partei-waechst-auf-mehr-als-126-000-mitglieder-oekopartei-bei-jungen-menschen-und-frauen-UW3KC2DBA3LT2ZBMTT25DGZAOU.html.

1324 Philipp Rotmann, Sarah Bressan, and Sarah Brockmeier, "New Expectations: Generation Z and Changing Attitudes on German Foreign Policy," (Berlin: Global Public Policy Institute).

Only about half a year after the 2020 parliamentary motion, in which the Greens had rejected armed drones, this shift in perspective manifested in a concise party position. At a party conference in summer 2021, the Green delegates suddenly abandoned the previous drone opposing position. It came down to two policy proposals for the Green party program with MP Keul leading the anti-armed drone proposal. In the parliament she had continued the Green tradition of strictly opposing armed drones as the previous section illustrated (see 7.2.1). The other proposal, initiated by MP Jürgen Trittin (former Minister and former Co-Chair of the Green PG) was open towards armament. It allowed for armed drone employment under specific circumstances as long as it served the protection of soldiers. The Trittin proposal narrowly won by 347 to 343 votes.[1325]

7.3.2 The Coalition Agreement: Enabling the Bundeswehr to Arm Drones

Armed drones had been a controversial subject for years. The German parliament alone had debated the pros and cons of arming German drones for over a decade. Governments changed; the debate remained. The CDU/CSU governed for sixteen years (see Table 1). They were a constant presence in parliament and a fervent supporter of armed drones. Some might find it ironic that none of the four government coalitions with the CDU/CSU ultimately got to make the decision to arm. Despite changing coalition partners (the Social Democrats and Liberals) they never got to this final step in the policy-process. In the end, it was the "traffic light coalition" ("Ampel-Koalition") between the SPD, Greens, and the FDP who put the stamp of approval on armed drones after the 2021 election. The public announcement to arm German drones sparked a comparatively moderate outrage, not least because, as described out above, the SPD and the Greens had already made it very clear they did not oppose it anymore. In the case of the Greens, the new position on armed drones was even in their election program.

After years of debating, the SPD, Greens, and the FDP dared to take a step forward in armed drone policy – just as their coalition agreement announced ("mehr Fortschritt wagen"). Precisely it stated:

> "Armed drones can contribute to the protection of soldiers on missions abroad. Subject to binding and transparent conditions and with account to ethical and security policy aspects, we will therefore enable the Bundeswehr to arm drones in this legislative period. During

[1325] Thomas Wiegold, "Knappe Mehrheit billigt im Grünen-Wahlprogramm mögliche Beschaffung bewaffneter Drohnen für die Bundeswehr," *Augen geradeaus!*, June 13, 2021, https://augengeradeaus.net/2021/06/knappe-mehrheit-billigt-im-gruenen-wahlprogramm-moegliche-beschaffung-bewaffneter-drohnen-fuer-die-bundeswehr/.

> their deployment, the rules of international law apply; we reject all extralegal killings – also by drones."[1326]

This phrasing picked up a key argument from the post 2018 debate, originally introduced in the discourse by the CDU/CSU, about armed drones serving to protect German soldiers. However, the treaty did not only agree to the use of armed drones alone. At the same time, it included the application of strict operational conditions as necessary for armed drone use, thus already laying out tight limitations for the deployment. This kind of "yes but"-agreement mirrored the SPD and the Green positions which had emerged that year. The previous requirement of parliamentary debates had disappeared. Moreover, the coalition announced they wanted to include armed drones more in international arms control regimes, which was a slightly more determined phrasing than in the 2017 coalition agreement.[1327] Almost ten years had passed since Defense Minister de Maizière (CDU/CSU) had stated he wanted armed drones for the Bundeswehr. Now, four Defense Ministers later, Boris Pistorius (SPD) implemented this plan.

7.4 Conclusion

In complementation to my main analysis (Chapters 4–6) this epilogue illuminated what happened after the end of my observation period, up until the publication of the new "traffic light" coalition agreement in November 2021, which included a decision for drone armament. Consequently, the previously upheld taboo of getting armed drones was no longer active. The analysis of twelve carefully selected Bundestag documents allowed to track discursive developments since January 2019. Several impulses came together. Not only did drones continue to proliferate and drone strike employment to expand, but the Bundeswehr also became the target of hostile attacks with soldiers killed. In the Bundestag, the dynamics had shifted towards the drone advocates, both in terms of pro-drone parties in the parliament (CDU/CSU, FDP, AfD) and the parliamentary drone discourse with the "protection of soldiers"-argument becoming dominant. While previously the extreme left (Left Party), center-left (SPD, Greens), and the center-right (CDU/CSU) held the political balance, the presence of the AfD shifted the spectrum of political possibilities and rhetoric further to the right. Within the discursive ecosystem, a shift

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[1326] Transl. by author. In original: "Bewaffnete Drohnen können zum Schutz der Soldatinnen und Soldaten im Auslandseinsatz beitragen. Unter verbindlichen und transparenten Auflagen und unter Berücksichtigung von ethischen und sicherheitspolitischen Aspekten werden wir daher die Bewaffnung von Drohnen der Bundeswehr in dieser Legislaturperiode ermöglichen. Bei ihrem Einsatz gelten die Regeln des Völkerrechts, extralegale Tötungen – auch durch Drohnen – lehnen wir ab." (SPD, the Greens, and FDP, "Koalitionsvertrag zwischen SPD, Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen und FDP - Mehr Fortschritt Wagen: Bündnis für Freiheit, Gerechtigkeit und Nachhaltigkeit," 2021, 149.)

[1327] Ibid., 145.

in party politics, specifically the inner-party dynamics of the SPD and the Greens, ultimately facilitated the decision to arm drones.

Between 2019 and 2021, several drone-relevant developments and events occurred on the international level which affected the political context of the Bundestag debate. Not only did drone proliferation soar, with allies such as Canada and the Netherlands getting armed drones, but Russia and France also joined the ranks of countries using drone strikes in 2019. France targeted alleged jihadists using drones in Mali. Moreover, Azerbaijan carried out drone strikes against Armenian soldiers in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, setting an example for drone strikes in interstate conflicts. On the other hand, the Bundeswehr experienced vulnerability when Taliban repeatedly attacked a Camp in North Afghanistan in 2019 and 2020 and a jihadist suicide attack injured patrolling German soldiers in Mali.

Within the Bundestag, the drone debates displayed how the dynamic had tipped in favor of the pro-drone camp. While the previous chapters already revealed a shift away from the initial discursive dominance of the drone opposition, I was able to substantiate this finding further. Even though continuity characterized the Bundestag drone debate at large, the debate content displayed a few new facets. Some were minor, for example a mainstreamed use of the previously provocative term "killer robot" for LAWS, claims about drone strike bases in Germany becoming potential military targets, or the Left introducing a few new buzzwords to old arguments. Another discursive change was that the AfD introduced a language of combat and war into the drone debate which other agents had avoided. Most main trends identified in the previous chapters continued and many even intensified. In light of attacks against the Bundeswehr, the protection of soldiers had become *the* dominant argument, benefitting also from increasingly specific depictions of operational scenarios. The AfD, together with the FDP, strengthened strategic and institutional aspects in the debate. US-German relations and Ramstein were still a frequent topic and the positions on it had not changed much either. Still, the "targeted killing"-claim of the opposition had lost its prior preeminence. All in all, the debate was now harsher. The sheer endless debates about drones seemed to annoy the MPs.

While the presence of the AfD and the FDP invigorated the drone advocates in the parliament, the drone opponents struggled. The inner-party conflict of the SPD turned public in 2020. The party, who previously had negotiated the "debate"-clause in coalition agreements with the CDU/CSU, formed a drone working group, whose final report provided a framework for a potential German armed drone employment in 2021. Still, the change of the Greens was even more drastic. Having once been a fervent armed drone opponent, the tide turned, among others, because of the enormous influx of young, pragmatic members, a strengthened "Realo" party

wing, the aspiration to govern, and a Green leadership open to discussing armed drone use. At a Green party convention in 2021, the result was a majority vote to allow drone strikes under specific circumstances. Thus, it was comparatively little surprising when the coalition agreement between SPD, Greens, and FDP did not only approve arming German drones but also already mentioned conditions for their deployment.

For more than a decade, German policymakers had debated exhaustively about armed drones. For years, however, the debate had barely moved forward. Compared to the early years of the debate, it almost seems ironic, that the initial drone-critics, the SPD and Greens, ended up making the actual decision in favor of armament. However, the debate had already slowly shifted towards the drone advocates in the last years. Moreover, right before the 2021 election several events and political developments had further impacted the context, which in turn, interacted with the drone debate and may have influenced these two parties' decisions. In retrospect, it is impossible to know whether their internal partisan decisions would have been different if they had known they would end up in government. In any case, the coalition agreement marks the preliminary end of the German debate about armed drones – and the definite end of my analysis.

8 Conclusion – To Procure or Not Procure

This dissertation has examined how the German drone policy debate developed in the Bundestag and offered novel insights into the prolonged decision-making process. The aim was to understand how the acquisition and use of armed military drones emerged as a political option between January 2009 and December 2018. Using a discourse theoretical approach, it combined extensive primary source research with an interpretative analytical perspective. As such, not only did the analysis illustrate which group was dominant in different debate phases, it also depicted how the discursive practices and the discursive ecosystem interacted and shifted over time. Through description, interpretation, and contextualization, I illustrated how speech contributions dynamically interacted with surrounding ideational and material structures. Subjects explored included the debate on military uses of combat drones, notions about procurement and proliferation, and ideas about Germany's (future) role in armed conflicts. The main body of this dissertation analyzed well over 500 Bundestag documents from January 2009 to December 2018. In addition, the epilogue plotted the debate from January 2019 to November 2021, when the coalition agreement presented a decision in favor of armed drones.

Before extracting the main findings, one should first and foremost acknowledge that the parliamentary debate was highly complex, emotional and politized. This complexity likely contributed to the debate continuing for this long. So how did the acquisition and use of armed military drones by Germany emerge as a political option in the German parliamentary debates from 2009 to 2018? The previous chapters showed that armed drones slowly emerged as a political option due to the gradual normalization of drone technology, a lack of new arguments, shifting discursive dominance, a new constellation of parliamentary agents, revised party positions, and influential trends and events within the discursive context.

As far as my discourse analysis goes, the turning point in the drone controversy occurred in the mid-2010s, and the final tipping point for the procurement and use of armed drones was in 2019–2021. Between 2009 and 2013, drone-skeptics (the Left Party, the Greens, and the SPD) dominated in the discussions. They especially benefited from the contextual conditions in the earlier years because they could draw on the already established negative connotations of armed drones due to US strikes in the Global War on Terror. In the early years, the drone opponents were on fire: They built up and transferred meanings about "killer-drones", unfair targeted killing, and costly project failures, such as the unarmed Euro Hawk drone. Drone-skeptics constructed persuasive causal stories about Germany "sliding" into illegal and unethical US style warfare, flawed governmental drone procurement practices, and a grim future of arms races and

robot wars. They attacked claims of political opponents who, in turn, primarily reacted defensively instead of building their own, positive counter-narrative.

The page then turned in the mid-2010s when the AMALE-drone advocates slowly became discursively dominant. They benefitted from several factors. First, there were shifts in the constellation of agents within the parliament in 2014. The drone-friendly FDP left the parliament. At the same time, the SPD entered the government and moved to a more moderate position on armed drones. Second, a series of impulses transformed the discursive ecosystem, especially in 2013–2014 including the Ramstein scandal and the Euro Hawk drone "disaster". These two impulses played into the hands of the drone opposition. After an initial climax in 2013–2014, the controversy gradually calmed down. The discursive separation between drones and LAWS, and Russia's annexation of Crimea took away some spotlight from armed drones. Both factors contributed to the loss of their previous status as an extraordinary, even revolutionary, military technology. Moreover, a reorientation of national foreign and security policy occurred. State leaders promoted the idea of Germany taking on more international responsibility, including by increasing its engagement in armed conflicts through military means. Big discursive shifts were underway, contributing to the gradual normalization of armed drones. In 2016, when Germany deployed unarmed ISR drones to Mali, the move was far less contested, and the communication of the CDU/CSU-SPD government was much stronger than before.

Final tipping points occurred after 2018. Combat drones continued to proliferate among states and drone strikes spilled over into a new combat scenario besides asymmetric conflicts. Russia, France, and Azerbaijan firstly used drone strikes; the latter introducing them into interstate battles with Armenia. In 2019 and 2021 Bundeswehr soldiers became targets of attacks in Mali and Afghanistan, raising demands for defensive capabilities such as armed drones. By then, the FDP and the right-wing AFD (both pro-drone) had been elected to enter the Bundestag. Policymakers were weary of the prolonged debates. In 2021, the new government coalition of the SPD, Greens, and FDP ultimately decided to acquire armed drones.

Analyzing the broader discursive dynamics revealed that policy progress was complex and challenging. Regarding political positions, advocates and opponents had constructed two worlds of meaning, which clashed again and again without much openness to other arguments. At the extreme, these clashes turned into aggressive accusations between partisan agents such as between the CDU/CSU and the Left. The result was a stalemate between political positions. On the structural level, however, the drone discourse was relatively open. It was about much more than a mere new military technology. As depicted in the theory chapter, discourses can overlap and intersect (see 2.3.1). This was also the case here. The analysis revealed a plethora of meta-

narratives and proxy debates (see 8.1.2). Thus, the drone debate intersected with several relevant issues of German foreign and security policy.

At the same time, the debate took place at a time when some fundamental questions about foreign and security policy were still unresolved. Up until that point, many Germans were highly skeptical of the use of military force, feared militarization, and arms races. Now, the rising instabilities around the globe required Germany to take on more responsibility. But what was responsibility supposed to mean? What should Germany's role in international military engagements look like? What types of missions should the Bundeswehr participate in? On the one hand these questions opened up a real space of possibilities for the option of having and using armed drones in the future. On the other hand, having these questions unresolved complicated the decision-making process because, ideally, the purpose, strategy, and action needed to be clear before deciding on the instruments. In this regard, the drone question presented a chicken-and-egg problem.

The remainder of this final chapter is organized as follows. In the first subchapter, I will provide a summary of the preceding chapters on the discursive theoretical framework and methods used, the three analytical chapters which constituted the main body of this work, plus the epilogue. Then, I will review and showcase the main findings of the discourse analysis as a whole. Finally, after briefly contextualizing my dissertation within the current political landscape, I offer policy recommendations that emerge from the analysis, regarding defense priorities, arms control, and political communication (8.1.). Since this work seeks to contribute to interpretivist research, the second subchapter opens up the view with a reflection on the dissertation, including the research process and the potential limitations of the project. Finally, it portrays how this dissertation contributes to the literature on drones and foreign policy change, while also appealing to other fields of study, and identifies opportunities for further research (8.2).

8.1 Summary and Findings

In the following I will summarize the previous chapters on the theoretical and methodological framework of my discourse analysis, the three analysis chapters on debates about the military uses of combat drones, procurement and proliferation, and German foreign and security policy, and my epilogue (8.1.1). After this summary, I will highlight the main empirical findings of my dissertation. Seeking to understand the emergence of armed drone use as a political option, I present the key insights about the debate development and pinpoint larger discursive dynamics that were at play (8.1.2). Finally, I place my dissertation in the contemporary political context

shaped by the Russian attack on Ukraine 2022 and the "Zeitenwende" turn in German foreign and security policy. Against this backdrop, I will offer policy recommendations related to armed drones, such as the need to avoid one-sided defense priorities, the ongoing relevance of arms control, and the benefits of clear terminology in parliamentary discussions on new security policy issues (8.1.3).

8.1.1 Summary of the Discourse Analysis

Chapter 2 presented the theoretical foundation of my dissertation. As a "language-sensitive" approach, discourse theory assisted in a gaining a better understanding of the drone debate in the German Bundestag. The chapter shed light on discourse-theoretical approaches to studying policy processes and introduced my definition of discourse as *a productive, patterned ensemble of meaningful representations and concepts about a specific object or practice, that frame it in a certain way and lay out possibilities for action in relation to it – all while interacting with surrounding ideational and contextual structures*. The definition highlighted key elements and informed the three research sub-questions about discursive representations of military drone use, possibilities for action regarding armament, and Germany's role in a changing international security context. Since discourse approaches often ask "what-means" and "how-possible" questions, they lend themselves to studying the "longer lines" of political life. In my case, these longer lines corresponded with an interpretation of how a policy was formed, how alternative(s) became available, and how an event could unfold when others did not.

Discourse analyses are almost always qualitative and are usually informed by an interpretivist research philosophy. Mine is no exception (see 2.1). Unlike a positivist epistemology, which holds that knowledge is objective, and consequently expects research to be replicable and to focus on causality and predictions, interpretivism assumes knowledge is subjective. Interpretivism seeks to understand a social phenomenon and emphasizes the role of context in two ways. First researchers cannot be entirely detached from their contexts; including the subject under study. It presumes the researchers to be subjective individuals shaped by their own background and experiences. Hence, researchers should embrace reflexivity, which is one out of four criteria for good interpretivist research besides trustworthiness, thick description, and intertextuality, revisited below when reflecting on my research process (8.2.1). Second, context matters greatly for understanding social phenomena because political issues are never isolated from their surroundings.

My theoretical foundation was built on three main pillars: The 1) speakers (agents) contributing to parliamentary discussions who perform 2) language practices producing meanings, for example through rhetorical strategies such as framing and grafting, 3) inside a certain context or

"discursive ecosystem", as I call it. My approach leant towards centering agents over structures (compare 2.2), because in parliaments such as the Bundestag parliamentary groups (agents), their constellation, seats, and speaking time, shape the discourse more than in other less formalized discursive settings. Structures matter in particular for the latter two pillars. Language is the engine behind the ability of discourses to do something (productivity). Analyzing the language practices of politicians allowed me to demonstrate how German policymakers empirically (re)constructed meanings, framings, and narratives about armed drones in Bundestag debates. In the discourse analysis, I examined how armed drones emerged as a policy option by linking insights from the debate with the environment of the discursive agents. Political discussions do not happen in a vacuum, but engage dynamically with their context. Using the metaphorical concept of "discursive ecosystem" allowed to flesh out the idea of context further, to underline the dynamic among its various components, and, importantly, to include both ideational and material structural conditions in the theorization. Ideational elements, meaning ideas or other discourses, inform social practices and hence shape policy development (interaction). Material aspects, such as debate speakers, certain PGs, and security-relevant events, provided important impulses to the discourse itself and the discursive ecosystem (compare 2.3).

Chapter 3 laid out the methodological approach. My research question about the emergence of armed drone use as a political option lent itself to a longitudinal perspective for the interpretative discourse analysis. Since language practices was one of the three main pillars of my analysis, I operationalized the most important concepts, such as representations, frames, and narratives as well as rhetorical strategies (compare 3.1). As explained in the subchapter on researching the parliamentary documents (compare 3.2), searching the online archive of the Bundestag resulted in over a thousand hits for the debate between 2009–2018. Out of these hits, I selected more than five hundred texts for the discourse analysis, including protocols from plenary debates, minor and major interpellations with respective responses by the federal government, as well as several policy proposals and reports. In terms of the analyzing the documents (compare 3.3), a discourse analysis was better suited than alternative text-based methods such as CA. After all, the aim was to engage with the discourse on a deeper level than the literal content and frequencies of certain terms. The coding took place in two steps, a preliminary and a more extensive one. An open coding procedure revealed the main topics in the debate were the German drone program, procurement and international relations, the drone programs of other actors, international law, and arms dynamics. Then I undertook the more substantial coding, focused on a set of analytical questions derived from my research sub-questions, each guiding

one of the analysis chapters. They asked about how the speakers 1) characterized and evaluated drone warfare (see Chapter 4), 2) how they represented the step of getting armed drones by formulating and evaluating policy options (see Chapter 5), and 3) how they framed the international security situation, German military power, and foreign policy (see Chapter 6).

In **Chapter 4**, I began by examining how speakers discussed and represented what is important for potential military uses of combat drones in order to illuminate the agenda-setting process of combat drone policy. Specifically, I explored the various meanings-in-use and representations, concepts, and discursive framings. By drawing comparisons and categorizing this new technology, speakers engaged in sense-making and also evaluated drone warfare (compare 4.1). While AMALE-drones were an improved new technology similar to other military platforms for drone advocates, opponents condemned the same technology as a weapon for killing people. The chapter showed that there were two overarching narratives: The "military defense"-narrative advanced by drone advocates (CDU/CSU, FDP, and their government representatives) and the "targeted killing"-narrative constructed by drone-skeptics (Left, Greens, and SPD). The former focused on armed drones as a technology or capability, suggested they would fit into and extent existing processes and prioritized German soldiers as the relevant agent in their narrative. Drone strikes could be useful for the defense. By contrast, at the core of the latter was the practice of targeted killing, the perspective was on the larger legal and strategic context, and the key agents were locals, especially the targeted people. Here the preferred policy was to abstain from drone strikes. Whereas the drone-skeptics dominated initially, the drone advocates caught up and established dominance towards the end.

Despite their differences there were some issues on which all parties agreed, for instance that it is alright to use unarmed drones for ISR, that extrajudicial killings are bad, and that LAWS are a concerning development (compare 4.2). Still, the contentious issues prevailed. The positions were split into two camps no matter whether discussing operational scenarios, the targets, and victims of drone strikes, whether strikes were ultimately effective or counter-effective, how the people launching the strikes in the field behaved, or how the policymakers at home decided on mandating the use of force when armed drones are available (see 4.3).

As my analysis demonstrated, the debate as a whole had two particularly interesting qualities. First, both framings incorporated cognitive-oriented and emotion-oriented features since both comprehension, solvability, and resonance as well as concreteness, proximity, and drama appeared frequently in speech contributions. Second, there were several meta-narratives interwo-

ven in the debate, overlapping with other discourses. For example, both camps touched on conversations about the scope of violence, the purpose of military operations, geographic and legal issues of warfare, (non-)neutrality of technologies, and trust in democratic institutions.

Chapter 5 focused on analyzing discussions about procurement and proliferation, which, in turn, built on ideas and judgements about what role combat drones would play in the future. It illustrated the representations of possible policy responses in the areas of armament options, military procurement (especially finances), the defense industry, and proliferation dynamics. Again, the analysis revealed two broad narratives: the drone-skeptical "perilous procurement"-narrative and the drone-supportive "necessary progress"-narrative. A pessimist outlook underpinned the former. Speakers criticized the government-internal procurement processes, especially those under the CDU/CSU and the FDP, as flawed. They also warned about the external, international consequences of contributing to an arms race involving drones and robotic warfare. By comparison, the "necessary progress"-narrative was more optimistic about the opportunities drone technology offered. Taking a perspective of external systemic pressures, they also emphasized how Germany, in particular, the national defense industry, would have to compete internationally in the area of drones to not fall behind.

The chapter began by outlining how speakers debated on the key question of armament, precisely, whether unarmed, armable, or armed drones were acceptable to have (compare 5.1). Proliferation played a role for both AMALE-drone advocates and opponents: They acknowledged the worldwide diffusion (horizontal proliferation) and technological sophistication (vertical proliferation) of armed and unarmed drones. They also recognized that arms control was possible (compare 5.2). However, for the former, proliferation was a perilous consequence of more and more states getting armed drones; for the latter, it was a motivation to adopt this technology and not miss out. Thus, both stances drew on fear and insecurity. Although they both considered the regulation of weapon systems to be possible and worthwhile, their approaches still varied. Drone advocates preferred an ex-post diffusion management, whereas the drone opposition demanded more regulation, especially preventive arms control. The Left, and, initially, the Greens, asked for an international drone ban. While the topic of arms control lasted in the debate from 2012 to 2018, mainly raised by the Greens and the Left, after 2015 the subjects of arms races and arms-buildups drifted into the background (compare 5.3).

The opposition dominated in 2013, when politicians from the SPD, the Greens and the Left promoted the Euro Hawk as an example for military drone projects wasting taxpayer money. The opposition, now only consisting of the Greens and the Left, were also very strong in 2016

when they shamed the conservative-social democrat government for, supposedly, having already decided to arm drones without sufficiently consulting the parliament. In 2016, drone advocates missed an opportunity to actively promote drone armament. Instead, they spent most of their time speaking defensively and justifying armable drones. The opposition had managed to corner them. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the drone advocates had gained the upper hand in debates about military use at the time. Moreover, they had managed to get closer to their goal of armament when the government decided in favor of armable drones.

Chapter 6 analyzed the broader German foreign and security policy discourse regarding the context for drone policy. It focused on the idea of Germany taking on more international responsibility, which emerged in the mid-2010s. Thus, the perspective was broader than in previous chapters. This broader discourse provided a policy baseline against which speakers (re)constructed combat drone policy. Since the chapter contextualized insights, it also revisited some aspects from previous chapters in more detail. As demonstrated, the discursive context entailed a tension between those wanting to hold on to and even increase military restraint, which Germany had practiced after WW2, and those advocating to resume more international responsibilities in the future, including military engagements. The narratives reconstructed from the drone debate ("responsibility" and "restraint") mirror this tension. The "responsibility"-narrative emerged in 2013 and gained foothold in 2014. It featured framings about Germany's soldiers, military, and allies as the central agents with whom trustful partnerships existed. The "restraint"-narrative voiced concerns about a creeping militarization and tended towards a position advocating for fewer military forces and less military in general. The CDU/CSU and the Left represented the extremes on this issue (compare 6.1).

Regarding analytical activities, this chapter applied not only description and interpretation like the first two chapters, but also used contextualization. It engaged in historical and socio-political contextualization, attempting to interpretatively explain shifts in the noted discourse by examining three foreign and security policy impulses within the discursive ecosystem; namely the US drone strikes which went through bases in Ramstein and Stuttgart, Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, and several asymmetric conflicts, such as the one in Mali. While the Left was extremely vocal throughout the entire time, the Greens were less active in the final years. In any case, the main agent in this narrative was, again, the US, with speakers focusing on criticizing the involvement of US bases within Germany in US drone strikes from 2013 to 2016. Once more, drone-skeptical speakers used US drone strike practices as a worst-case example for combat drone policy and a lack of military restraint. After 2016, the government,

CDU/CSU, and SPD reacted by counter-framing the US as a valuable, historic partner, and ally (compare 6.2).

This chapter discussed (the lack of) notions regarding military power in the drone debate and reflected on the continuing dispositions of military culture, as well as new initiatives in foreign and security policy. It revealed that important shifts occurred in German foreign and security policy, as well as in the parliamentary drone debate, in the mid-2010s. In 2013, information was disclosed about US drone strikes at Ramstein, which led the opposition to shift their focus from scandalizing drone strikes to criticizing US-German relations. A discursive space opened up. In addition, in the years around 2016, the governing parties displayed that they had done their homework on communication. They talked positively and informatively about German ISR drone operations in Mali. Speakers also distinguished much better between armed and unarmed drone systems. Compared to previous years, the overall debate had also become less dramatic. In sum, all of these developments in the drone discourse combined with the related discourses and processes about Germany's new international responsibility slowly formed a foundation for armed drones becoming a political option. Moreover, the chapter included final remarks on the drone debate in terms of policy decision-making. The analysis revealed that policymakers stressed the (diminishing) necessity for debating, argued about its framing (legal, ethical, peace policy, arms control, military or security policy), and accused others of obstructing the debate. Thus, they often just debated over the debate as such without actually progressing the policy process (compare 6.3).

In **Chapter 7**, I added an epilogue to my main analysis from Chapters 3-6 to examine developments that occurred after the end of my core observation period in 2018. It allowed to account for the new "traffic light" coalition government's decision to approve of armed military drones in fall of 2021. In this chapter, I analyzed twelve additional Bundestag documents, observed changes in the parliamentary setting, and considered key events presenting new impulses, such as the increasing adoption and use of armed drones by other countries, as well as attacks on German soldiers in Afghanistan and Mali (compare 7.1). In parliament, many speakers were annoyed by the seemingly endless debates around drones. Two pro-drone parties had entered the parliament in 2017, the AfD and FDP, supporting the CDU/CSU. Concurrently, the "save and protect soldiers"-argument had become more dominant than ever, while the drone-skeptical "targeted killing"-narrative was feeble by comparison. Now, speakers had evidence for the military necessity of arming drones. They used recent attacks on German soldiers in missions abroad to back up their arguments. The drone advocates had become even stronger than before.

Zooming in on the parliamentary debates revealed much continuity in the content. Entirely new facets were few and of minor relevance. Still, the debate had become harsher. The entry of the AfD into parliament brought with it a language of combat and war (compare 7.2).
Importantly, the Social Democrats and the Greens, who had been opposing arming drones for many years, faced internal division on the issue, and eventually tipped the scale towards armament. After years of debates, it was time for decisions. However, these decisions happened outside of parliament. At a party conference in summer 2021, the Green party narrowly passed an armament-friendly proposal. In October 2021, an SPD drone working group published a report, which sketched out a set of rules for potential German armed drone use. Both parties adjusted their party position to a more drone-friendly stance. By November 2021, the policy option of armed drone use had finally manifested into a decision of a political majority. After years and years of controversial discussions in parliament, the drone debate had come to a preliminary close. Following the 2021 national election, the SPD, Greens and FDP published their coalition agreement in November 2021. They agreed on getting armed drones, allowing the Bundeswehr to use them in a transparent, restrained, and rule-based way. It was a policy landmark. By then, central parts of the discursive ecosystem had shifted (compare 7.3).

8.1.2 Findings: How Did the Use of Armed Drones Emerge as an Option?

Armed drones were a highly controversial technology in Germany, but the parliamentary drone debate was more complex than a simple contestation over a new military technology. It was messier than that too. My research question was: “How did the acquisition and use of armed military drones by Germany emerge as a political option in the German parliamentary debates from January 2009 to December 2018?” The first part of this section reports my findings on what exactly happened at what time. It recognizes that, by the second half of the time period, armed drone advocates had gained dominance in the discourse. After over a decade of debating, drones had become normalized and policymakers were tired of the topic. The second part concludes with an explanation of how to make sense of these findings. It extends insights into the development of the debate by delving into deeper layers of discourse and larger discursive dynamics, as well as how it interacted with other issues and the socio-political context.
From 2009 until around 2013, the drone opposition (the Left Party, the Greens, and the SPD) dominated the discourse. How did they manage to do so? Certainly, an important factor was that the contextual conditions back then were in their favor. When information about CIA drone strikes was leaked, people were shocked. When the US increased their drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen, and Afghanistan, critique swelled. Activist groups emerged, who campaigned against armed drones. The idea of lethal autonomous weapon systems, previously only known from

science fiction, seemed a real scientific possibility. All these facts provided an advantage for the drone opposition. At the same time, they also used this advantage; in the early years the opposition dominated. They were also very savvy discursively and managed to make the issue of armed drones seem like it was about many different things. Even though the Bundeswehr did not have any armed drones, the opposition, especially the Left and Greens, accomplished to construct drone strikes as bad nonetheless, by linking it to the US and highlighting consistently how Germany was involved in and contributed to US targeted killing drone strikes. They effectively constructed a causal story about the slippery slope of Germany sliding into US-style drone warfare. Also, they successfully attacked the claim of drones being financially cheaper by rigorously transferring meanings from the failed and expensive – yet unarmed – Euro Hawk project to military drone projects in general.

Drone advocates, on the other hand, mainly responded to the arguments of the opposition, thus reacting defensively instead of actively setting their own agenda. They did not seem ready in the early debate phase, missing out on several opportunities to argue their case convincingly. Especially the analysis of discussions of military power as related to drones revealed their poor performance. This finding is consistent with previous research on how German political elites justify military missions, which found that power-related arguments or enemy-constructions are rare (compare 1.2.1).[1328] Still, drone advocates even missed out on framing armed drones positively with low-hanging fruit like subjects such as the Bundeswehr reform, military capabilities, strategic scenarios, and the importance of NATO. Their most convincing arguments for drones were always centered around German soldiers. Similar to these military-focused debates they also did not realize the potential of the industrial debates, since they barely stressed how investments in military drone capability-building could create jobs, enrich the industrial knowledge base, and foster benefits for other business areas. Their causal story about the wider benefits of investing in military drone technology was thin and hence little persuasive.

After the drone debate peaked in 2013–2014, dominance shifted, and it became less heated although external shocks fueled the debate again. In the months leading up to the fall 2013 election, the parties controversially debated over armed drones, potentially using the issue to highlight and contrast their specific partisan positions for the voters. Due to the disagreement, they postponed the armament decision to the next legislation period. However, the FDP did not make it back into the parliament. The drone friendly CDU/CSU was almost on pair with the drone-skeptical SPD, Greens, and Left Party, who had previously been the dominant agents. External shocks now drove the political debate. Revelations about how US bases in Ramstein

[1328] Geis, Müller, and Schörnig, "Liberale Demokratien und Krieg," 193-94.

and Stuttgart were involved in American drone strikes fueled arguments about the German entanglement or even assistance in these attacks, as well as conversations about US-German relations in general. Yet, the drone opposition shifted its focus towards these events and away from the violence of the battle zone itself or the injustice of targeted killings. At the same time, the public controversy lost some of its edge. US President Obama reduced CIA drone strikes and promoted stricter targeting standards for improving transparency. European and German court rulings fostered legal clarity. This emergent norm framework may have contributed to making armed drones more appropriate. These events showed how impulses from the outside can impact the larger ways of discourses.

A gradual normalization of combat drones occurred due to ongoing horizontal and vertical proliferation of the technology as well as the prospect of LAWS. The normalization of unarmed ISR drones provided the first step of this development. The analysis showed that by the time Germany employed them to Mali, they were barely controversial anymore. As more and more states acquired armed drones, they became more common, turning their existence into a "matter-of-fact". Moreover, in the wake of arising LAWS, remotely piloted armed drones gradually appeared less scandalous than in the years before. Initially, autonomous weapon systems were a powerful and scary extreme scenario of what could become of armed drones, but then they became their own category of weapon system: LAWS. Over time, LAWS discursively detached from armed drones. As a consequence of this detachment, armed drones became less threatening and scandalous; they became the "old stuff". The debates on (dangerous) arms races and arms build-ups illustrate this development. After 2015, these aspects slowly faded from the debate. However, arms control stayed as a subject as long as until 2018, especially due to the Green and Left speech contributions.

Ultimately, it was not the drone-friendly CDU/CSU or FDP who made the difference in the debate but the SPD and the Greens who changed their positions in 2021 and approved of procuring armed drones. These changes mainly took place within the parties themselves, outside of parliament, and paved the way for having a political majority in support of drone armament. Some audiences might have been surprised by the turn of events. After all, the SPD and the Greens had previously played a significant role in blocking drone armament. However, the discourse analysis showed there were indicators for an inner-party division (SPD) and a general gradual rhetorical demobilization (Greens) on the issue visible in parliamentary debates since 2013, which opened a window of possibility for the emergence of armed drones. Apart from being an empirical finding in its own right, from a theoretical angle, it also underlines the importance of agents in discourse and policy development working together with ideational and

material structures. Future research could trace how these partisan processes enfolded exactly and what caused them (see section below).

The final decision on drone armament occurred in November 2021 due to a change in government, amid a widespread exhaustion with the drone debate. This fact underlines how relevant the constellation of parties in the parliament and the government were for my analysis (compare 2.3.3). In a discursive setting like a national parliament parties matter greatly for the developments of debates and their results. The discursive ecosystem concept allowed me to consider their impact. Partisan landmark events had shaken up the discourse before. For example, when the FDP had to leave the parliament, the CDU/CSU lacked a political ally in their pro armed drone policy stance. On the other hand, the drone opposition somewhat lost the Social Democrats when they entered government with the Conservatives. Eventually, not only the FDP joined the Bundestag again, but the AfD also entered the parliament – both in favor of armed drones, tipping the scale. My conclusion of this finding is very straight-forward: Which party is in parliament matters both for discourse and policy and, by extension, votes matter. At the same time, parties can change their previous position. In the case of drones, the above-mentioned normalization of armed drones combined with a general exhaustion of debating this weapon system explains the shifts.

Examining the broader discursive dynamics revealed the Bundestag drone debate had several issues. For one, the debate revealed a range of meta-narratives, proxy debates, and other policy issues. All three analysis chapters demonstrated this abundance in the drone discourse. Chapter 4 illustrated this finding in particular. It showed how politicians debated the purpose and effects of violence in conflicts, the priorities of IHL and human rights, the possibility of mission creep, and trust in democratic institutions, such as soldiers and politicians, in discussions about the use of armed drones. In Chapter 5, which focused on procurement and proliferation, I demonstrated how the opposition brought up grand issues and proxy debates about poor government, political interference by the arms lobby, and flawed national defense procurement. Regarding Germany's foreign and security policy, Chapter 6 highlighted the lurking meta-narratives about counterinsurgency missions, Germany's relationships with NATO and with the US, and the German contribution to international military engagements. Possible reasons for these discursive overlaps could be that the topic of armed drones by itself was not tangible enough or too touchy. It could also just have been a sub-category of larger issues at stake. However, there were not only discursive overlaps in structures of meanings, but the agents – both drone advocates and opponents – also purposely linked the decision about armed drone procurement with other issues by using grafting as a rhetorical strategy. For example, the drone opposition linked

the expenses of a new drone system with the financial failure of the Euro Hawk and drone advocates tied the availability of armed drones to the safety and protection of German soldiers. These moves might have made their arguments stronger. All these elaborations put the drone debate in the spotlight, increasing its apparent relevance. When politicians used drones to "spice up" other debates, they inadvertently blew up the drone debate as well, making it more difficult to decide on drones because the issue became bigger and bigger, and more complex.

Rigid party positions led to a stalemate situation which blocked the policy-process for years. As Chapter 4 demonstrated, the Bundestag debates discursively (re)produced two worlds of meanings. This realization carried through the other chapters like a red thread. Both camps clung to their positions and claimed the factual and moral high ground. The language used was full of emotions and drama, which made the debate less rational. Moreover, the same arguments kept spinning in the discourse without any new ideas or framings entering the debate. New arguments only appeared scarcely after the beforementioned climax of the drone debate in 2013 and 2014. Still, the divisions between the camps remained. Although the issue of drone armament was contentious, there was little progress over time. While both the Conservatives and the FDP supported armament, only the CDU/CSU remained as a supporter once the FDP was expelled from the Bundestag. The Greens and the Left remained adamantly opposed to arming drones. Due to the change from opposition to government and internal divisions, the SPD was somewhat caught in the middle, although they did, in fact, slow down and ultimately adjourn the decision-making process.

There was little constructive debating during all these debates in the sense of really engaging with the opposite ideas. There was not as much back and forth between arguments, counterarguments, and responses to these counters. However, this is a general problem of parliamentary debates, where politicians are primarily interested in promoting their own agenda and partisan position. Instead, it was common to simply dismiss claims as morally wrong (killing civilians, not caring about soldiers) or factually false (legality of drone strikes, contestation of drone warfare "reality"). As a consequence, two parallel worlds of meanings emerged over the years with very different cores (armed drones vs. targeted killing), perspectives (existing processes vs. larger context), and agents (German soldiers vs. targeted people and locals). The two fractions locked heads. For many years the drone debate was not productive in the sense of new meanings emerging, but it kept rearticulating and reproducing the same ideas again and again. Thus, the parliamentary debate got stuck; and with it the policy-process.

Situating these findings into the historical and socio-political context as part of the discursive ecosystem helped to make sense of these observations. Since public opinion was rather skeptical of military matters and militarization, the German drone debate had a challenging starting point. Drones are a provocative technology that raises many ethical and legal questions. The German debate, however, was even more complex because it happened at a time when Germany was searching for its place in the world, as Foreign Minister Steinmeier acknowledged in 2015. It was a time of transition. After WW2, Germany had developed a unique attitude towards military matters. They country adopted a cautious, and sometimes even hesitant, approach to international military engagements and the military institution itself. Large parts of German society were skeptical of the use of military force in other countries and afraid of militarization at home. As Chapter 5 showed, especially the political left worried about arms-build ups and arms races. These were preeminent concepts-in-use in Germany, despite being home to world-leading defense companies and a huge defense procurement bureaucracy. Even after deploying soldiers in conflicts abroad in the 1990s, the national sentiment remained largely shaped by pacifism. Although the international need for these interventions was clear, policymakers were uncomfortable. In fact, they avoided calling the violent conflict in Afghanistan a war for years.

Chapter 6 showed that the drone debate intersected with unresolved, underlying tensions of German foreign and security policy. Combatting terrorism in countries far away was a challenge both for the policy and the military sphere, requiring new ideas and instruments. German soldiers were injured and killed in violent conflicts abroad. As a result, politicians and society at large had to wrestle with fundamental questions more than ever before: What does international responsibility mean? How involved should Germany be in international military engagements? What kinds of missions should the Bundeswehr be a part of? These were – and are – the tough questions of German foreign and security policy. Uncertainty and even dissent continued to exist. At the same time, Germany *was* already part of these difficult counterinsurgency missions. The US already *did* target terrorist suspects with drone strikes. States around the world were *already* buying armed drones.

As a result, politicians faced a chicken-and-egg problem in drone policy making: Do they first decide all the other issues and then procure armed drones, when it is, perhaps, already too late? Do they just go ahead with procuring armed drones and skip these tough discussions, as the Left suspected? Or do they take armed drones as a concrete example to rigorously discuss all the other looming questions? In the end, neither option applied. The fact that even drone advocates long struggled to explain in which operational scenarios Germany needed armed drones underlines how shallow their side of the discussion effectively was, especially in the earlier

years of the debate. For a long time, the drone advocates lacked substance for their argument; potentially because they still shied away from uncomfortable truths. Unlike the Americans or the British, German troops were not supposed to track, locate, and kill suspected terrorists through drone strikes in the counterterrorism operations following 9/11. Drone-skeptics, on the other hand, had plenty of media coverage available illustrating how drone strikes enabled violations of human rights and international law, although official evidence was lacking for a long time. The lack of high-quality evidence on both sides made it difficult for the agents to really engage with the opposing views, but it also meant there was no chance of being proven wrong. For military matters the space of what is appropriate or possible was initially rather narrow, but broadened later on. As outlined above, the foreign and security policy disposition of Germany has long indicated restraint and military-skepticism. In this regard, the political and hence discursive spectrum has leaned further to the left end than in other Western countries, such as the US for instance. In the drone debate, this shift was driven in large part by the consistent vocal activism of the Left Party in the Bundestag, as well as the absence of a right-wing party throughout most of the observation period. Consequently, discussions in the Bundestag on armed drones displayed left-leaning positions, such as anti-militarism, non-intervention, and a preventive drone ban, more prominently than political debates in other countries.

Simultaneously, German speakers have refrained from aggressive military positions, such as promoting unilateral interventions or the need to "kill the bad guys". Speakers lacked a discursive foundation for grafting these positions. German discussions about international security and military matters also tended to distance themselves from patriotism, "support our troops" claims, and veteran-culture, unlike in the US or the UK for example. Similarly, national pride in a strong German military as well as in the national defense and aerospace industry was no common feature of the drone discourse. However, at least on a broader scale, things have recently shifted. Having the AfD in the Bundestag extended the political spectrum towards the right. Moreover, the Greens turned on their previous anti-drone position. The SPD also accommodated the idea of a future with armed drones. The space of what was discursively and politically possible has become wider, culminating in the November 2021 decision to adopt armed drones.

8.1.3 Policy Recommendations for Germany During the "Zeitenwende"

Although the international context has changed, the armed drone discourse still offers important lessons for policymakers today. While the announcement of the adoption of armed drones was a considerable step in German foreign and security policy, a massive international shock was to come only a few months later when Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. While the

drones debate was ongoing, Germany came to terms with punching its weight in foreign and security policy: From sending troops to Afghanistan, Mali, and other conflicts, accepting to carry more responsibility internationally, and supporting a stronger European defense cooperation to rely less on the US, to finally abandoning long-held reluctance towards armed drones (see Chapter 5 and 6). Yet, the Russian aggression led the German international affairs elite to call into question fundamental assumptions. It set into motion a wave of rethinking and reorientation.

In a speech to the parliament, Chancellor Olaf Scholz responded to this "watershed" moment by announcing a historic turning point for Germany and Europe: The "Zeitenwende".[1329] Seeking to enhance German military capabilities – not phrased as military power but as a "powerful, cutting-edge, progressive Bundeswehr" – he proposed two initiatives: Living up to the NATO agreement of spending two percent of the GDP in defense and a special 100-billion-euro fund for the German forces ("Sondervermögen") to boost and accelerate current defense capabilities.[1330] MPs gave him standing ovations. The *Zeitenwende* presented Germany not only with a window of opportunity but also with a challenge to define key foreign and security policy issues and positions, such as economic interests vis-à-vis other states (including authoritarian ones), the future of multilateralism, and rethinking Germany's role as a self-prescribed civilian power.[1331] In April 2022, the responsible Bundestag committees approved the procurement of missiles to arm the German Heron TP drones.[1332]

As depicted in Chapter 1 and 7, both Russia and Ukraine had been using drone strikes, albeit mainly with smaller platforms than the AMALE-models discussed here. Nevertheless, it is another example of an interstate war scenario for this weapon system, previously deemed a weapon of choice for asymmetric battle scenarios. Smaller platforms have conducted attacks on civilian and military targets, often on infrastructure, illustrating their diverse operational range. In addition to aerial vehicles, news reports have mentioned the use of naval drones. This indicates that the use of this technology has spread to other domains. There have been attacks on Russian soil by so-called kamikaze drones, which explode upon striking. Unlike systems designed to return to their sender, they allow for anonymity, although anonymity, can, then again, lead to attribution problems. Ukraine has officially denied being responsible for these

1329 Olaf Scholz, "Policy Statement by Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and Member of the German Bundestag, 27 February 2022 in Berlin", 2022.
1330 Ibid.
1331 Michael Brzoska, "Zeitenwende: Wie groß ist die Herausforderung für die deutsche Außenpolitik?," *Politikum* 8, no. 3 (2022).
1332 Staff Writer with AFP, "Germany to Get Weaponized Drones for the First Time".

attacks. In any case, one may likely expect a surge in their employment in the future. However, these types of drones were not part of my analysis.

In this new era, my discourse analysis on the parliamentary armed drone debate in the chapters 4-6 reveals several lessons learned and policy repercussions. First, the analysis demonstrated that German policymakers have long struggled to define national interests and objectives guiding their armed drone policy. The government should continue to tackle this deficit for a stronger foreign and security policy. Having a crisp understanding of your interests and objectives is the foundation for thinking about what role your military forces should play where, what mission scenarios are likely, and which capabilities the soldiers require. The final step is then picking which instruments the state needs for these scenarios.

Second, the defense priorities should not be one-sided. German decision-makers should avoid the mistake of flipping the entire military apparatus back to conventional national defense. As the analysis showed, counterterrorism and counterinsurgency missions have long dominated the German defense debates. Not long ago, Germany had invested extensive resources in the Bundeswehr reforms to prepare and equip the forces for asymmetric conflicts and counterinsurgency missions. It would be shortsighted to reverse this process entirely. Although the priorities have shifted back to conventional defense, Germany should accommodate both to remain flexible and prepared for whatever the future may hold.

Another policy recommendation, resulting from Chapter 5 particularly, would be to not forget about arms control. The war in Ukraine has likely buried any realistic prospects of a complete international drone ban, as many state leaders feel the need to arm up rather than to control the proliferation of weapon systems. Even Germany has decided to join the armed drone club. Nevertheless, it would be plausible to flank this acquisition with mechanisms ensuring a responsible drone use. Furthermore, Germany could show even greater support to international arms control regarding armed drone proliferation. There could be a European drone employment regime including an oversight framework, also for the sake of a reliable accountability regime for protecting civilians from drone strikes. Also, Germany could boost its efforts in regulating autonomy in weapons systems. Intensifying arms control initiatives among European states would be a logical step in the ongoing process of deepening their defense and security cooperation. At the moment, states foster joint R&D projects such as the Eurodrone and call for greater interoperability, but arms control is not rigorously linked to these endeavors yet. Despite the decision in favor of drone armament, concerns about the risks of this technology remain valid. That is why policymakers should address these concerns by promoting respective countermeasures instead of considering the armed drone chapter to be closed.

Finally, policymakers should engage in public discussions especially on controversial policies. Importantly, they should use the same terminology when doing so (compare the "umbrella term phenomenon" in Chapter 4.1). They should continue the dialogue with both the general public and the expert community. It is important to invite experts with diverse backgrounds and different perspectives to conversations about new controversial military technologies, for instance military and security experts as well as specialists in studies, international law, and arms control. In discussions on new military systems, it is helpful to agree on a common terminology right at the beginning. Lacking precise terminology, for example by simply saying "drones" instead of specifying whether civilian or military technology, armed or unarmed, can cause confusion, and hinder effective policymaking. Since the LAWS debate is in full swing, this might be an area to consider the lessons learned from the armed drone debate.

8.2 Reflection on my Dissertation

My research contributed a rigorous analysis of German armed drone policy development and offered novel insights on why it took Germany so long to decide on the matter. Approaching the end of the dissertation, this subchapter reflects on the research project as a whole, beginning with the research process. Here I will consider the theoretical contributions, evaluate the methodological quality, and comment on how I dealt with the armed drone decision happening after the end of my observation period (8.2.1). Then, I will discuss the potential limitations of my project and respond to objections that traditional discourse theorists and policy analysts might conceivably have, for instance about my pragmatic approach (8.2.2). Since this inquiry was highly data-driven and focused on a parliamentary setting, taking a discourse analytical approach to studying the development of German drone policy was not without theoretical and methodological challenges. Finally, the dissertation concludes by addressing its contribution to the literature on drones and foreign policy change by introducing Germany as a new country case and emphasizing the value of analyzing plenary debates. It also points out areas for future research. Due to the complexity of the studied debate, this dissertation offers insights and follow-up opportunities not only for scholars interested in drones, but also for those interested in the emergence of new military technologies, legislative debates in democracies, parliamentary politics, and German foreign policy (8.2.3).

8.2.1 Research Process Reflection

Retrospectively speaking, one theoretical finding stands out: The attacks on German soldiers in armed conflicts tell us much about the significant role of structures in relation to the impact of

impulses within the discursive ecosystem, such as external events. Not all impulses and events considered here were equally impactful in how they interacted with the discourse. One might have expected the 2010 ambush versus the 2019 camp attacks to have similar repercussions for the discourse. Given the "protecting and saving solders"-argument was one of the most prominent ones, both shocks should have mattered. The 2010 incident was lethal with three people dying. By comparison, the 2019 attack was less lethal since nobody was killed; and yet it still had a decisive effect for the parliamentary debate and armed drone policy at large; more so than the 2010 ambush. It shows that external shocks do play a role, but not on their own. The prevailing structures of ideas and meanings also matter, to form links and connections in order to persist. These structures shape how agents interpret an event. Then again, it is up to the agents to raise an issue in the discourse. For example, the drone advocates missed out on using the ambush as evidence for why German forces needed armed drones. Otherwise, 2010 could have already been a turning point for the discourse and armed drone policy in Germany.

In order to evaluate my interpretivist research, one can revisit the criteria depicted in the methods chapter: Trustworthiness, thick description, reflexivity, and intertextuality. Since interpretative inquiries are less formalized in style than positivist ones, trustworthiness speaks to a transparent communication of research choices. Explaining the choices, procedures, and analytical steps was a constant endeavor in the methods chapter. In addition, this subchapter serves to foster trust by means of explicit reflection, to the extent that some positivist might consider too subjective. Thick description was an integral to this dissertation, which depicted the discursive dynamics at play. It thus had a large descriptive share. A burgeoning number of direct quotes by different speakers served to explore the language in action. Still, the parliamentary setting also posed limits because it is very formal and restricts the speaking time. For example, debates, especially with ministers speaking, were richer in rhetorical tools than minor interpellations. In order to present the insights from the data in a thick narrative, I used the coding scheme and codebook of questions for the data analysis (compare 3.3). However, I chose to structure the chapters in a way that best answered my research question, which seemed more logical and compelling. All in all, the analysis managed to provide rich details and contextualization, also due to my familiarity with the texts and the Bundestag. Being a native German speaker provided the necessary language skills for this analysis and a high cultural competence. Nevertheless, I also actively distanced myself from the subject of study and reflected on potential biases. All these aspects contributed to fulfilling the reflexivity criterion. Finally, bringing

together over five hundred parliamentary documents, stretching over a decade, and cross-checking with potential external impulses provided a solid intertextuality (on potential limitations of intertextuality see 8.2.2).

A big challenge to my PhD research project and process was the 2021 coalition agreement, when the new government parties (the SPD, the Greens, and the FDP) decided in favor of getting and using armed drones (see 8.2.2). Suffice to say here that, looking at this challenge today, it was both a curse and a blessing because it encouraged me to write the epilogue as an additional Chapter 8. Certainly, it was an extra effort to incorporate these new developments in my thesis, after the main part had already been written. Still, I handled this challenge in a transparent way by explicitly stating the circumstances and explaining the reasons for limiting the scope of the additional analysis.

8.2.2 Potential Limitations

The main limitations of my dissertation resulted from the tension between the aim to explore the discourse on the one hand and to understand the formation of German drone policy on the other. In order to do so I chose a pragmatic discourse theoretical approach, which traditional structure-centric and purely agent-centric students of discourse might potentially not align with. Furthermore, traditional discourse theorists might criticize my dissertation for not expanding more on intertextuality between different types of texts from inside and outside of parliament. However, due to the longitudinal research design, this kind of intertextuality was not a priority because I had already covered hundreds of just Bundestag documents spanning a decade. My concept of intertextuality focused on the connections between these parliamentary texts. A more general limitation, not specific to my research, was the partly ambiguous use of the term "drone" by speakers in the data.

The dissertation bears a certain tension between my primary motivation to explore the discourse while also hoping to understand and to make sense of how the German drone policy developed; and eventually resulted in the given outcome. This issue is linked to the end time of my analysis. When I finalized my research design, the 2018 elected German government (CDU/CSU and SPD) had previously settled on a political compromise on AMALE-drones: By the end of 2018, they had agreed to lease five "armable" Heron TP models from Israel. Compared to the previous long debate that yielded no significant policy progress, the agreement seemed like a suitable end point for the analysis. It was an entire decade after the emergence of the drone debate in 2009. Moreover, the time frame 2009–2018 provided the data analysis with several "buffer" years before and after the climax of the drone controversy in 2013–2014, which allowed to

assess how the debate developed and how this climax had built up and ebbed off. However, the decision for "armable" drones was only a preliminary policy outcome, as the 2021 coalition agreement later demonstrated. In order to solve this research dilemma – being in the final stage of the project and having limited resources on the one hand, on the other hand facing a significant new empirical development – I added the supplementary epilogue.

The epilogue served to prevent a gap in understanding of the German parliamentary debate on armed drones. Although the research for the epilogue was not as extensive, it still added value for my dissertation. It provided a well-suited end point for my dissertation, which was interested in the decision about armed drone policy. Also, the epilogue allowed to do a certain check-up of the results from my main analysis. Thus, it ended up strengthening my arguments further, because the parliamentary debates after 2019 continued and many of the previously identified points and patterns intensified. However, had I begun drafting my dissertation project after the publication of the coalition agreement in the fall of 2021, I might have opted for extending the time frame of the full analysis to 2021. In that case, I would have made concessions elsewhere to accommodate the larger amount of data (e.g., more quantitative text analysis, limit analysis to specific topics rather than the undertaken explorative approach).

The epilogue pointed to important questions about the power of discourse analysis in capturing the dynamics of policy formation. After 2018, the Bundestag debate largely continued to stagnate. In the end, the discourse was less effective in triggering the policy window and driving the policy formation than the empirical events within the discursive ecosystem were. This highlights the influence of factors external to the discourse in driving the policy process, such as the continuous international AMALE-drone proliferation, a decreasing likeliness of stricter arms control, and national party power dynamics. Events such as the vote on armed drone policy during the Green party conference and the SPD working group on the issue culminated in position shifts within the Greens and the SPD towards the end of the drone debate. The election, which resulted in a political majority of the SPD, Greens, and FDP, was the trigger in the policy process. All of these parties now supported drone armament. This was not a sudden shift in the discourse alone, such as a brand-new argument for example. These observations highlight the limitations of discourse analysis, in terms of both theory (low productivity in the drone debate) and analytical utility for scholars, especially when applied in its "pure" form.

Ultimately, my findings highlight that policy analysis, when relying solely on discourse, risks missing key dimensions of the policy process. This suggests the need for a broader, pragmatic approach, such as the one attempted here. Integrating multiple perspectives, allows to consider

both internal discursive elements and the external political and societal elements that, together, drive policy change. By considering external factors alongside discourse, scholars can develop a more comprehensive understanding of how policy windows open and how controversial issues, like the German AMALE-drone debate, eventually reach resolution. For my original puzzle, the controversial debate and an essential non-decision on drones until late 2018, the discourse-analytical approach was suitable. Methodologically, the epilogue touched on the confines of discourse analysis, which I understand rather generously due to the concept of the discursive ecosystem, because it recognized the special significance of (these) events.

The epilogue was a supplementary addition to my main analysis. However, for a rigorous study of the time from 2019 onwards, when these external elements and events played a larger role, other approaches would be better equipped. One could study the causal relationships at stake by doing a deep dive into the party power dynamics and the inner-party reasons. One could examine the party-internal power dynamics and reasons within the Greens and the SPD in detail, inquiring why they eventually changed their position. Process tracing would be a possible qualitative method for identifying and testing the causal mechanisms at work. Using path analysis, one could depict which paths were available to the decision-makers in the beginning, how they merged, or disappeared towards the end. For a broader quantitative study, one could examine and test the effects of different variables, such as changes in public opinion on armed drones, partisan polling numbers, economic factors, and engagement with stakeholders like lobbies and military staff. All of these methods would be alternative options to discourse analysis. However, they are all highly centered on the policy outcome of AMALE-drone procurement. As explained above, when I sketched out my research design, the government had decided in 2018 to lease "armable" drones. While this was progress compared to the debates of the prior years, it was not as strong of an outcome as the 2021 decision and did not provide the main puzzle for my dissertation. Instead, what puzzled me was the lengthily, highly controversial debate. That is why I chose a discourse analysis.

More traditional structure-centric discourse theorists and purely agent-centric foreign policy scholars might not agree with the pragmatic discourse-analytical approach of this study. As explained in the theory and methods chapter, I acknowledge that agents and structures construct each other. At the same time, my theoretical approach centers agents over structures, all while understanding that structures enable the conditions for what is possible in a discourse in the first place. My concept of the discursive ecosystem is also unconventional to some extent because it embraces both ideational structures (i.e., socio-political ideas, historical experiences) and material structures (i.e., agents participating in the discourse, relevant external events). Pure

discourse-analytical approaches would tend to omit aspects that characterize parliamentary debates as a setting, such as the party discipline ("Fraktionszwang") or tactical considerations by the speakers. Zooming out and limiting the analysis to the structural dimension like some post-structuralists or critical discourse analysts might have done, would have left out pivotal aspects. That is why this project adhered to a broader notion of what a discourse analysis is, considering both agents and structures.

With all these potential limitations in mind, it is important to note again that my focus was empirical, not theoretical. The research priority was to make sense of the data and to understand the parliamentary debates on armed drones thoroughly possible. It was not my priority to remain within a clean-cut theoretical box. In institutional settings such as parliament, the constellation and speech contributions of agents play a significant role – and, as this analysis showed also in the armed drone debate in the Bundestag. Incorporating elements from the discursive ecosystem helped to make sense of what was said in the parliamentary debates.

Some discourse theorists might argue that my dissertation lacks intertextuality in the sense of connecting the Bundestag documents with texts outside of the parliament. Including media debates, expert interviews, and speeches from outside of parliament more extensively could have enriched the discourse analysis further. However, achieving such intertextual breadth was beyond the scope of this paper. It already assessed an extensive amount of data for a qualitative study and occasionally included such additional text data. One could have chosen a shorter time period, for example, the peak of the controversy in 2013–2014, and cast a wider net of texts to examine how meanings circulated in the broader socio-political discourse. Similarly, one could have engaged more with how the AMALE-drone debate in the Bundestag was intertwined with other discourses over the years. This would have constituted a different research project. My interest was in the Bundestag as a key forum for policy debates and how the armed drone discourse developed there over time. Thus, I prioritized analyzing and contextualizing the debate by consulting other types of sources. This dissertation contains intertextuality by means of referring to concepts and terms repeated in various parliamentary texts over time.

A basic, yet unavoidable, data-related challenge for this thesis was the ambiguous use of the term "drone" by German policymakers, particularly during the earlier years of my observation period. The way the speakers talked about drones posed an umbrella term problem. By this, I mean that they did not always explicitly state what type of technology – armed or unarmed – they were referring to. This terminological fluidity was sometimes beneficial and may have been intentional. Drone advocates could aim to capitalize on the more positive connotations of

unarmed drones and extend them to armed models. Occasionally, they have even thrown military platforms and civilian platforms together under the umbrella term "drone" (see 4.1). I addressed this issue by carefully considering the context, which helped me to understand which type of platform the speakers meant.

8.2.3 Contribution to Literature and Areas for Future Research

My dissertation makes three contributions to the existing literature. First, it contributes to the literature on drones by introducing a detailed study of a new country case: Germany. Most of the existing drone literature has naturally focused on the US because it was the first mover on armed drones and has carried out drone strikes since 2002, including controversial targeted killings. Because US drone strikes have been taking place since 2002, much of the academic drone literature addressed the consequences, especially on the legal, ethical, and security implications of drone warfare (1.2.1). As armed drones became more widely available, scholars increasingly studied the causes and conditions of their adoption and proliferation, especially in second-mover countries (1.2.2). By contrast, German decision-makers abstained from acquiring armed drones for a long time, but eventually, a political majority supported this step – nearly twenty years after the first US drone strikes.

Second, this dissertation complements the common scholarly focus on the causes and consequences of drone proliferation and adoption as a foreign policy change by illuminating the political process leading up to the decision-making. It offers insights into the interplay between discourse and contextual factors that create policy windows, but also into the necessity for political agents to seize these opportunities when they arise. Existing drone literature may have neglected this aspect because it focused on the US, where a debate of this extent only happened after drone strikes had already become a fact. Accordingly, the US official discourse had an ex post facto justifying character, as studies of the Obama administration speeches indicated. Unlike in Germany, it did not serve a decision-making purpose. Examining the German parliamentary debates from 2009 to 2018 allowed to study the policy debates on drones while the outcome was still undetermined. Compared to other countries, the German parliamentary debate was somewhat of an extreme case, because of the length and intensity of the drone debates. That is why it is also relevant to the literature on foreign policy change.

Although it was not directly part of the research, my analysis also showed the influence that first-mover actions can have on policy processes for emerging military technologies. The US was the primary example of combat drone use in the German debates, though it was generally viewed negatively. Moreover, many of the same issues, arguments, and frames present in the

existing drone literature, which primarily studied the American case, were discussed by German parliamentary speakers. This indicates the extent to which knowledge and ideas travel beyond borders.

Third, the German parliamentary drone debate strikingly illustrated the many political reasons and factors that played into the policy decision to adopt armed drones (compare 8.1.2). Due to its explorative approach and open theoretical perspective, my project was able to provide a unique, holistic perspective to the literature. The German case illustrated that overcoming platform and adoption challenges might be a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for states to adopt armed drones. The Bundestag discourse revealed a plethora of relevant aspects whose interaction contributed to the emergence of armed drone acquisition in Germany and the prospect of their employment. These include clashing arguments and narratives (on legal, ethical, military, and industrial-economic matters), discursive dynamics (i.e., flooding the debate with other issues, LAWS making armed drones seem more normal), partisan politics (i.e, rigid or changing party positions), external shocks (i.e, the scandals around the Euro Hawk and Ramstein, erupting wars, and attacks on German soldiers), democratic politics (i.e, changes in the parliamentary party set-up and in government), strategic culture (e.g., a military-skeptic public), and foreign policy (e.g., unresolved questions of German foreign and security policy). Therefore, this dissertation contributes to a better understanding of the complexities underlying such controversial decisions. For this reason, its relevance extends beyond Political Science, potentially appealing also to students and scholars in Sociology, Political Communication, Philosophy, and related disciplines (compare 1.2).

Future research could build on multiple aspects of this dissertation as it was very explorative in its setup. One approach could be to expand the assessment of the drone discourse to include non-partisan agents outside of parliament. Due to the limited scope of this dissertation, which focused on an initial exploration of the parliamentary drone discourse, a broader perspective was not possible. Nevertheless, an in-depth examination of how parliamentary debates relate to drone discourses of other communities could be rewarding, especially when keeping a discourse analytical approach. Such inquiries could illustrate how ideas presented in the parliament interact with those of NGOs, such as the drone-skeptical German Drone Campaign, or institutional discourses within the German armed forces.

Another direction could be to take the insights from my single case study and integrate them into a comparative analysis. The possibilities here are manifold. For example, future research could compare my findings from the parliamentary debates with the larger public debate in Germany at that time, perhaps through a media analysis of press or social media. One could

also compare the parliamentary debate on armed drones, for instance the procurement and proliferation aspects, to Bundestag discussions on other weapons systems, such as the Future Combat Air System (FCAS) or the system succeeding the Tornado fighter jet. On an international scale, it would also be worthwhile to systematically compare the arguments and dynamics of the German debate with those in other countries and look for discursive spillover effects.

My dissertation may intrigue normative scholars to study the drone debate in terms of deliberative democracy and deliberation in parliamentary debates. Indicators of the quality of deliberation in debates include the provision of justificatory reasoning, notions of a common good, respectful handling counterarguments, and constructive behavior, such as seeking joint solutions. A preliminary review of my analytical findings suggests that, in earlier years, drone opponents justified and explained their position on armed drones more effectively than advocates did. Similarly, while skeptics argued that this weapon system would not be for the common good (because Germany might "slide into" a US-style drone warfare), the drone advocates focused narrowly on the well-being of German soldiers rather than the entire population. Towards the end of the debate, the tone became harsher, with the Conservatives and the Left Party accusing each other of bad behavior and malicious intent. Finally, as Chapter 4 on the "Two Worlds of Meaning" demonstrated, stiff extreme poles characterized the debate for a long time. Evidently, the quality of deliberation in the drone debate was not very high. However, since this dissertation did not approach the debate through a deliberative lens, one would have to conduct a thorough inquiry of such kind for a substantial judgement.

Alternatively, one could zoom in on the parties. In parliament, it would be intriguing to reveal how inner-party dynamics and strategic interactions contributed to the final position presented during debates. One could conduct interviews to learn more about this, for example by examining how parties choose who got to speak and who did not, or how the PG leadership moderated internal party dissent. Outside of parliament, one could carry out process-tracing to track how the parties internally developed a partisan drone policy. The Greens and the SPD would be the most interesting cases here, because they changed their position. Future research could inquire why exactly they did so. Were they persuaded by the pro-drone arguments supported by external circumstances, such as the increasing proliferation of armed drones, or the operational need to defend German forces? Was there an inner-party shift in foreign policy culture and security norms? Did the drone-friendly wing of the party win over the drone-skeptical wing in an internal power struggle, or did certain individuals in the partisan leadership turn the tide? Or, did armed drones simply lose their edge in light of other pressing policy areas, such as

LAWS or migration? While my dissertation touched on possible reasons, answering these questions in detail is a project for future studies. As much as uncertainty permeated the drone debate, one thing is clear: the drone controversy will continue to fascinate.

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Appendix 1: Google Search Summary

Rising German Google searches of the term “Unmanned Aerial Vehicle” (“Unbemanntes Luftfahrzeug”) illustrate a rise in public interest in the issue of military drones between 2007 and 2019.

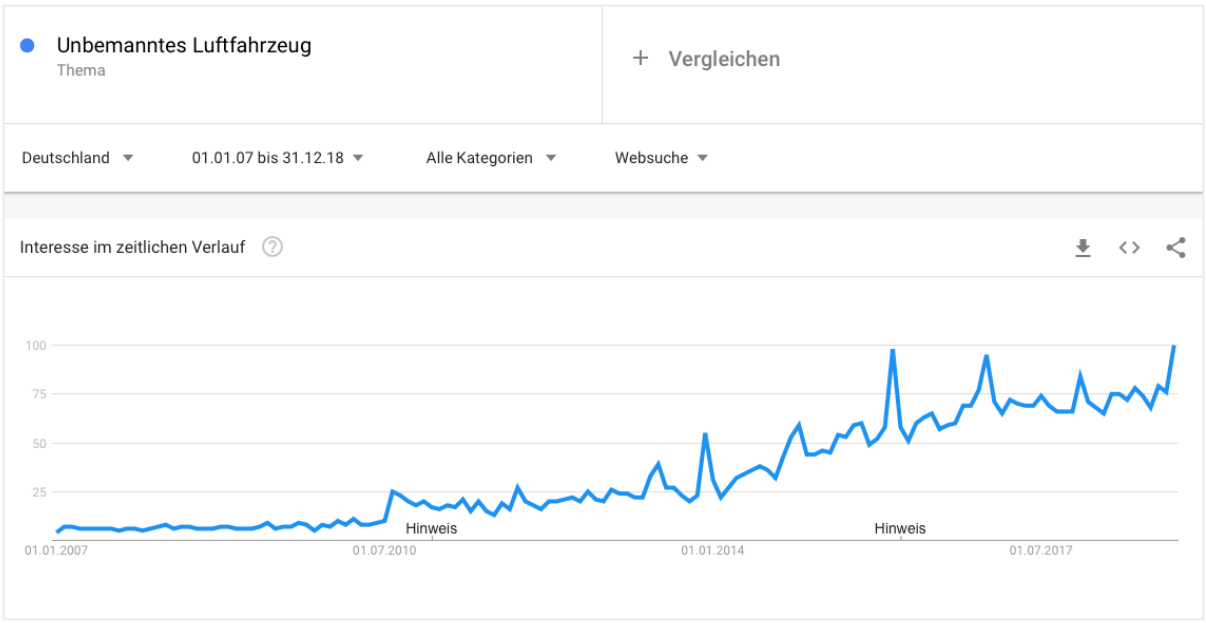

Figure 5: Google Search Summary “Unmanned Aerial Vehicle” (Germany, 2007-2019)
Source: Google Trends

Appendix 2: Chronology of Drone-Related Events

The table above presents an overview of significant events and incidents as related to armed and unarmed military drones between 2009 and 2022 (Table 16).

2009	September: "Kunduz bombing" in Afghanistan, ordered by Colonel Klein
	September: German federal election
	October: The German armed forces lease three unarmed Heron 1 ISR drones from Israel for the first time
2010	March: First employment of unarmed Heron 1 in Afghanistan
	April: Taliban kill three German soldiers in an ambush in Afghanistan during the Good Friday Battle ("Karfreitagsgefecht")
	October: US drone strike kills German citizen in Pakistan
2011	/
2012	February: US drone kills second German citizen in Pakistan
	March: US drone kills third German citizen in Pakistan
	August: Defense Minister Thomas de Maizière states he wants armed drones for the German military
2013	March: 149 organizations launch the campaign "no combat drones!" ("Keine Kampfdrohnen!")
	May: Acquisition process of the unarmed Euro Hawk drone officially terminated
	May: Media reports on US drone strike operations going through US Air Base Ramstein in Germany
	September: German federal election; FDP fails to reenter the Bundestag
	November: Coalition agreement between CDU/CSU and SPD states before getting armed drones the government would have to examine questions of international and constitutional law, security, and ethics
2014	February: President Joachim Gauck, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD), and Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen (CDU) launch debate on a new German foreign and security policy at the Munich Security Conference
	February: Russia invades the Ukrainian Crimean Peninsula

	July: Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen states she supports the acquisition of "armable" drones for the German military
2015	/
2016	January: Bundeswehr wants to lease the unarmed but armable Heron TP drone
	November: First employment of the unarmed Heron 1 in Mali
2017	June: SPD refuses to sign the lease for armable Heron TP drones, which would have included the purchase of ammunition
	September: German federal election. AfD and FDP enter the Bundestag
2018	February: Coalition agreement between CDU/CSU and SPD states before deciding on armed drones the German Bundestag would have to consider questions of international law, constitutional law, and ethics
	June: Lease of five unarmed but armable Heron TP drones
-end of main analysis-	
2019	August: Taliban attack Camp Pamir near Kunduz, North Afghanistan, where German soldiers are stationed. One Afghan soldier dies
2020	February: Second attack on Camp Pamir in Afghanistan within twelve months
	September: Nagorno-Karabakh conflict breaks out between Armenia and Azerbaijan
2021	March: SPD leadership board launches a party internal working group on drone armament
	June: Green party congress votes in favor of supporting drone armament
	June: Suicide attack injured twelve German soldiers during a patrol in Mali
	September: German federal election
	November: Coalition agreement between SPD, Greens, and FDP endorses drone armament under certain conditions
2022	February: Russia invades Ukraine
	April: Purchase of missiles to arm Heron TP drones

Table 16: Chronology of Drone-Related Events
Source: Author's own work

Appendix 3: Overview of Ministers

Between 2009 and 2018, there were three different Ministers of Defense (all CDU and CSU) and four different Ministers of Foreign Affairs (SPD and FDP).

Year	Minister of Defense	Minister of Foreign Affairs
2009	Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg (CSU)	Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD)
2011	Thomas de Maizière (CDU)	Guido Westerwelle (FDP)
2013	Thomas de Maizière (CDU)	Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD)
2015	Ursula von der Leyen (CDU)	Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD)
2017	Ursula von der Leyen (CDU)	Sigmar Gabriel (SPD)
2018	Ursula von der Leyen (CDU)	Heiko Maas (SPD)

Table 17: Overview of German Ministers of Defense and Ministers of Foreign Affairs 2009–2018
Source: Author's own work

Appendix 4: The Main Contributors of the Debate

Noting the most frequent debate contributors in the parliamentary debates on drones, the two speakers who stood out the most were from the Left Party. Andrej Hunko was by far the most engaged one, followed by Jan van Aken, Spokesman on foreign affairs. Together they co-initiated numerous minor interpellations ("Kleine Anfragen", see 3.2.3). Among the Greens MPs, Hans-Cristian Ströbele and Agnieszka Brugger, Green Spokeswoman for security policy and disarmament (2013–2017) and later Deputy Chairwoman for foreign affairs, defense and peace policy (since 2018) were prominent speakers. Similarly involved were CSU MP Christian Schmidt, who was also Parliamentary State Secretary at the Ministry of Defense (MOD) (2005–2013) and his CDU colleague Dr. Ralf Brauksiepe, Parliamentary Secretary at the MOD (2013–2018). From the SPD, notable speakers were the MPs Dr. Rolf Mützenich, SPD Spokesman on foreign policy (2009–2013) and Deputy Chairman for foreign affairs, defense policy, and human rights (2013–2019) as well as Michael Roth, Minister of State in the Foreign Office (2013–2021). From 2014 on, there were far less speech instances by Mützenich, who belongs to the left wing within the SPD. Instead, his party colleague Rainer Arnold became prominent, who, as Spokesman on defense policy (2002–2017) represented a defense-friendlier perspective. Noteworthy contributors from the FDP included the MPs and Ministers of State at the Foreign Office Cornelia Pieper (2009–2013) and Michael Link (2012–2013).

Appendix 5: Cluster of Recurring Topics

To gain an initial understanding of the data, I applied a preliminary categorization to analyze the Bundestag documents. This approach provided a clustered overview of the subjects under debate. The coding scheme was structured in two levels: Level 1 captured the overarching topics (denoted as T1, T2, T3 etc.) while Level 2 reflected more specific issues (denoted as T1 a, T1 b, T1 c, and so on). Level 2 was defined as follows:

T1) German military drone program

T1 a) Military operation

Country of drone operation (e.g., Afghanistan or Mali), necessity for having and using military drones, mission type or task that it performs or should perform for the Bundeswehr (e.g., providing intelligence, finding IEDs, airstrikes), overarching purpose.

T1 b) Bundeswehr

Military capabilities (e.g., equipment, infrastructure, "capability gap"), performance of current drone systems (e.g., crashes), training of drone operator, rules of engagement.

T2) German military drone procurement

T2 a) Acquisition

Purchase of military drone systems for Bundeswehr (e.g., Euro Hawk, Heron), arming German drones or purchasing armament (e.g., Hellfire missiles, laser-guided bombs), respective administrative procurement process, non-acquisition of (armed) drones.

T2 b) Capability-building

Current capability-building initiatives in Germany or in Europe such as R&D projects or security cooperation efforts (e.g., EuroMale, European Remotely Piloted Aerial System Steering Group), budget and finances (e.g., Defense Budget, National Budget).

T2 c) Defense and aerospace industry

Defense and aerospace market (e.g., state of competitiveness, securing local jobs), companies of the defense and aerospace industry (e.g., Airbus, Rheinmetal, Diehl), lobbies.

T3) Military drone programs of other actors

T3 a) United States

US military drone program, US drone strikes, drone operations by the CIA, the "War Against Terror".

T3 b) Not United States

Drone program of and drone use by the EU (e.g., within the scope of EU security operations, such as EU NAVFOR Somalia Operation ATALANTA), and by individual states such as the UK, France, Israel or Turkey.

T3 c) Non-State Actors

By (hostile) non-state actor groups, especially Islamist terror organizations such as Al Qaeda, ISIL, Al-Shabab etc.

T4) Germany's international relations

T4 a) Bilateral – United States

US-German relations such as the security and intelligence cooperation (incl. references to Ramstein, AFRICOM, and NSA, congruence with German law)-

T4 b) Bilateral – not United States

Relations between Germany and states other than the US (e.g., close allies or countries of drone operation).

T4 c) Multilateral relations

Relations between Germany and at least two other states as well as with or within international organizations (e.g., UN, NATO, OSCE).

T5) International Law

T5 a) Targeted killing

Killing of terrorists, extralegal killing, capture-or-kill operations, target selection criteria, kill-lists, executing suspected terrorists without trial.

T5 b) State sovereignty

Violation of state sovereignty in case of non-declared warzone or not,

T5 c) Human Rights and Just War Theory

Violation or protection of human rights, effect of drone strikes on civilians (e.g., fewer or too much collateral damage), Just War Theory (e.g., violation of symmetry and proportionality principles).

T6) International arms dynamics

T6 a) Proliferation

Vertical proliferation alias technological advances (e.g., increasing automatization of tasks and processes, LAWS, ability to fly in drone-swarms etc.), horizontal proliferation

alias growing number of state and non-state drone users, implications and risks of increasing proliferation (e.g., delimitation of warfare, arms build-up, arms race or spiral), dual-use potential, trade and export of drone systems or drone parts.

T6 b) International arms control

Regulation by treaties and agreements (e.g., MTCR, United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA), and other treaties), cooperation by trust-building measures (e.g., transparency of capabilities, R&D control limitation of arsenals, verification), international drone ban.

T 6 c) Disarmament

Calls for the reduction of military capabilities in Germany and/or other states, for example reducing the size of the forces, decrease number of missiles or drones.

Abstract

To Procure or Not Procure: The German Parliamentary Debates on Armed Military Drone Policy

In Germany the acquisition of armed military drones for the Bundeswehr has been one of the most controversial security policy decisions of the past decade. In 2012, the Defense Minister and the Bundeswehr publicly stated that they wanted armed drones. But this demand was met with strong opposition in the parliament and elsewhere. What followed was a very long and messy policy-process. Eventually, about a decade after Germany had acquired large, unarmed drones, the result was to lease (but not buy) five "armable" (but not armed) drones. How do we make sense of this immensely long process that led to this compromise? How did the use of armed military drones emerge as a political option in the German parliamentary debates from January 2009 to December 2018? To answer this research question, I used a discourse-analytical approach. The assessment of the parliamentary drone debates comprises well over 500 text documents drawn from the online archive of the German Bundestag.

The analysis uses the concept of a "discursive ecosystem". It allows to shed light on the dynamic interaction of a discourse with its context, including both ideational and material structural conditions in theorizing. As a research procedure, I traced how the German parliamentary debate on military drones developed over time by conducting a qualitative in-depth analysis of the debate content, examining the represented meanings-in-use of drone warfare, the articulated policy options, and the discursive constructions of Germany's role in the world. In an epilogue, I briefly describe the developments after the main observation period until the fall of 2021, when the newly elected government decided to allow drone armament and strikes under certain conditions. The analysis shows that the parliamentary drone debate was highly complex, emotional, and politicized. However, armed drones slowly emerged as a political option due to the gradual normalization of drone technology, a lack of new arguments, shifting discursive dominance, a new constellation of parliamentary agents, revised party positions, and influential trends and events within the discursive context.

Zusammenfassung

Beschaffen oder nicht beschaffen: Die deutschen Parlamentsdebatten über bewaffnete militärische Drohnen

In Deutschland war die Beschaffung bewaffneter militärischer Drohnen für die Bundeswehr eine der umstrittensten sicherheitspolitischen Entscheidungen des vergangenen Jahrzehnts. Im Jahr 2012 erklärten der Verteidigungsminister und die Bundeswehr öffentlich, dass sie bewaffnete Drohnen wollen. Doch diese Forderung stieß auf heftigen Widerstand im Parlament und anderswo. Was folgte, war ein sehr langer und chaotischer politischer Prozess. Erst etwa ein Jahrzehnt nachdem Deutschland große, unbewaffnete Drohnen angeschafft hatte, wurden schließlich fünf „bewaffnungsfähige“ (aber nicht bewaffnete) Drohnen zu geleast (aber nicht gekauft). Wie lässt sich dieser immens lange Prozess, der in diesem Kompromiss mündete, verstehen? Wie hat sich der Einsatz bewaffneter militärischer Drohnen in den deutschen Parlamentsdebatten von Januar 2009 bis Dezember 2018 als politische Option entwickelt? Um diese Forschungsfrage zu beantworten, habe ich einen diskursanalytischen Ansatz gewählt. Die Auswertung der parlamentarischen Drohnendebatten umfasste weit über 500 Textdokumente aus dem Online-Archiv des Deutschen Bundestages.

Die Analyse verwendet das Konzept des „diskursiven Ökosystems“. Dieses ermöglicht, die dynamische Interaktion eines Diskurses mit seinem Kontext zu beleuchten und sowohl ideelle als auch materielle strukturelle Bedingungen in die Theoriebildung einzubeziehen. Im Rahmen meiner Forschungsarbeit lege ich dar, wie sich die deutsche Bundestagsdebatte über militärische Drohnen im Laufe der Zeit entwickelt hat. Dazu habe ich eine qualitative Tiefenanalyse der Diskursinhalte durchgeführt und die verschiedenen Bedeutungen von Drohnenkriegsführung, die artikulierten politischen Optionen sowie die diskursiven Konstruktionen der Rolle Deutschlands in der Welt untersucht. In einem Epilog beschreibe ich kurz die Entwicklungen nach dem Hauptbeobachtungszeitraum bis zum Herbst 2021, als die neu gewählte Regierung beschloss, Drohnenbewaffnung und -einsätze unter bestimmten Bedingungen zu erlauben. Die Analyse zeigt, dass die parlamentarische Drohnendebatte sehr komplex, emotional und politisiert war. Die allmähliche Normalisierung von Drohnentechnologie, der Mangel an neuen Argumenten, Verschiebungen diskursiver Dominanz, neue Konstellationen parlamentarischer Akteure, veränderte Parteipositionen und einflussreiche Entwicklungen und Ereignisse im diskursiven Kontext führten dazu, dass die Einführung und der Einsatz bewaffneter Drohnen jedoch langsam zu einer politischen Option wurden.

Erklärung

Hiermit erkläre ich, Johanna Polle, dass ich keine kommerzielle Promotionsberatung in Anspruch genommen habe. Die Arbeit wurde nicht schon einmal in einem früheren Promotionsverfahren angenommen oder als ungenügend beurteilt.

Berlin, den 17. Juli 2025 _____
Ort/Datum Unterschrift Doktorand/in

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Eidesstattliche Versicherung:

Ich, Johanna Polle, versichere an Eides statt, dass ich die Dissertation mit dem Titel:

„To Procure or Not Procure: The German Parliamentary Debates on Armed Military Drone Policy"

selbst und bei einer Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Wissenschaftlerinnen oder Wissenschaftlern gemäß den beigefügten Darlegungen nach § 6 Abs. 3 der Promotionsordnung der Fakultät für Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften vom 18. Januar 2017 verfasst habe. Andere als die angegebenen Hilfsmittel habe ich nicht benutzt.

Berlin, den 17. Juli 2025 _____
Ort/Datum Unterschrift Doktorand/in