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**THESES**

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**Germany on the Path toward a Post-Civilian Power: Arms  
Export Policy within the Framework of German Foreign  
and Security Policy (2005-2024)**

Doctoral (PhD) dissertation

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## **Background and relevance of the topic**

The Federal Republic of Germany has traditionally been regarded as a stable and dominant economic and political power in Europe, yet its foreign and security policy is marked by numerous contradictions, often making it the subject of criticism. In academic literature and press reports, Germany's foreign and security policy is most frequently discussed in terms of its European policy, bilateral relations, or the operational role of the Bundeswehr. One of the most controversial aspects of German foreign and security policy is its arms export policy, which has attracted significant international and domestic attention, particularly in connection with the War in Ukraine. In Germany, unlike in many other countries with significant defence industries, arms export policy is the focus of almost endless ethical, moral, and political debates. It is also a highly sensitive issue in both domestic and foreign policy, which in 1992 even led to the resignation of a defence minister and has repeatedly tested Germany's reliability as an ally. Another peculiarity of the arms export policy is the government's general secrecy, which falls within the executive branch's competence, while information about the background of individual political decisions is often available only from news reports based on leaked information. The German public holds a decidedly negative view of arms exports, and decision-makers are usually forced to defend themselves constantly against criticism from the opposition and civil society.

Developments since the late 2000s have taken arms export policy to a new level. Export values have reached new records, and decision-makers have increasingly argued that arms exports are a foreign and security policy tool that contributes to the maintenance of the national defence industry. Although the political leadership continued to emphasise the principle of a restrictive arms export policy, German opposition parties and various civil society organisations sharply criticised the new direction. Russia's war against Ukraine and the “turning point” (*Zeitenwende*) announced on 27 February 2022 led to the biggest shift in arms export policy to date. Germany is now openly supporting a state fighting a war of self-defence against a nuclear power with major conventional weapons.

At the same time, the international security environment is changing rapidly. The crisis of the liberal international order, the symptoms of which have been apparent since 2008, is having a profound impact on German decision-makers' perception of their country's role, as Germany is among the states that have benefited most from the liberal international order that emerged after the Cold War. Between 2014 and 2016, German decision-makers sought to define a new foreign and security policy, projecting an image of a Germany ready for action and willing to

engage in crisis management. Subsequently, Russia's attack on Ukraine directly confronted German policy-makers with the reality that the post-Cold War cooperative international security order was transforming into a new confrontational order, necessitating a further shift in foreign and security policy (Major & Mölling, 2022).

The examination of Germany's foreign policy and arms export policy is particularly relevant today. Owing to the country's geopolitical position and power capabilities, its international role and behaviour decisively shape not only the European Union's influence and capacity for action in world politics, but also the balance of power within the alliance to which Hungary belongs. As one of the world's leading arms exporters and a military power, Germany's arms export policy affects the dynamics of the international arms trade and European defence integration. Hungary's economy and defence industrial base are largely built on its relationship with Germany, making it essential for Hungarian strategic thinking to monitor and deepen its understanding of changes in Germany's international role.

## Formulation and delimitation of the scientific problem

The dissertation analyses the change in Germany's role concept and arms export policy between 2005 and 2024, using role theory and liberal sub-systematic approaches to foreign policy analysis (Kiss J. 2009, p. 312; 324-336; 382-384). During this period, Germany underwent a remarkable transformation. After the internal economic crisis of the Schröder era, Germany, under Angela Merkel, once again became the leading power in the European Union (Giegerich & Terhalle, 2021, p. 7). However, by 2023–2024, in the post-Merkel era, Germany was again described as the "sick man of Europe " (The Economist, 2023; Wolf, 2024a; Elliott, 2024). At the same time, there were significant changes in arms export policy. While German society showed little interest in the topic in the mid-2000s, the delivery of highly advanced weapons systems to war-torn Ukraine sparked lively public debate in 2023–2024 (Rinke, 2024; Knight, 2023). At the end of 2024, the "traffic light" coalition government formed by the SPD, FDP and Greens/Alliance 90 collapsed, and in May 2025, a new government led by Friedrich Merz was formed. Furthermore, Germany's first genuine national security strategy was published in 2023, which may indicate the development of strategic thinking.

The dissertation topic is divided into two periods: the first covers the period from 2005 to 2013, while the second focuses on 2014 to 2024. I consider 2014 a turning point because, 15 years after the Kosovo War, decision-makers made another attempt to strategically reorient Germany (Maull, 2015b, p. 327). Although the *Zeitenwende* announced on 27 February 2022 is now regarded as the real turning point, changes in German strategic thinking, albeit limited, had already begun after 2014 (Csiki Varga & Etl, 2020; Csiki Varga & Altdorfer, 2021; Hettyey, 2015a).

It is important to note that this dissertation has been written during a period in German history when the country has been experiencing extremely intense political, economic, and social changes, as well as internal and external crises. Although I endeavoured to adhere to the research time frame of the research, I considered it essential to occasionally step outside the examined interval to convey the changes that had taken place in foreign and security policy. I completed my research at the end of 2024, but I used some important data that had just been published for 2025 (such as the individual licence values in the national arms export reports). In addition to the period under review, the research also briefly addresses some of the more significant developments in 2025 and early 2026, such as the Merz government's arms export policy, and provides a brief historical overview of the period between 1945 and 2005, which is

essential for understanding and examining the German defence industry and arms exports in greater depth. I completed the thesis itself in February 2026.

### **Research objectives**

In line with the above, the research objectives of the dissertation are as follows:

**O1)** To examine Germany's main role concept between 2005 and 2024 based on role theory in foreign policy analysis.

**O2)** To examine Germany's arms export policy between 2005 and 2024.

**O3)** To examine the influence of the defence industry and public opinion on the role performance of German arms export policy.

In addition, the thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of the external and internal drivers of German foreign and security policy and to explore the opportunities and challenges of the European defence industry.

### **Research questions**

**Q1)** Did Germany's role concept change between 2014 and 2024 compared to the period from 2005 to 2013?

**Q2)** What role does Germany's arms export policy play between 2014 and 2024?

**Q3)** How do defence industry actors and public opinion influence the role performance of German arms export policy?

### **Research hypotheses**

Based on the research questions and objectives outlined above, the following hypotheses can be formulated.

*First hypothesis:* The speeches delivered by leading politicians at the 50th Munich Security Conference in 2014, the review process (*Review 2014 – Außenpolitik Weiterdenken*), conducted by the Federal Foreign Office (*Auswärtiges Amt*) and the foreign policy ambitions formulated during the *Zeitenwende* suggest that decision-makers have developed a role concept that can be described as post-civilian power. In this concept, a realistic worldview, power politics, military force and a foreign policy based on national interests become more prominent. However, the guiding principles of civilian power, such as the support of human rights, international norms

and participation in multilateral international institutions, have remained. The structural change in the international order played a key role in this shift, fundamentally determining Germany's response. Based on this, my first hypothesis is as follows:

**H1)** *Germany's role concept changed after 2014, which can be described as post-civilian power.*

This hypothesis is not self-evident, as some argue that after 27 February 2022, the civilian power explanation became completely obsolete (Fix, 2024, pp. 44, 47; Kleine-Brockhoff, 2025), while others believe that it remains relevant (Mauil, 2025).

*The second hypothesis:* According to role theory, states have a primary role and additional auxiliary roles (see subsection 3.1 for details). It can be assumed that decision-makers adapted their arms export policy to the primary role concept that emerged after 2014. Due to the change in strategic thinking, decision-makers now apply arms export policy as an integral part of foreign and security policy, based on well-defined strategic considerations, while the legal and political framework remains restrictive and Germany actively seeks to promote the international regulation and harmonisation of arms exports. The second hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

**H2)** *Germany's role in arms export policy changed and reflected the role concept that emerged after 2014.*

*Third hypothesis:* It can be assumed that in a country such as Germany, which has an advanced defence industry but is also a democracy, defence industry actors and public opinion have an identifiable influence on the arms export policy that is actually implemented. Based on this, I formulate the third hypothesis as follows:

**H3)** *The influence of public opinion and the defence industry can be identified in the role performance of German arms export policy.*

This hypothesis is not self-evident, given that in Germany, due to its militaristic past prior to 1945, the defence industry and the state are separated, defence companies are predominantly privately owned, and defence products do not constitute the majority of German exports. Furthermore, arms export policy falls within the competence of the government and is subject

to strict secrecy for reasons of national security. It is therefore likely that public opinion has no real influence on arms export policy decisions.

## **Methodology**

The research used a mixed qualitative and quantitative methodology, which included content analysis, analysis of strategic documents, interviews, testing of foreign policy models, and analysis of various indices and data.

### *Examining changes in role concept using qualitative and quantitative content analysis tools*

To identify Germany's role concepts between 2005 and 2024, I used content analysis, a method frequently employed in foreign policy analysis research, utilising both qualitative and quantitative tools (Holsti, 1970; Breuning, 2019; Hettyey, 2022; Le Prestre, 1997; Hansel & Möller, 2015). I applied content analysis to address the first research question: "*Did Germany's role concept change between 2014 and 2024 compared to the period between 2005 and 2013?*" The aim of the content analysis was to determine how German policy-makers perceived their country's international role during the two periods. The content analysis covered 74 sources, including four foreign and security policy documents, five coalition agreements, 62 speeches by leading politicians, one press interview with a leading politician, and two articles written by leading politicians. The sources were in German and English. When selecting the sources, I aimed to choose those with content as general as possible, avoiding a narrow focus on specific areas of foreign policy, to better discern the decision-makers' understanding of their role. In the first step of the content analysis, I coded the text contexts, dividing them into categories and role concepts. In the second step, I considered how many sources each role concept appeared in and ranked the role concepts accordingly. I conducted the content analysis manually.

### *Methodological considerations for the examination of arms exports*

In this thesis, I use the terms 'international arms trade' and 'arms exports and imports', taking into account the recommendations of the European Union's official terminology database, IATE (*Interactive Terminology for Europe*), for the international trade, export and import of military equipment. As Germany does not possess weapons of mass destruction, this paper primarily examines the export of conventional weapons and, where relevant, touches upon the export of dual-use goods.

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The primary sources for examining German arms exports are the arms export reports (*Bericht der Bundesregierung über ihre Exportpolitik für konventionelle Rüstungsgüter*) published annually and semi-annually by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (between 2022 and 2024 by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action). The German arms export reports distinguish between "weapons of war" (*Kriegswaffen*) and other military equipment (*sonstige Rüstungsgüter*). Weapons of war are military equipment which, either alone or in combination with other systems, are capable of destroying or harming people and are used in armed conflicts. The list of weapons of war includes weapons of mass destruction, which Germany has renounced manufacturing, possessing and producing, as well as 11 categories of conventional weapons. A shortcoming of the German arms export reports is that they disclose only the value of deliveries for weapons of war, while for other military equipment they disclose only the value of licences. A further problem is that governments supply more equipment over a longer period under so-called open licences, which also makes transparency more difficult (Freeman, 2018, pp. 18–19).

The most authoritative source in the literature is the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Arms Transfers Database, which is why I rely on it most in my analysis of German arms exports, alongside national reports. The SIPRI database does not include small arms and light weapons, only heavy weapons and their components. SIPRI uses a trend indicator value (TIV) to measure the volume of arms trade, reflecting the military capability of the weapon rather than its monetary value. The trend indicator value can be used to assess trends in the international arms trade, broken down by period, exporter, and importer. SIPRI calculates the volume of transfers from the trend indicator value and the number of arms delivered in a given year (SIPRI, n.d.-a). Despite its shortcomings, the SIPRI trend indicator system is the best available objective quantitative measurement tool for the international arms trade (Freeman, 2018, p. 4). To examine the trade in small arms and light weapons, I use reports available up to 2020 from the Small Arms Survey, an independent research institute based in Geneva.

### *Testing foreign policy models*

To determine whether Germany's arms export policy was consistent with its primary international role between 2005 and 2024, I assess the explanatory power of basic foreign policy concepts, also known as foreign policy models, based on the theories presented in Chapter 3 of the dissertation, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. These basic concepts are civilian power (*Zivilmacht*), derived from constructivism; the power state (*Machtstaat*), based on neorealist premises; the trading state (*Handelsstaat*), grounded in the theory of commercial liberalism; and geo-economic power, based on commercial realism. Foreign policy models reflect the concept of the actor and its expected behaviour in arms export policy. A foreign policy model is an analytical tool from which behavioural patterns can be inferred and whose validity can be confirmed or refuted in the context of arms export policy (Horn, 2016, pp. 9–10).

I examine foreign policy models across five time phases between 2005 and 2024 to avoid significant distortions and better track changes. Due to the extraordinary volume of data, I do not examine all target countries but instead focus on the ten main target countries according to SIPRI trend indicator values for German arms exports in each phase. Consequently, my analysis may not fully reflect reality, but certain trends are clearly evident. The study aims to assess the extent to which foreign policy models apply to the ten most important destination countries. I begin my analysis of the data somewhat arbitrarily in 2006, as the first Merkel government took office on 22 November 2005 and the Fragile States Index assessments are also available from 2006 onwards. The division is as follows: Phase I 2006–2009, Phase II 2010–2013, Phase III 2014–2017, Phase IV 2018–2021, Phase V 2022–2024. As the theory of geo-economic power cannot be examined using the empirical research method applied, I use the indicators of the related trader state model as a basis and then conduct the analysis with the help of primary and secondary literature.

The indicators used to examine the arms export policies of foreign policy models are summarised in the table below:

Foreign policy model	Dependent variable	Independent variable	
		Indicator I	Indicator II
<b>Civilian power</b>	SIPRI trend indicator value	Average of Freedom House CL and PR values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Free" country</li> </ul>	Average Fragile States Index score <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable: between 0 and 29.9</li> <li>• Stable: 30-59.9</li> </ul>
<b>Power state</b>		The target country is an ally or security partner (EU and NATO member states, Japan, Switzerland, New Zealand, Australia, Israel, Ukraine from 2022)	
<b>Trading state</b>		Annual share of total German exports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium relevance: share between 1 and 3.9%</li> <li>• High relevance: above 4%</li> </ul>	Median annual GDP growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stable growth: between 2.1% and 5.0%</li> <li>• Strong growth: above 5.0%</li> </ul>
<b>Geo-economic power</b>		Annual share of total German exports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium relevance: share between 1% and 3.9%</li> <li>• High relevance: above 4%</li> </ul>	Median annual GDP growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stable growth: between 2.1% and 5.0%</li> <li>• Strong growth: above 5.0%</li> </ul>

1. Table: Dependent and independent variables of foreign policy models in the empirical analysis of arms export policy (own compilation)

I supplement the quantitative analysis of foreign policy models with further analysis aligned with the theoretical criteria applied to arms export policy, drawing on coalition agreements, security policy documents, and secondary literature. I also provide a brief outlook for 2025 to illustrate the development and consolidation of trends already emerging in arms export policy.

#### *Analysis of strategic documents*

To address both the first and second research questions, I analysed five coalition agreements and four strategic documents produced between 2005 and 2024. For the first research question, I identified Germany's most important foreign policy objectives from these documents. For the second research question, I compiled the security policy, economic, and normative aspects of arms export policy and arms control.

#### *Semi-structured qualitative interviews*

To address the second and third research questions, I conducted four semi-structured qualitative interviews with experts employed by four German or Germany-based security and defence companies, either in Germany or online, in August 2025. The main criteria for selecting interview participants were employment at a relevant company and sufficient experience and knowledge of German government agencies and armed forces, as well as international partners. The participants had previously worked in armament programmes, companies dealing with dual-use technologies, and international organisations. I labelled the interviews with simple

serial numbers, indicating the section (paragraph) of the interview. Information on the interviews is presented in the table below:

Interview code	Position of interview subject	Organisation	Date of interview	Place of interview
Interview_001	security expert	international consortium	August 2025	Germany
Interview_002	security policy expert	German private company	August 2025	Germany
Interview_003	space industry expert	German private company	August 2025	Germany
Interview_004	security expert	international consortium	August 2025	Online (Germany)

2. Table Information on interviews (own compilation)

*Indices for examining the defence industry*

To assess the impact of *the* German defence industry on arms export policy, I used Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), the Government Defence Integrity Index (GDI) and the Defence Companies Index on Anti-Corruption and Corporate Transparency.

*Other statistics and databases*

In addition to the data mentioned above, I used various statistics and databases related to specific areas of foreign and security policy, such as NATO data on defence expenditure (Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries), OECD statistics on official development assistance, OSCE reports, and, for UN contributions, the annual reports of the German Foreign Ministry. I assessed Germany's humanitarian and military support to Ukraine using the Ukraine Support Tracker database of the Kiel Institute for the World Economy (*Das Kiel Institut für Weltwirtschaft*). I used a total of seventeen different opinion polls to examine public attitudes towards arms exports. The most relevant opinion polls were conducted by the German Defence Technology Association (*Gesellschaft für Wehrtechnik, DWT*) and the Bundeswehr Centre for Military History and Social Sciences (*Zentrum für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften der Bundeswehr, ZMSBw*).

The research methods used are summarised in the table below:

Main research methods	Qualitative/quantitative	Source type	Main characteristics
Content analysis	Qualitative and quantitative	Primary	74 sources (62 speeches by politicians, 2 articles, 1 press interview, 4 foreign and security policy documents, 5 coalition agreements)
Testing foreign policy models	Qualitative and quantitative	Primary and secondary	SIPRI, Freedom House, Fragile States Index, UN Comtrade, World Bank data
Analysis of arms trade data	Quantitative	Primary	SIPRI, German national reports, Small Arms Survey data
Analysis of strategic documents	Qualitative	Primary	4 foreign and security policy documents, 5 coalition agreements
Interviews	Qualitative	Primary	4 semi-structured qualitative interviews
Defence industry indices	Quantitative	Primary	Transparency International corruption, defence integration, and defence company anti-corruption and transparency indices
Other statistics and databases	Quantitative	Primary and secondary	Data from international organisations, opinion polls

3Table: Main research methods used in the dissertation (own compilation)

### Summary of the doctoral thesis

In the introduction, I outlined the background and relevance of the research, the research problem, the objectives, questions, and hypotheses, the limitations of the research, and presented the relevant literature on the topic.

In the second chapter, I described the research methods, including content analysis, methodological examination of arms exports, testing of foreign policy models, interviews, and other quantitative and qualitative methods.

In the third chapter, I presented the research's theoretical framework. First, I described the role theory concepts which are central to the research and explained how the interaction between changes in the international order and states' role concepts can be interpreted. I detailed the concept of civilian power based on role theory, including its development and modifications. I then presented foreign policy models based on theories of international relations as applied to Germany, and at the end of the chapter, I applied these foreign policy models to the interpretation of arms export policy.

In the fourth chapter, I addressed whether Germany's role concept changed between 2014 and 2024 compared to the period from 2005 to 2013. Using content analysis, I examined 74 political speeches, strategic documents, and coalition agreements, identifying 22 role concepts between 2005 and 2013 and 24 after 2014. I then described how the five most frequently occurring role concepts after 2014 were reflected in foreign policy practice, that is, in role performance, and finally, briefly outlined the changes in other role concepts.

In the fifth chapter, I addressed the research question of whether Germany's arms export policy had changed and to what extent it followed the post-2014 role concept. First, I provided a brief historical overview of the development of West Germany's and then reunified Germany's arms export policy from 1945 to the 2000s. In the second step, I presented the current national and international background of German arms export regulation, the decision-making mechanism, and the role of parliamentary control and transparency. In the third step, I outlined the main trends in German arms exports based on data from the SIPRI Arms Trade Database, the Small Arms Survey, German national reports, and the annual reports of the Joint Conference Church and Development (*Gemeinsame Konferenz Kirche und Entwicklung*, GKKE) working group. In the fourth step, I examined the validity of foreign policy models applicable to arms export policy using quantitative and qualitative methods, along with primary and secondary sources.

In the sixth chapter, I examined the impact of the defence industry and public opinion on the role performance of German arms export policy between 2005 and 2024. My analysis was based on a liberal, sub-systematic approach to foreign policy analysis. To assess the influence of the defence industry, I used primary and secondary literature as well as semi-structured qualitative interviews. First, I examined the structural characteristics of the defence industry; in the next step, I presented the phenomenon of the military-industrial complex, addressing the relationship between the state and the defence industry, the defence industry lobby, and its influence on arms policy. To examine the impact of public opinion on arms export policy, I used a theoretical framework of foreign policy analysis on public opinion and available German public opinion polls.

## **Results of the hypothesis testing**

### *First hypothesis*

**H1) Germany's role concept changed after 2014, which can be described as "post-civilian power".**

Based on a content analysis of 74 primary sources (coalition agreements, strategic documents, politicians' speeches and articles) published between 2005–2013 and 2014–2024, and an examination of role performances, it was confirmed that Germany's main role concept as a civilian power did indeed change after 2014, and that this changed role concept can be described as post-civilian power. The hypothesis was therefore validated. Two of the three

phases of the change in role concept occurred gradually after 2014. There was a role adaptation in German foreign and security policy because foreign policy strategies and instruments changed. A realistic interpretation of international relations became prominent in German foreign policy thinking, recognising that the liberal international order was in crisis and that international relations were determined by the rules of power politics. German foreign policy has placed greater emphasis on asserting national interests and is less willing transfer its sovereign powers to international organisations, seeking instead to exert influence over them. The use of military force, cooperation with regional powers outside the Western alliance system, and an approach combining community and intergovernmental methods in European policy became accepted foreign policy tools. In a second step, role learning occurred, leading Germany to change its foreign policy goals. Although Germany continues to aim to shape and civilise international relations, since 2014 it has increasingly sought to defend them, and since 2022 its declared goal has been to become a 'combat-ready' and resilient actor, even in the military sphere. Key factors in this change in role concept were structural changes in the international order and rising expectations of Germany, prompting German decision-makers to revise their foreign policy instruments and objectives.

Despite this change in perception, Germany's role concept and role performance continue to bear the hallmarks of civilian power, as German foreign policy seeks to support a rules-based world order, international law and human rights. However, the post-civilian power role can be considered unstable due to the different role concepts within the political elite.

### *Second hypothesis*

## **H2) Germany's role in arms export policy changed, reflecting the role concept that emerged after 2014.**

Based on an examination of the German arms export policy regulatory framework, strategic and coalition documents, foreign policy models and arms trade data, I have concluded that the hypothesis *has been partially confirmed*. Although the role in arms export policy indeed changed, shifting away from civilian power at the end of the 2000s, it did not follow the main role concept that emerged after 2014, namely, post-civilian power. The arms export policy was dominated by the liberal trading state and, to some extent, the neorealist power state. The post-civilian power role became clearly evident after the outbreak of the War in Ukraine in 2022. Regulatory gaps, weak parliamentary oversight, and a lack of transparency led to a relaxation of the restrictive arms export policy. The 2008 economic and financial crisis, followed by the

2022 War in Ukraine and intensifying geopolitical competition, acted as catalysts for the role change. German arms export policy was increasingly characterised by a role conflict, as the roles assumed in it were at odds with Germany's role concept, namely civilian power and post-civilian power after 2014. The role conflict was caused by disagreements between the executive bodies responsible for arms export licensing and arms control and the coalition government parties, changes in the strategic environment, and external expectations of Germany's role.

### *Third hypothesis*

### **H3) The influence of public opinion and the defence industry can be identified in the role performance of German arms export policy.**

Based on the study of primary and secondary sources, semi-structured qualitative interviews and public opinion polls, it can be concluded that the hypothesis *has been verified* and proven to be valid. Both public opinion and the defence industry have an impact on German arms export policy, which contributes to role conflict because the defence industry lobby contributes to the role performance of the trading state and the power state, while public opinion contributes to the role performance of civilian power. The influence of the German defence industry on arms export policy has proven to be constant, regardless of the government in power, as it lobbies through interest groups. It was in the defence industry's interest to loosen arms export policy, as its traditional European markets had shrunk. Governments yielded to pressure from the defence industry because they had an interest in maintaining it, both from a security policy and an economic perspective. The defence industry lobby was made possible by the under-regulation of party financing and lobbying, as well as a lack of transparency. However, the lobbying activities of the German defence industry are limited by the separation of the state and the defence industry, and governments have traditionally been reluctant to support the defence industry.

The influence of public opinion on Germany's arms export policy manifested itself in its alignment with parliamentary parties, non-governmental and church organisations, and the peace movement, which were critical of arms exports. The influence of public opinion on arms export policy is made possible by Germany's democratic corporatist system, in which state actors and social organisations are equally well organised and represented, and their relationship is characterised by interaction. However, the influence of public opinion was limited, as governments only implemented short-term, selective tightening of arms export policy, thereby

complying with the interests of the defence industry. Due to pressure from the defence industry and public opinion, German arms export policy came under increased pressure, which, combined with role conflicts between the executive bodies and the parties, changes in the strategic environment, and growing expectations from allies, contributed to its unpredictability.

### **New scientific findings**

1. Three of the following scientific findings were formulated in line with the objectives, questions and hypotheses of the research, and one additional new scientific finding was established during the course of the research.
2. From the perspective of role theory in foreign policy analysis, I demonstrated that Germany's previous role concept changed after 2014, shifting to that of a post-civilian power. In line with role theory research, the dissertation confirmed that changes in Germany's role concept were driven by the "strategic shock effect" arising from shifts in the international order and international crises. The change in role concept was reflected in changes in foreign and security policy strategies, instruments and objectives. By introducing the concept of post-civilian power, I argued that certain aspects of civilian power theory remain relevant for describing German foreign policy, but the impact of the international order on civilian power cannot be ignored.
3. Using arms trade data, indicators based on foreign policy models, and an analysis of strategic documents, I demonstrated that, although Germany's role in arms export policy had changed, its established roles were inconsistent with its post-civilian power role concept, emerged after 2014. The roles manifested in arms export policy were largely in line with the foreign policy of a trading state, based on economic considerations, and of a power state, based on security considerations. I pointed out that, between 2005 and 2024, the contradictory nature of German arms export policy stemmed from conflicts between different roles and shortcomings in its strategic approach, which called into question Germany's international credibility. By examining arms export policy, I highlighted a thesis formulated in the role theory literature but not yet applied to German foreign policy: that states' understanding of their role is always issue-specific. Furthermore, based on recent role theory research, I have demonstrated that Germany's role concept during the period under review was not uniform but fragmented across executive bodies and political parties, ultimately resulting in the unpredictability of its foreign and security policy.

4. Through a subsystematic approach to foreign policy analysis, semi-structured qualitative interviews, indices and opinion polls, I have demonstrated that during the period under review, Germany's arms export policy was influenced by the restraining and driving forces of German public opinion and the defence industry, which contributed to the role conflict in arms export policy. The dissertation confirmed that the defence industry was able to assert its interests in arms export policy through interest groups and due to regulatory and transparency deficiencies. Governments have an interest in maintaining the defence industry for security and economic reasons, but the relationship between the defence industry and the government is contradictory due to the government's restrained policy. In addition, public opinion, together with social organisations, is able to a certain extent, encourage governments to tighten their lax arms export policy.
5. I was the first to produce a synthesising and analytical-evaluative work in Hungarian on Germany's foreign policy role concepts for the period 2005-2024, and I applied newer role theory approaches to Germany's foreign and security policy. In addition, I was the first to analyse Germany's arms export policy in Hungarian from a role theory perspective and from a sub-systematic perspective of foreign policy analysis.

### **Recommendations: Practical applicability of research results, new research directions**

#### *Practical applicability*

1) In basic research: Hungarian-language literature on Germany's foreign and security policy after 2014 is mainly discussed in policy analyses and individual studies, but there is no comprehensive synthesis or evaluation of the past ten years. Furthermore, there is virtually no comprehensive academic analysis in Hungarian of recent developments in Germany's arms export policy and defence industry. This dissertation fills these gaps.

2) In education: The results of the dissertation can be used as teaching material in university education, especially in courses on foreign policy analysis, common foreign and security policy, regional security, arms control and disarmament, international studies, and international security and defence policy.

3) In foreign policy analysis: The methodology of the dissertation can be used to examine the foreign and security policies of other countries from a role-theoretical and subsystematic perspective.

4) In policy-making: it can provide relevant guidance and background material for Hungarian security and defence policy experts to understand the foreign and security policy of one of Hungary's most important allies, which can assist in policy-making.

*New research directions*

- 1) Based on the theoretical framework of the dissertation, it may be worthwhile to examine the role conceptions of German political parties and public opinion, thereby providing a better understanding of the polarisation of German foreign policy and the changing role conceptions of civil society. Given that the AfD and, to a lesser extent, Die Linke have grown stronger in recent years, it is important to examine these parties' role concepts and their impact on German foreign policy in greater depth. The domestic political polarisation and the rise of new parties observed in recent years justify this research direction.
- 2) Given that Germany's foreign and security policy and arms export policy will continue to undergo extraordinary changes even after the conclusion of this research (e.g. the partial restoration of compulsory military service, new defence procurement, the crisis in transatlantic relations during Trump's second term), it is worthwhile to continue the research for the period after 2024.
- 3) Examining changes in the role conceptions of other states in the transatlantic region, such as the United States, France and Poland, with particular regard to the period after 2022. Role concepts can provide a better understanding of the divisions within the European common foreign and security policy and NATO, which ultimately highlight the challenges facing the transatlantic alliance system.
- 4) Examination of changes in the defence industry and arms export policies of other European states in the period after 2022, as well as a comparative analysis of the influence exerted by public opinion and the defence industry.
- 5) The impact of tensions in German arms export policy on Germany's arms cooperation in Central Europe. This topic may be particularly relevant in light of European defence modernisation and defence industry developments.

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### **Author's professional biography**

Gyula Speck began his university studies at Károli Gáspár Reformed University, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in history in 2013, followed by a bachelor's degree in international studies from Kodolányi János College in 2017. In 2016, he was an intern at the Strategic Defence Research Institute of the National University of Public Service and then worked at the Deputy State Secretariat for Strategic Analysis of the Prime Minister's Office between 2018 and 2019. He obtained his master's degree in 2019 from the National University of Public Service, majoring in international security and defence policy, as a correspondence student. He began his doctoral studies in 2019 at the Ludovika University of Public Service Doctoral School of Military Science. During his studies, he won the New National Excellence Programme scholarship five times.

Since 2021, he has been an assistant lecturer at the Department of International Relations and Diplomacy at the National University of Public Service. His main subjects are Hungarian foreign and security policy, international relations in the post-bipolar era, regional security, and arms control and disarmament. Since 2024, he has been a guest lecturer at Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. In 2024, he completed a joint internship programme organised by the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium and the HUN-REN Institute for World Economics. In line with his teaching and research profile, he has participated in several international professional training courses, such as the Manfred Wörner Security Policy Seminar organised by the German Ministry of Defence, the arms control symposia of the Racviac Centre for Security Cooperation, and the ISODARCO International School on Disarmament and Research on Conflicts. His academic research focuses on various aspects of Germany's foreign and security policy, with particular emphasis on Germany's defence cooperations and relations with Central European countries. He currently has a total of 34 records in the Hungarian Scientific Works Repository, including 23 academic publications in Hungarian and English. Since beginning his doctoral studies, he has given a total of 16 conference presentations in Hungarian and English, including at the Racviac Centre for Security Cooperation's arms control symposium and the Institute for the History of the System Change's conference entitled "Helmut Kohl and Central Europe".