

A MALLEABLE STRATEGIC CULTURE? TRANSATLANTIC THINK TANKS AS  
AUTOPOETIC SYSTEMS

William Johannes Wesselhoeft

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Political Science, Concentration TransAtlantic Studies.

Chapel Hill  
2017

Approved by:

Holger Moroff

Rahsaan Maxwell

John D. Stephens

© 2017  
William Johannes Wesselhoeft  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

## **ABSTRACT**

William Johannes Wesselhoeft: A Malleable Strategic Culture?  
Transatlantic Think Tanks as Autopoietic Systems  
(Under the direction of Holger Moroff)

This essay pioneers a systems theory/liberalist approach to strategic culture. Employing a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation definition of strategic culture which treats security decisions as culturally unique and scientifically traceable, it works with the theory of Niklas Luhmann and Andrew Moravcsik. Societal interest groups operate within a society/environment milieu in their creation of strategic culture. The milieu is self-referential, ‘autopoietic.’

Think tanks, ‘Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik’ (SWP) and ‘Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik’ (DGAP), have their Transatlantic leanings evaluated as autopoietic milieus, for societal actor interest and structural coupling. SWP and DGAP have very different levels of autonomy in their research agenda/productive output, and likely different influence in German foreign policy towards the Transatlantic relationship. Evident is a ‘thought bubble’ (autopoiesis) and high level of structural coupling with non-government donors in DGAP, compared to SWP, with high research/production output autonomy – no thought bubble – and a low level of potential structural coupling with private corporations. SWP can be considered a quangos (quasi non-governmental organization), while DGAP cannot be. Think tanks evaluated exhibit societal actor behavior, operationally closed or open to evolutionary developments. This indicates that think tanks, and other systems involved in foreign policy creation, are malleable. Strategic culture is malleable.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
CHAPTER 1: THEORY.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Strategic Culture.....	2
Luhmann’s Theory of Modern Society.....	7
Emphasizing the ‘Thought Bubble’ According to Johnston and Luhmann.....	9
Moravcsik’s Societal Preferences as Explaining Autopoeitic Behavior.....	12
Preferences versus Evolutionary Decisions (Autopoeisis).....	15
Operational Definition of Strategic Culture.....	16
Contemporary Work on German Strategic Culture.....	16
CHAPTER 2: CASE STUDY.....	18
Introduction.....	18
Evaluating Think Tanks as Autopoeitic Systems & Structural Coupling to Funding.....	20
Transatlantic Relations Projects at SWP and DGAP.....	22
Content Output on Transatlantic Relations at DGAP and SWP.....	25
Authors and Topics.....	25
Overall Funding of DGAP and SWP.....	29
Figures.....	32
CHAPTER 3: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION.....	35

Discussion.....	35
Conclusion.....	39
REFERENCES.....	41

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: # of Transatlantic Publications.....	32
Figure 2: SWP Pubs by Authorship.....	32
Figure 3: DGAP Pubs by Authorship.....	33
Figure 4: Total Budgets, Millions of €.....	33
Figure 5: SWP Funding Sources.....	34
Figure 6: DGAP Funding Sources.....	34

## CHAPTER 1: THEORY

### Introduction

With the Trump election in the US, the Brexit vote in the UK, the refugee crisis in Europe, and Germany being looked to as a leader in the European Union, it is crucial that the United States maintains an understanding of the creation of the foreign policy of its closest allies as the world potentially goes up in flames. The discontent of populist groups across human civilization marks an attitudinal change towards the legitimacy of government and the feasibility of continued globalization. Economic insecurity is accompanied by physical insecurity as exemplified by terrorism. The trusted leaders of yesterday are today the political opponents – the culmination of exploitation of negligence of national interests – of the self-ascribedly underserved middle class across Europe, the US and parts of Asia. Democracy has come into question, as has the efficacy of the government in handling crisis, from basic economic needs to an influx of disputedly deserving immigrants.

The interests of the US in the Middle East have turned into a need for Europe to look outside of the EU's borders and establish a voice where the US has not been able to solve foreign policy conflicts on its own. The days of Germany's abstaining vote in the UN on US engagement in Iraq are past, and Germany is environmentally being pressured into exercising a strategic culture which is true to its values and also consistent with its interests. Germany's critical strategic alliance with the United States during these hard times serve as reason for examining the German-US Transatlantic relationship.

In order to better understand the strategic relationship between Germany and the US author chooses to forge a theoretical framework for the understanding of strategic culture through systems theory and international relations theory. The case study implements the strategic culture theory into the Transatlantic relations programs of two leading German foreign policy think tanks. The case study elucidates their approaches to facilitating a strategic relationship with the US, utilizing the researched and employed strategic culture theory.

### **Strategic Culture**

The added value of strategic culture as attributing culture-unique circumstances to security decision outcomes is fairly clear. According to the work of Alastair Ian Johnston, *strategic culture is, “an ideational milieu which limits behavioral choices... [and] from these limits one ought to be able to derive specific predictions about strategic choice”* (Johnston 1995:46). The importance of viewing strategic culture as institutionally derived -- by collectives, military establishments, policy communities, societies and the like -- argues to the reader that the bottom-up origin of top-level decisions is explanatory. Thus, there is potential to manipulate the decision milieu in order to trigger certain results. There is at once an assumption of 3<sup>rd</sup> generation strategic culture theory that cultures are unique in their security decisions, and that each strategic culture makes decisions which are scientifically traceable (Johnston 1995). Deconstructing a security decision can take various forms, as evidenced by the vast range of strategic culture scholarship available to the reader.

Within strategic culture theory there has been rather heated discourse (see Colin Gray's cutting response to Alastair Ian Johnston; Gray 1999) about which of three generations of strategic culture thought is correct and useable. Johnston (1995) differentiated



ideational strategic culture and operational behavior. He recommended an academic shift towards implementing strategic culture analysis which was less determined by ideational and professed values, and rather placed importance on just *considering* ideational and professed values, and comparing them to operational behavior. He cited the observation by cultural scholars that there was a difference between what political leaders were saying and what they were doing. This, in Johnston's mind, was ground for finding a more dependent/independent variable approach to strategic culture analysis. He noted that there is likely continuity between strategic cultures across states (in the West), and that this 'thought bubble' might be causing a dominant strategic culture discourse to take place. Thus, there is potentially no unique strategic culture, making the field of strategic culture ready for scientific analysis. The cultural context that strategic decisions occur within are purportedly constrained by the status quo Realpolitik of international relations, within the Western 'bubble' of strategic discourse.

Colin Gray sharply criticized Johnston's scientific reconceiving of strategic culture. He argued that Johnston's 'new way' did not give adequate credence to Gray's first generation scholarly notion that culture is equal to context. Gray reinforced the first generation's view -- of which he is a leading member -- that strategic culture study is a way to understand the context of security decisions. However, he concluded with the concession that the first generation's thought could be amended to focus more on the idea/behavior discord, which was the origin of, and reason for, Johnston's reconceived strategic culture methodology.

A broad and brief background of strategic culture thought is found in Thomas Mahnken's report on United States Strategic Culture, for the Defense Threat Reduction

Agency of the US government (Mahnken 2006). Mahnken begins with the Ancient Greek awareness that militaries had different capabilities depending on the formulation of their state. Much later, German “Continental” strategic thought had been differentiated from British “Maritime” strategic thought, by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Corbett 1911 in Mahnken 2006:3). Finally, he references Colin Gray’s (1999) description of strategic culture as the following: “*a nation’s strategic culture flows from its geography and resources, history and experience, and society and political structure*” (Mahnken 1999:4). This is referential to the definition’s broadness. The category of strategic culture is multi-faceted and diverse, with several areas ripe for evaluation; resting on the basic assumption that culture serves as a milieu within which strategic decisions are made.

The author’s strategic culture research has found the definition of strategic culture to be a broadly applicable subject, which can be focused towards a contextual definition for case study. Examples of such definitions have been made available in studies of strategic culture in Germany. For the reason of strategic culture’s broadness of definition, it is important for the author to define strategic culture for the purpose of this essay. Hoffman & Longhurst (1999) set out a three-point description of strategic culture, which will be summarized here in recognition of its ostensible objectivity and intelligibility, as well as dynamism in being applicable as a foundational definition upon which a focused, contextual definition may be derived. The definition is based on the work of seminal strategic culture scholars including Ian Johnston, Macmillan, Jacobsen, and Katzenstein (Hoffman & Longhurst 1999:47).

First, strategic culture approaches negate assumed universal rationality by emphasizing security choices as historically derived. This means that the historical context

for strategic decisions is variable and dependent on the culture's presumed assumptions about the security environment, as well as the environmental pressures which the culture responds to strategically. Second, "strategic culture is about collectives and their shared attitudes and beliefs" (Hoffman & Longhurst 1999:31), whether that be military establishments, policy communities or entire societies. This aspect of security culture's description is greatly important to this thesis' approach, because this thesis will evaluate security culture as derived from 'differentiated societies,' as understood later in this essay's theoretical framework. Third and finally, strategic culture is the limiting and determinant environment -- the 'milieu' -- in which decisions about security are made: "information is received, mediated and processed into appropriate responses" (Hoffman & Longhurst 1999:31). This is the clearest brief definition of security culture, as the milieu which constrains decisions. However broad, it is a solid foundation to build a focused definition on.

Establishing a focused definition of strategic culture for this essay must begin with a discussion of culture in the context of political relations and influence groups, because this field looks at the cultural interface that a society has with politically related security decisions. Johnston's definition of culture was tailored for strategic culture work; within a society, "dominant subcultures can impose cultural forms on other groups, manipulate them, or convince other subcultures that these dominant cultural forms are in fact their own forms" (Johnston 1995:44).

This shows striking relation to Andrew Moravcsik's liberalist assumption that societal preferences are expressed by influence-seeking actors; the most competitive actors succeed (Moravcsik 1998:517). This relates to dominant subcultures imposing cultural forms on other groups, for example via policies, as in the argument of Hoffman & Longhurst (1999), above.

“Games like coordination, assurance, prisoner’s dilemma, and suasion have distinctive dynamics, as well as impose precise costs, benefits, and risks on the parties” (Moravcsik 1998:521). Adding another layer of theoretical understanding, Niklas Luhmann’s non-hierarchical ‘differentiated societies,’ as compositional of society, would show discordance from the idea of a ‘dominant subculture.’ The relation to Luhmann’s thought, however, would be that a dominant subculture which imposes cultural forms on other subcultures is parallel to formal communication between societies, which causes societal evolution, described as ‘autopoiesis.’ This will be further delved into later.

Returning to the definition of strategic culture, Johnston has prefaced it as a, “*milieu which limits behavioral choices*” (Johnston 1995:45). Strategic culture’s ‘central paradigm’ has two facets within a society’s culture; first, as a ‘system of symbols’ (ibid:46). The ‘system of symbols’ is composed of 1) how the strategic environment is perceived, for example whether war is inevitable or an ‘aberration,’ 2) how the adversary is perceived and the threat it poses – zero-sum or variable-sum --, and 3) the ‘efficacy of the use of force,’ which is how well the society perceives its ability to engage with strategic threats and solve their related problems. This ‘system of symbols,’ form Johnston’s ‘central paradigm’ of strategic culture (ibid:46). The second facet of strategic culture is at the operational level, which affects strategic behavior. This facet of strategic culture is not relevant to this thesis, and therefore only the 1<sup>st</sup> facet, focusing on the ‘central paradigm,’ is chosen for the theoretical framework of this essay. Answers to the central paradigm questions will lead to a strategic culture that, for example, favors offensive choices versus diplomatic choices. Building on the definitions of Hoffman and Longhurst (1999) and Johnston (1995), the

definition of strategic culture employed by this essay is, *the milieu created by societal actor groups which determines strategic decisions*, and will be expanded upon.

This thesis approaches strategic culture from a theoretical framework which incorporates liberalist international relations assumptions alongside a theory of modern society. The theory of modern society by Niklas Luhmann can be compared with Andrew Moravcsik's liberalist assumptions to differentiate preferential choices versus more determined evolutionary changes. This is in an attempt to be able to predict strategic choices, and possibly manipulate strategic culture to trigger specific outcomes. Following is work on Luhmann's thought, to be later engaged with Moravcsik's work and strategic culture, in order to complete the theory foundation requisite for employing a case study thereupon.

#### **'Luhmann's Theory of Modern Society'**

Society is differentiated into various non-hierarchical subsystems, which might be pictured as 'a stack of overlapping staggered pancakes.' There is not necessarily a center of society as has been the status quo assumption in previous systems theory. Luhmann rather suggests that differentiated subsystems of society take on tasks which they are orientated towards handling, in reaction to external pressures. As the greater society receives pressure from the environment, the adequate differentiated – for example economic or political -- society rises to the occasion and both handles the pressure and evolves as necessary and with an amount of randomness due to unforeseen communications to and from other differentiated societies. There is a ripple effect, where other differentiated societies will evolve due to the process of formal communication; communication from one society to another registers and triggers evolution in the differentiated society. Thus, Luhmann proposes that society is self-

creating and also self-limiting. This evolutionary process which societies go through -- within the greater society -- is called 'autopoiesis.'

Autopoiesis necessarily fosters a new society to environment relationship, and thus there are new possibilities, for example, for policy to be exercised in the face of existing *and* new threats. This is accompanied by the fact that, "no system can operate outside of its boundaries" (Luhmann 1992:70), which is termed *operative closure (ibid)*. This is the realization and acceptance that however pioneering and 'out-of-the-box' a phenomenon may seem; it is still happening within the autopoietic constraints of the system. 'Structural coupling' occurs between two differentiated societies, such as politics and economics, where there is an overlap of operational interest -- for example -- when creating a federal economic policy.

An observation of the entirety of society would make evident that society is continually evolving via formal communication, which reciprocally evolves -- 'autopoiesis' - - adding to its differentiated society constitution. Fundamental in understanding Luhmann's theory of modern society is that there is no hierarchy of differentiated societies, and that the differentiated societies are all interacting with each other, within the greater society. In terms of the environs, the greater society's space is differentiated from its environment by the *lack* of formal communication -- for example, where there is a *lack* of policy action in the environment, and *presence* of policy action (an example of formal communication), in the societal space. Thus, all the space that is filled by formal communications by differentiated societies is what constitutes the entire society. That which is not formal communication by the differentiated society is not society. The differentiated societies within the greater society

pay credence to Luhmann's titling of 'the society of society;' in the native German, *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* (1997).

Luhmann's theory of modern society emphasizes that differentiated societies compose the greater society. They communicate and trigger evolutions to themselves and thus to the greater society. The differentiated societies play a similar role in the greater society as the societal actors who influence the wider state decisions in liberalist thought. While liberalist thought -- as identified by Moravcsik -- does not focus on the environment-society differentiation, its focus on the interests of societal actors to be expressed in state preferences can be seen parallel to Luhmann's evolutionary reactions of the appropriate differentiated societies to external evolutionary triggers -- pressures from outside of the society.

### **Emphasizing the 'Thought Bubble' According to Johnston and Luhmann**

This essay has taken into account the definitions and descriptions of various scholars who are intertwined in their work in the strategic culture academic environs. The character of the strategic culture definitional discourse shows relation to a concept emphasized in Luhmann's theory of modern society. In relatively developed societies, a society will observe the greater society, for example where an academic department evaluates a political office's behavior in the state. In a relatively less developed society there will be little or no observation from a society towards the greater society or another society, evidenced by a lack of critical thought and action, especially in the administrative societies of society. Repetitive, uncritical behavior is, according to Johnston, evidenced in a continuity of strategic culture thought in the West. This served as the premise for his 'scientification' of strategic culture evaluation. It is worth noting the following example of Mahnken, Gray and Searle in their

writings on the strategic culture world, for their possible un-criticalness and repetitive thought, or ‘thought-bubble’ behavior.

Thomas Mahnken – in his report on U.S. Strategic Culture -- was writing for the US government and rested the foundation of his work on Gray’s definition. Gray is a British academician from Oxford University, and interestingly founded the U.S. defense-focused National Institute for Public Policy in Washington D.C., which receives major funding for the U.S. government and perceives post-Soviet threat – in line with strategic culture’s initial purpose of analysis in evaluating the Soviet versus U.S. exercise of nuclear-oriented military culture to predict strategic behavior. The cold war purpose of the Gray’s strategic culture fits contextually within the U.S. defense institution’s objectives for security.

Relatedly, Alaric Searle, another British-originated academic elite – educated at Edinburgh University and Free University Berlin—who works on British and German politico-military issues, cited Mahnken’s thought. To reiterate, Mahnken supported Gray. Indeed, the academic universe of strategic culture necessitates a coordination of supported citations in order to establish organized thought, and that has seemingly been the nature of political-academic link in Washington D.C. The observation that these three scholars; Mahnken, Gray and Searle, as scholars whose work influences and is influenced by the US-UK political-academic overlap, is significant in reference to continuity of thought across academic society, in Luhmann’s understanding of societies within society. The dominant political-academic discourse in the US is arguably, and at least popularly, monopolistic upon realist assumptions. This elucidation could be evidence for Ian Johnston’s conception of strategic culture as being constrained within its own cultural environment. The point of this is to bring to the fore the disputable nature of strategic culture in the context of possible



political-academic overlap as was evident with Gray, Mahnken and Searle, who are arguably part of the Western thought bubble marked by continuity in the strategic culture discourse. Gray's 1999 cutting response to Ian Johnston evidenced the status quo of strategic thought in the Western thought bubble by displaying the entrenched interests of Gray, who is evidentially a political-academic entity involved in Washington D.C.

The system as constraining within itself, as a 'thought bubble' which is exemplified by political-academic overlap which is potentially evidential of entrenched interest, is further developed by applying Niklas Luhmann's theory of modern society, where the most developed societies enter into the developmental level where they become self-observant -- society observing society (Luhmann 1992:73). An example would be a political science department, which has a distinguishable ecosystem and population, examining a subject such as German foreign policy creation, another field with a distinguishable topic and ecosystem of formal policies and actors; formal communication and autopoiesis which is causative of evolutionary change. The 'thought bubble' idea is also a strong exemplification of Luhmann's thought, because it necessitates an understanding of multiple ecosystems within a larger ecosystem; which is a crucial basis for the formal communication that leads to evolutionary autopoiesis. Autopoiesis leads to new possibilities with an adjusted society-environment relationship, and this is the case with strategic culture discourse in the Anglo-American academic sphere, but there is also potential evidence of operational closure as the discourse becomes self-satisfying, and the possibilities for new thought are closed off into this 'thought bubble.'

## **Moravcsik's Societal Preferences as Explaining Autopoietic Behavior**

Understanding the evolutionary change, via autopoiesis, that occurs as the societies of society aggrandize in the face of environmental pressures, provides an organismic, natural picture that the process of constituting policies entails. To focus on the specific societies within society which play host to policy creation in the face of external-pressure triggered autopoiesis, we can explain the harnessing of Moravcsik's societal actors as constitutive of self-interested influence towards state action. Primarily, Moravcsik approaches societal actor influence from his first liberalist assumption of international relations; '*societal primacy*.' "Societal ideas, interests and institutions influence state behavior by shaping state preferences" (Moravcsik 1998:513). While Moravcsik describes domestic politics as where, "the state is not an actor but a representative institution constantly subject to capture and recapture, construction and reconstruction by coalitions of social actors" (Moravcsik 1998:518), this thesis aims to extend the *capture and recapture* by social actors into the *greater society* as conceived by Luhmann. Social actors, who in this essay are termed '*societal*' actors, perform autopoiesis within the greater society. This autopoiesis can be exemplified by foreign policies propagated by a government. Moravcsik's liberalism would, in this extension, understand *foreign policies* as determined by societal actor capture and recapture due to preferential interests.

To provide a brief synopsis of Moravcsik's liberalist surmising as a preface to our case study; the 'three core assumptions' of liberalist thought on international relations are; 1) "the fundamental actors in world politics are individuals and privately-constituted groups with autonomous preferences, 2) governments represent some subset of domestic social actors; and 3) the interstate behavior is shaped primarily by the pattern of state preferences,

not state power” (Moravcsik 1992:2). Moravcsik later distilled his three core assumptions as:  
a. the Primacy of Societal Actors, b. Representation and State Preferences, and c.

Interdependence and the International System (Moravcsik 1998:517-518). This essay focuses on the *Primacy of Societal Actors* (1), in relation to Luhmann’s differentiated societies, which autopoetically evolve new policies in reaction to the environment.

In the *Primacy of Societal Actors*, where individuals are rational and conservative, and influenced by scarcity towards conflict or cooperation (Moravcsik 1998:517). “Socially differentiated individuals define their material and ideational interests independently of politics and then advance those interests through political exchange and collective action... in pursuit of material and ideal welfare” (Moravcsik 1998:517). There is a striking relation here to Luhmann’s differentiated societies where they are phrased by Moravcsik as ‘societally differentiated individuals.’ Here, I iterate the relation into an understanding which sees differentiated societies and societally differentiated individuals as of the same ilk. Just that they are driven by different attitudes; that is, Luhmann explains their development as a result of autopoiesis and Moravcsik as a result of self-interest influence. In fact, Moravcsik’s differentiated individual/societal actor is based on Luhmann’s understanding of role theory, with individuals playing different roles such as student, parent, plaintiff, consumer, etc. Entire sub-systems of society, the ‘societies of society,’ create their own rules and behave accordingly, within those created constraints. These ‘sub-systems’ are self-referential – their behavior occurs in reference to their own rules, and the behavioral phenomenon that occurs within this ruleset is termed ‘autopoietic;’ self-generating. Moravcsik’s societal actors are self-referential and are the origin of autopoietic behavior.

An example of liberalist theory's understanding would be the treatment of the following as a symptom of preferences. "Increased spending initiated by a new ruling elite ideologically committed to territorial aggrandizement is a preference-induced change in strategy consistent with liberalism" (Moravcsik 1998:521). Thus, the focus is on the preference for specific strategy, which is strikingly consistent with strategic culture theory as a milieu for strategic preference results. The preferences are a result of 'structural coupling,' where sub-systems in Luhmann's mind, or societal actors in Moravcsik's mind, influence each other only indirectly. This is because all operations which are relevant to a sub-system, for example in politics, take place within that subsystem. Thus, to have a multi-actor/multi-sub-system policy preference, there must be *structural coupling* at the subsystem level (among the *societies* of society), for example between business-interested actors and socially-interested actors in a parliament, who formally hold negotiations to agree upon a policy.

Moravcsik's core assumptions of liberalist international relations thought see the 'primacy of society' as fundamental to state action. Thus, there is not necessarily an institutional hierarchy which leads to state action, but rather that societal actors are able to exert their influence at different levels to force state action which is in their interest. This is similar to Luhmann's diffuse center of society, and lack of a hierarchy in creating decisions which are evolutionarily determined within specific differentiated societies. However, Moravcsik does iterate liberalist thought's evaluation tools at the purviews of society, state, and international dependency. Thus, it ostensibly may be conflictual with Luhmann's theory of modern society in that Moravcsik may be a purport that there is a hierarchy of societies which does not exist in Luhmann's greater society. However, the identification of societal actors as influencing state behavior serves as a strong link to Luhmann's differentiated

societies, because we can look at how differentiated societies might behave as societal actors. Just as societal actors attempt to ‘capture and recapture’ the state’s operations with their interests, there may evidently be structural coupling between sub-systems/societal actors which leads to the cooperation that makes this possible. This provides a sophisticated theoretical framework – drawing from international relations and from sociology -- to evaluate the societal group/differentiated society interests and their necessary evolutionary operations, which exhibit either 1) preferences – in accordance with Moravcsik’s liberalism, or 2) evolutionary -- autopoietic – responses, within the greater framework of differentiated societies; in accordance with Luhmann’s theory of modern society.

### **Preferences versus Evolutionary Decisions (Autopoiesis)**

The difference between preferences and evolutionary decisions is qualitative, in that preferences are adjustable and imply a sense of subjectivity and self-satisfaction – an operative closure to the environment (Luhmann 1992:70), where evolutionary decisions imply a sense of determination which is nonadjustable to the nature of the milieu surrounding the decision – and they create a new relationship between the society and environment; new possibilities are now potential. Preferences are selfish actions, where evolutionary decisions are indisputable necessities. The purpose of this differentiation is to identify which forces behind a foreign policy decision are forcefully constrained by the environment, and which forces are subjectively evolving within their own milieu and thus potentially variable – less an objective force of evolution and more a subjective force of motivation. In all, identifying which strategic culture aspects may be manipulated in order to trigger a certain outcome, versus which strategic culture aspects are comparatively set and unchangeable, is the purpose

of this process of evaluation. As explained later, the funding which creates an autopoietic thought bubble can be deemed as a structural coupling.

### **Operational Definition of Strategic Culture**

The operational definition of strategic culture is *the milieu created by societal actor groups which helps limit strategic decisions*. It will be methodologically interpreted for application to a case study. The definition is supported by and engaged with the work of Johnston, Luhmann and Moravcsik. It integrates central parts of each scholars' relatable work on the subject of this essay, into a feasible definition which serves as a paradigm for understanding strategic culture in a societally-derived way. Strategic culture will be understood through an evaluation of a foreign policy milieu case study, because foreign policy is an exemplification of state strategic behavior. A foreign policy milieu case study, then, as an exemplification of state strategic behavior, can be evaluated to look for evidence of being caused by societal interest groups, and for autopoiesis. This two-level method of analysis will shine light on the origin of the strategic culture of a selected case study. The author can conclude on the proportion to which the case study's strategic culture can be understood in terms of the operational methodology, which consists of analysis for: *1) preferential choices (net attitudinal leanings) which exist in autopoietic milieus (thought bubbles [in think tanks]), which might be 2) structurally coupled to funders.*

### **Contemporary Work on German Strategic Culture**

Significant publications on the topic have included: the evolution of multilateral and bilateral relationships (Haftendorn 1999) in the reaffirmation of a 'strategic triangle' between Germany, France and the US. The reviewing of Germany's behavior in military engagements around the world, and participation in EU battlegroups, with reference to a European Union

strategic culture (Chappell 2010, 2014). A description of Germany's strategic culture by its preferences in EU common defense policy (Keohane 2016). Then, Becker, for the French Ministry of Defense, analyzed recent changes in the dispatching pattern of the Bundeswehr (German Army) (Becker 2013). Longhurst considered Germany's post-War history from a constructivist view, and then looked to changes in the deployment of the Bundeswehr in recent conflicts, as well as national conscription policy (Longhurst 2004). Brummer looked at the role that 'agency' played in determining Germany's strategic culture, examining Germany's role in the Kosovo war as a case study (Brummer 2012). Dalgaard-Nielsen explains German strategic culture's identity and transformation by examining Bundestag debates and Bundestag votes (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2005). Hoffman & Longhurst looked at the German military's role, "in past incarnations of Germany" (Hoffman & Longhurst 1999:32), evaluating broad historical policy and political events, beginning after World War 2. Malici looked at ideational values, tracing their evidence in foreign policy decisions (Malici 2006). Clearly, there has been significant contribution to understanding German strategic culture from a variety of perspectives. However, it is the purpose of the author to question to what extent certain foreign policy think tanks have a role in the forming of state policy towards the Transatlantic relationship.

## CHAPTER 2: CASE STUDY

### Introduction

Where contemporary German strategic culture has been explained through several means which does not include looking at the think tank community, this essay seeks to evaluate the topic specifically by looking at a certain think tank community, as an autopoietic sub-system, which structurally couples with other subsystems, to cooperate towards a policy attitude towards transatlantic relations. The think tank community thus behaves like a societal actor, which attempts to capture and recapture state power to satisfy its own interests.

The topic here is the leading think tank discourse on Transatlantic relations. For the US, it is crucial to have an understanding of the foreign policy creation of its closest allies, in order to predict and work with current and future avenues of conflict and cooperation. The theoretical framework presented provides the thesis with an approach that is justified upon a theory of modern society as well as a theory of societal actor influence in state behavior. The concept of strategic culture is discussed and defined for this thesis, and the supporting parallels are drawn out to the thought of Luhmann and Moravcsik. The question of how foreign policy is created due to societal actor influence is now poised on the basis of that theoretical framework, as well as the question of whether there is evident autopoiesis occurring. Societal actor influence can be identified from surmising the leading policy discourse leanings on Transatlantic relations from leading German foreign policy think tanks. Autopoiesis may be evidenced in the form of policies which are seemingly derived from one another, as well as policies which are related and dependent on one another. Transatlantic



relations discourse leading foreign policy think tanks in Germany will serve as the case study for our theoretical framework.

The author concedes that the hard evidence for theoretical autopoeisis will be difficult to ascertain in a case study. Thus, the conclusions gleaned from policy discourse, interpreted as institutional (think tank) preference due to societal interest groups will be used as a context upon which extrapolations regarding the evidence of autopoeisis will be formed. To begin with, the author proposes a methodology for functional application in understanding the theoretical framework's added value towards the case study. That is, case study evidence – publications on Transatlantic relations by leading German foreign policy think tanks – will be evaluated for the foreign policy positions they take towards the Transatlantic relations discourse. Specifically, the author will look at Transatlantic relations related production output and programs, from which there is an implication of the attitudinal approach taken by the German foreign policy think tank community. The evidence of autopoeisis will be more evident in the latter – that is, the attitudinal recommendations for the academic community.

Think tanks occupy the space between government and academia, “serve as a bridge to build and uphold civil society” (Anheier 2008:30). As McGann put it, Think Tanks, “often act as a bridge between the academic and policymaking communities and between states and civil society, serving in the public interest as independent voices that translate applied and basic research into a language that is understandable, reliable, and accessible for policymakers and the public” (McGann 2016:6). Civil society, policy actors or policy makers consider or adopt think tank research and programs (ibid:20). The definition of civil society is dynamic, in that civil society may be apart from think tanks, for example academics as civil society which listen to think tanks as the bridge from civil society to government. Think

tanks, as bridges from civil society to government, are also integrated into civil society and government to varying extents, where they are funded by governments, as is often in the German case, or are employers of academics who also operate within the more strictly academic world, for example as professors. For example, McGann describes think tanks as a bridge between civil society and the state, but also as “civil society actors in the policy-making process” (McGann 2016:Abstract). Given that leading foreign policy think tanks in Germany are involved in the contract research for the German state, according to (DNI 2008), and that experts have been involved in foreign relation exercise, for example German-Syrian intelligence services cooperation talks (ibid), it is fair to assume a significant degree of influence from the foreign policy think tank community in German state foreign relations. Of course, how *much* influence, is in question.

### **Evaluating Think Tanks as Autopoietic Systems & Structural Coupling to Funding**

Where other approaches to German strategic culture have been taken, this paper takes the approach built on the work of Luhmann and Moravcsik. Autopoietic systems traditionally take the form of “politics”, or “economics” (etc.), but the aim of this paper is to attach the idea of autopoietism to societal actorship, where cooperation towards policy happens at the level of ‘structural coupling.’ Societal actors as autopoietic systems can be exemplified by think tanks, which exert policy influence and are structurally coupled to various other autopoietic systems, by variables including funding (finance), and employment. Structural coupling leads to cooperative operations, including, for example, the attitude a think tank community has towards a policy relationship. Evaluation of origin/amount of funding and type/constitution of employment, then, will yield a better understanding of how structurally coupled select think tanks are to other autopoietic systems.

According to the 2016 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report, Germany has 194 think tanks. Of these think tanks, there are two (2) which are chosen to be evaluated for this essay. The think tanks are as follows: German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) and German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP). Because this thesis is using the field of foreign affairs to exercise the theoretical framework outlined in the theory section of this paper, the think tanks chosen are especially influential in foreign policy discourse. The two think tanks were selected by the utilization of three sources. First, the University of Pennsylvania's 2016 Global Go To Think Tank Index (McGann 2016), which ranks German think tanks among regional think tanks of Western Europe. Second, from the 2016 Foreign Policy Research Institute FPRI Western Europe database, of which the author gratefully has access to; funding and employment levels are listed and were consulted in further selecting the think tanks. Finally, and crucially, the 2008 US Directorate of National Intelligence (DNI) publication entitled "German Think Tank Guide" (DNI 2008) provides a synopsis section of major German foreign policy think tanks which justifies the DNI's 2008 interpretation of them as the most crucial foreign policy think tanks in Germany. Reference to the other sources confirms their position as most important foreign policy think tanks in accordance with 2016 data.

Given appropriate evaluation of Transatlantic relations projects and production output in leading German foreign policy think tanks, the author will understand the attitudinal orientation – that is – in terms of this thesis – an example of the strategic culture of the German foreign policy community towards Transatlantic relations. Then, the variables of employment and finance can be looked at and compared to the attitudinal orientation, thus throwing light on the amount of structural coupling that there might be between these think

tanks and other autopoietic systems/societal actors. The larger question is whether these think tanks, as independent policy institutes, do actually provide independent advice, or whether this is more a case of “who pays the piper, calls the tune.” Comparing the evidence gleaned from the first part of the analysis on programs and production output, to the sources of funding, will help answer this question.

### **Transatlantic Relations Projects at SWP and DGAP**

The German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) discourse on Transatlantic relations is first evaluated through its ‘Transatlantic Relations’ projects. There are three projects made public on the subject, which are TAPIR – the Transatlantic Post-Doc Fellowship for International Relations and Security, the Daimler EU-US Program (Daimler U.S. Forum on Global Issues), and Security and Defence in Northern Europe (SNE). TAPIR is a post-doc program which places fellows in leading think tanks in Switzerland, the UK, Finland, Germany, France, Norway, Poland and the US. Notable is that all of these countries consist of either the closest US allies – UK, Germany and France, Norway or are bordering/part of the Former Soviet Union (Finland, Poland). Agreements with think tanks in other countries do not exist in this program.

The Daimler U.S. Forum on Global Issues is biannual and hosted by three leading think tanks in the U.S., UK, and Germany. They are: the Brookings Institution (Washington), the Centre for European Reform (London) and the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP, Berlin). As a “regular, confidential dialogue between decision-makers and think tanks in the United States and European Union on current issues of international politics” (SWP 2017), a Washington-London-Berlin association is displayed. It

is notable that other important transatlantically-interested countries, including France, are not part of this confidential Transatlantic dialogue.

Security and Defence in Northern Europe (SNE) is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Defence and is a cooperative research program between three think tanks in Norway, the US and Germany. They are: The Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies (IFS), Center for Strategic and International Studies (US, CSIS), and SWP (Germany). Germany is seen as a regional key actor in the region (Northern Europe), and the US is seen as a key actor outside of the region (SWP 2017).

The German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) has the ‘USA/Transatlantic Relations Program,’ which has the following three areas of focus: 1) Afghanistan Operation, 2) Establishing Contact between transatlantic partners and the “Arab Spring” freedom movement, and 3) US election campaigns. The concern of DGAP on Transatlantic relations is stated by, “Political decisions in Washington often have direct effects on Germany. The transatlantic relationship is the central context for German and European foreign policy” (DGAP 2017). The goal of this program is to, “strengthen strategic dialogues between Berlin and Washington” (ibid), as well as foster an, “exchange of ideas among political elites in order to anchor an equal partnership instead of a merely politically expedient alliance” (ibid).

Beyond the focus on elite dialogue on strategic thought, DGAP stands out as a learning institution. There are in-person discussion groups in USA/Transatlantic Relations include ‘study groups’ on: ‘Strategic Issues’ which cover developments in NATO and “Germany and Europe’s role in strategically relevant areas” (ibid). ‘European Policy’ has an emphasis on the EU’s common foreign policy. ‘Global Issues’ focuses on maintaining a

secure energy supply. ‘Transatlantic Relations for professionals under 35’ encourage networking for younger foreign policy actors.

In addition to DGAP’s ‘study groups,’ which exemplify part of the think tank’s role as civil academic institution where teaching happens, there are two final ‘Activities and Initiatives’ of the US/Transatlantic Relations Program are “Friends in Crisis” – Lessons in Crisis Management from Afghanistan, and ‘Research Project: The German Debate on Afghanistan’. Emphasis here on Afghanistan and inevitably the security role that US and perhaps correspondingly Germany, plays in the regional security of Afghanistan.

The stated purpose of the USA/Transatlantic Relations Program at DGAP including the, “anchoring of an equal partnership” (ibid) between the US and Germany indicates interest in augmenting the current strategic relationship. Focus on Afghanistan points to DGAP’s interest in being a part – either physically or within the strategic discourse -- of the US engagement in Afghanistan. DGAP’s focus on in-person projects to strengthen the Berlin-Washington strategic dialogue offers a broader, U.S relationship-focused approach, compared to SWP’s differentiated academic, political and regional security project approach which includes the UK and Norway within its Transatlantic relationship projects.

The Transatlantic relations projects at SWP display strong interest in cultivating security relationships that include the US. The US is part of the academic, political dialogue and regional security projects, which demonstrates strong links across all three fields. However, the lack of U.S. funding could demonstrate a lack of interest in involving American money – this might be further investigated. The UK is included to a lesser extent, in the academic and political dialogue projects, and not in the regional security project for Northern Europe. UK-based BP Europa is the only non-German corporate funder of SWP.

Norway has funding links to SWP via the Norwegian Ministry of Defence and the Nordic Council of Ministers. Norway also funds the SNE regional security program. Norway has significant links to DGAP.

Notable is the United States presence in DGAP funding. The only two countries of origin for funding for DGAP are Germany and the United States. DGAP has comparatively far fewer sponsors, as well no diversity in national source of funding. SWP is comparatively more differentiated in its projects, which receive funding from more diverse sources, including private corporations. However, SWP does not receive US funding, where DGAP does receive US funding.

### **Content Output on Transatlantic Relations at DGAP and SWP**

SWP and DGAP put out content on the Transatlantic relationship, of which a brief synopsis may be made and perhaps an attitudinal orientation inferred. The author intends to utilize this portion of the case study to bolster the evidence towards the possible surmises of an attitudinal characterization and orientation of SWP and DGAP towards the Transatlantic relationship. Given that a surmise rests on incomplete evidence, the author proceeds knowing that politics is volatile and so may be the intellectual thought that is corollary to it. The author chooses to look at the most recent production output on transatlantic relations which can be found in the online publication databases of each of the think tanks' websites.

### **Authors and Topics**

To evaluate whether there is autopoiesis present in DGAP and SWP publications, we can look at which authors have the most published content on transatlantic relations. The idea is that if there are a handful of authors (employees) who publish the majority of the publications, there may be grounds for further investigation into a think tank on the basis that

there might be a lack of scholarly diversity; and that a ‘thought bubble’ has formed. As independent policy institutes, think tanks can be seen as an institutional attempt to approach the public good from an unbiased standpoint, as Jim McGann has iterated. Additionally, the political leaning of the chief authors’ content output on Transatlantic relations may indicate the personal stake that they, as academicians, have, and could point to autopoeisis within the think tanks, which will be more relevant when we look at overall think tank funding for evidence of structural coupling between the think tanks and their funding sources.

The author used the DGAP and SWP websites for research on transatlantic publications and employment. DGAP allows a ‘topic search’ for ‘Transatlantic Relations;’ there are 9 articles that have identified authors (2 without, 11 total). SWP allows one to access ‘Publications,’ and then ‘Refine Search,’ by ‘Issues’ for ‘Transatlantic Relations.’ SWP has 42 articles on Transatlantic Relations. There are 3 SWP authors with more than 3 publications, which constitute 14/42 or 33% of total Transatlantic Relations publications (all publications have identified authors). There are 2 DGAP authors with more than 3 publications, which constitute 7/9 or 78% of Transatlantic publications with identified authors.

At DGAP, the 2 most prolific authors, who make up 78% (7/9) of publications are Josef Braml and Daniela Schwarzer. 3 out of 4 of Braml’s authorship take an economic approach, (“Diplomacy by Other Means” [the USA’s use of trade agreements as soft power], “Transatlantic Relations in Dire Financial Straits” [the USA needs to shift responsibility to others in delivering free trade and stable currency], “President Obama’s Berlin Visit” [the President’s will to enhance economic ties is thwarted by Congress, which has shifted US economic focus to Asia; Germany can step in as a regional economic and security actor].



Braml's 4<sup>th</sup> publication is, "The Bush Administration's Faith-Based Foreign Policy" [Europeans are distancing themselves from US leadership, with good reason].

Schwarzer focuses on the decaying state of the USA-Germany relationship, as with: "New Deals for the Old Continent" [The new US presidency (2017) is focused solely on its own interests and Europe can no longer rely on the US], "Obama's Message to a Sober Germany" ["Germany's view of Washington is Today Sobered"], "Why Obama Couldn't Rescue US-German Relations", [there is a fundamental value differential between the US and Germany].

Braml, focuses on the US' declining ability to project economic power across the Atlantic, and therefore Germany's opportunity to 'pick up the reigns' and step up as an economic/financial institution and political actor. Schwarzer focuses on the deep differences between the USA and Germany in international political outlook and characterizes Germany as currently breaking away from US leadership in international relations. Both authors focus on Germany stepping into a new role which is independent from the US. DGAP's authorship is not diverse and is on the great majority inhabited by Braml. The critical view serves to portray DGAP's production output as a platform for diplomatic protest against the status quo. This is quite different from SWP, as well shall soon see.

SWP's 3 most prolific authors on Transatlantic Relations constitute 33% (14/42) of total publications on the subject and are the following people: Annegret Bendiek, Markus Kaim and Stormy-Annika Mildner. Bendiek has 6 publications, where the other 2 authors have 4 publications each. 5 of 6 of Bendiek's publications are on cybersecurity, where she tends to propose cooperation to formulate better cybersecurity policy between the US, NATO and EU. She does note in 1 article the political effect of the NSA/Snowden affair, where

Germans were likely discontented with US cyber policy (“Europe Must Balance the Digital Hegemon”). As opposed to breaking from the US relationship, she proposes assertive cooperation by Germany with the US.

Kaim (4 articles) focuses on the new security role strategy of Germany, especially in reference to its place in NATO and NATO reform (“Reforming NATO’s Partnerships”, “The New White Paper 2016 - Promoting Greater Understanding of Security Policy?”), to improve NATO’s effectiveness, as well as in the EU, as an important EU security strategy contributor (“New European Security Strategy – The Transatlantic Factor”, “Partnership Plus: On the Future of the NATO-Ukraine Relationship”). Kaim’s work is largely in reference to international institutions and sees the US as a piece of the security environment rather than inhabiting its entirety.

Mildner writes on trade relations and focuses on cooperation and how it can be enacted between Germany and the US (“Shoulder-to-Shoulder for Open Markets and Investor Protection”), within the greater frameworks of the WTO, EU and TEC (Transatlantic Economic Council), to accomplish common goals such as the former TTIP (“Trade Agreement with Side Effects?”, “Conflict Management in Transatlantic Trade Relations”). She notes the deadlock that occurs in international negotiations and applauds Germany for its ability to push through an EU-interested agenda amongst such a deadlock in the 2007/8 portion of the Doha Round (“Between Transatlantic Integration and the Doha Round”).

The SWP publications seem to be less a platform for diplomatic protest, and rather write in reference to the greater international institutions (the EU, TEC, TWO, NATO, etc.), looking for avenues and strategies of cooperation (whether they discuss security,

cybersecurity, or trade policy). DGAP publications highlight the deteriorating (or fundamentally divided) relationship between the USA and Germany, and the USA and the EU, as well as the new-found prospects for Germany's influence in trade/economics/financial standards and international institutional politics/security to increase. SWP's approach as a relatively diverse think tank, with 3 authors who have online publications on the topic, is comparably more diverse when set next to DGAP (3 SWP authors have written 33% of output, where 2 DGAP authors have written 78% of output).

Having established a synopsis of DGAP's and SWP's majority Transatlantic relations publications, the author now moves to understand whether the phrase, "Who pays the piper calls the tune," applies to SWP and DGAP.

### **Overall Funding of DGAP and SWP**

DGAP Transatlantic Relations publications are about the decline of the USA and the decline of the US-German relationship. SWP publications, on the other hand, favor cooperation with the US and other international institutions. What does the source of funding tell us about the interests of the funders. In other words, if SWP is funded by corporation X, is corporation X then interested in supporting free-trade initiatives such as the former TTIP? And if DGAP is funded by government Y, then is the ruling party of government Y interested in enhancing German prestige on the world stage/influence in international relations? Understanding that the variables of certain funders would have to be identified as being, for example, 'interested in German prestige,' 'interested in free-market', etc., would be a difficult task, the author restrains from making certain assumptions that the following funders (corporations, governments etc.) can have their interests so easily ascertained. Thus, the following is an identification of the chief funders of each think tank, DGAP and SWP,

and extrapolatory discussion which is by no means the end-all, be-all of where mentioned corporate or government interests lie. The following discussion is meant to stimulate the wider discussion on whether, “who pays the Piper, calls the tune” is an issue worthy of more scientific investigation. Structural coupling could be evident where there is

Funding for DGAP is in the majority sourced from the following organizations, which have contributed €100,000 or more in the past year (2016): Airbus Group, German Foreign Office, Robert Bosch Foundation, Deutsche Bank, Dr. Arend Oetker and Otto Wolff Foundation. Of the €4.5Million budget<sup>1</sup>, approximately €2Million was derived for specifically requested projects (“Erträge aus Projektmitteln”), while about just €840,000 was awarded from the German government ‘without any strings attached’ (“Bundeszuschüsse außerhalb des Projektgeschäfts”). So, approximately 45% of all income was for project-specific funding, and just 19% (€840,000/€4.5M) of income was ‘no-strings-attached’ government funding. €3.7M (81%) of the overall budget was from non-governmental sources.

SWP Funding Institutions consist of three categories: German Funding Institutions, International Funding Institutions, and Sponsors. The only international funding institutions are: British Petroleum Europa SE, the Nordic Council of Ministers, and the Norwegian Ministry of Defense. The private corporation funders are BP Europa SE, Daimler, Deutsche Bank, and Volkswagen AG. Notable is that four of the five private corporation funders are German. The only international funders are Norwegian/Nordic government institutions and UK-based BP.

---

<sup>1</sup> DGAP Jahresbericht 2015/16  
[https://dgap.org/sites/default/files/static\\_page\\_downloads/dgap\\_jahresbericht\\_2015\\_2016.pdf](https://dgap.org/sites/default/files/static_page_downloads/dgap_jahresbericht_2015_2016.pdf)

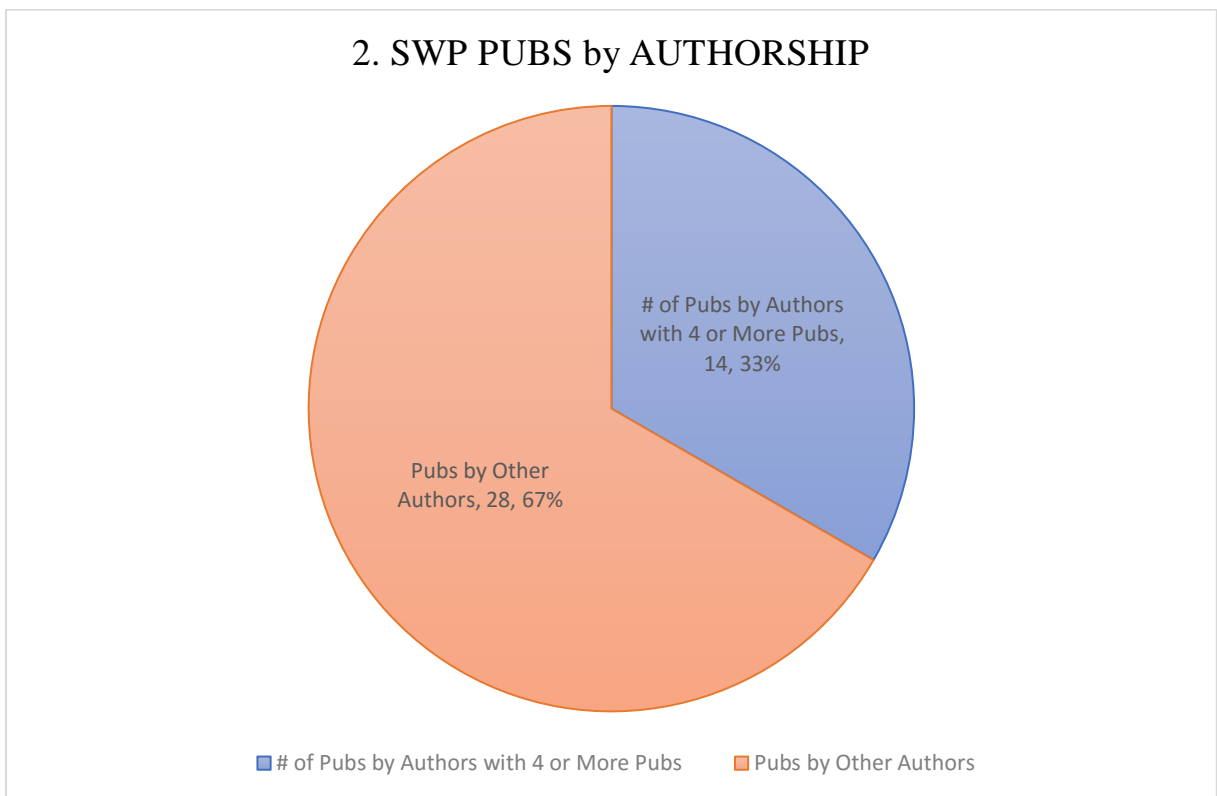
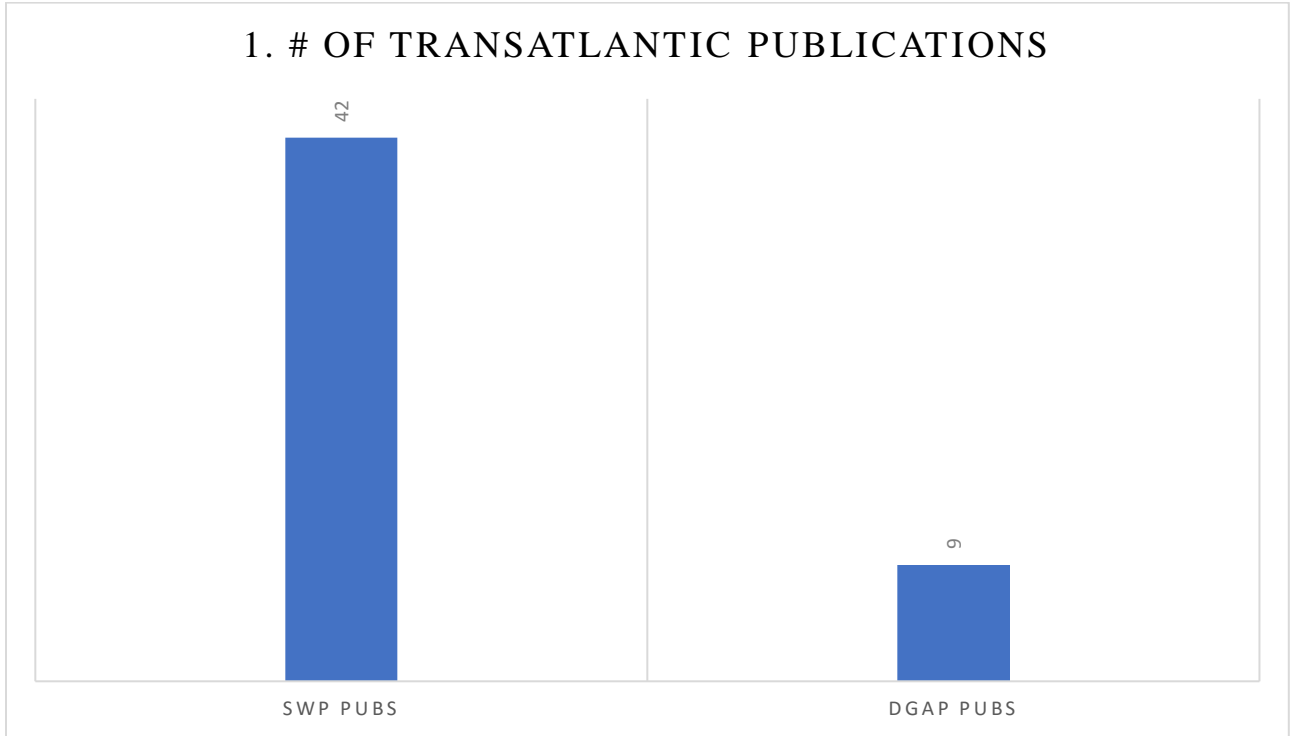
SWP's total 2016 revenue amounted to about €14.83Million<sup>2</sup>. The €12.3M (83% of total revenue) provided by government grants cover the entirety of the think tank's estimated personnel and operating costs and is equal to the total budget presented to the German government in requesting the think tank's yearly grant. Thus, it is fully funded by the government. SWP "operates exclusively under public regulations" (SWP Funding 2016). Additionally, SWP officially determines its own research agenda and "does not accept any research commissions." However, SWP is allowed to receive additional revenue up to 25% of the total government grant. In 2016, this amounted to €2.53Million, 56% of which was interestingly sourced from the German government and European Union. The additional funds are used for special research projects, and SWP does not receive commissions from further revenue attained from such special research projects. There is a firm commitment to "scientific rigour, independence and relevance" (ibid).

DGAP is significantly more reliant on private project-specific funding (€2M versus €4.5Million total budget, or 45%), versus SWP (€2.53Million Additional funding/€14.83 total budget, or 19%). Additionally, SWP iterated its ideals of scientific rigor and academic independence in forming its own agenda. This was not as clear with DGAP. The overall budget of SWP (€14.83M), is over 3 times the size of DGAP (€4.5Million). This is reflected in the number of online publications on Transatlantic relations (SWP:42, DGAP:11).

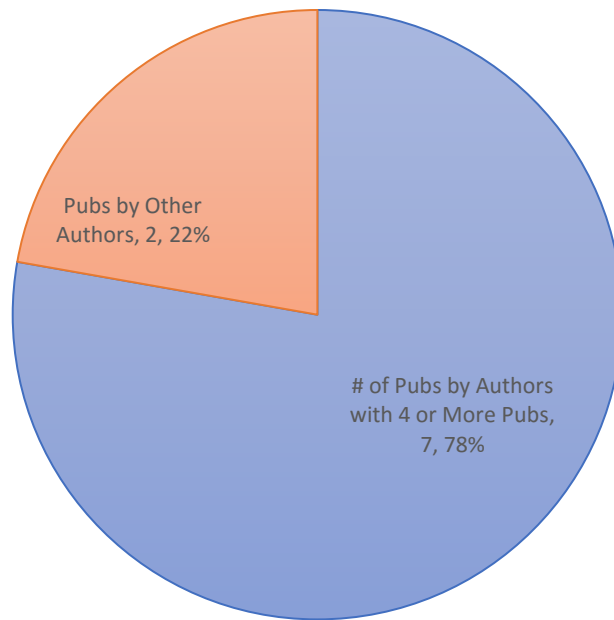
---

<sup>2</sup> SWP Funding 2016 <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/about-swp/foundation/funding/>

## Figures

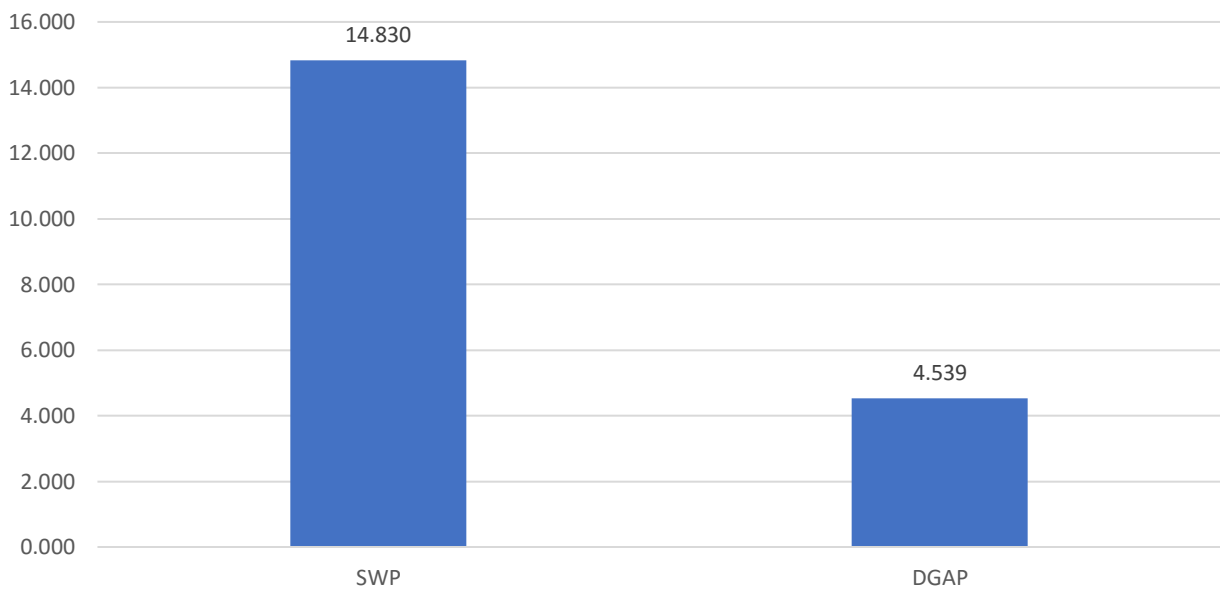


### 3. DGAP PUBS by AUTHORSHIP

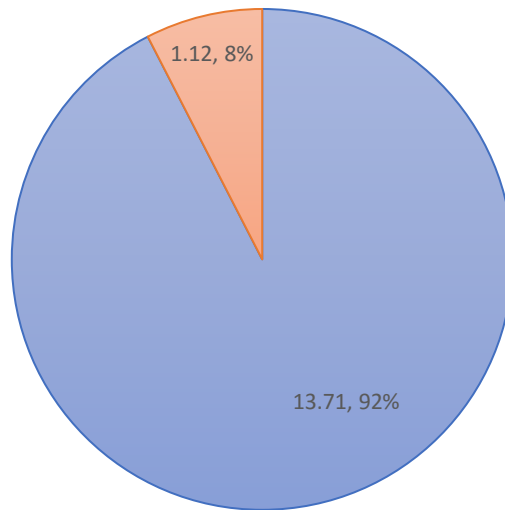


■ # of Pubs by Authors with 4 or More Pubs    ■ Pubs by Other Authors

### 4. TOTAL BUDGETS, MILLIONS of €

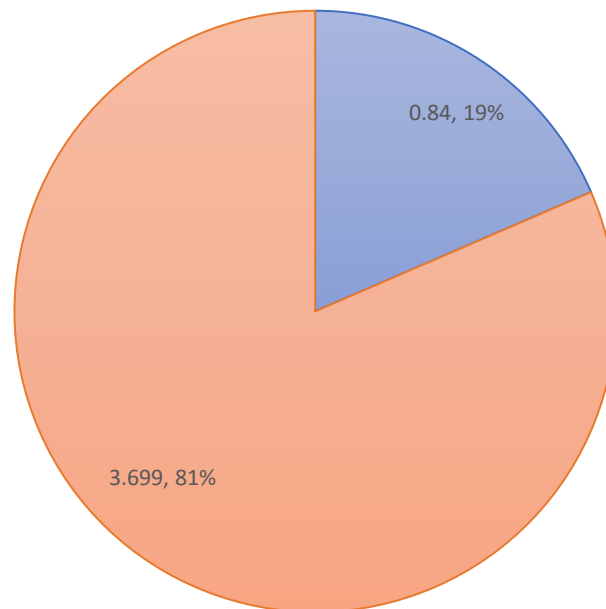


## 5. SWP FUNDING SOURCES



■ Total Government (German Govt + EU) Funding in Millions of €

## 6. DGAP FUNDING SOURCES



■ Total Government (German Govt + EU) Funding in Millions of €

■ Funding, from non-Govt sources, in Millions of €



## CHAPTER 3: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

### Discussion

The case study was an evaluation of 3 aspects of Transatlantic Relations work at DGAP and SWP. 1) Projects with commentary on project-specific funding sources, 2) Authorship and Publications/Production Output and, 3) Overall funding sources. Following is the conclusion, which is an iteration of the findings from each section, and then a discussion of what this could mean in terms of the theoretical framework built in this thesis, which created a ‘searchlight’ for preferences and autopoietic/self-referential systems. These might be evident in ‘thought bubbles’, where there is a lack in diversity of authorship, and a lack of diverse opinion in authorship, as well as in structural coupling of funding to authorship.

SWP is motivated to foster “regular, confidential dialogue between decision-makers and think tanks in the United States and European Union on current issues of international politics” (SWP 2017). In practice, there is a tripartite of projects differentiated into academic post-doctoral placements, US-UK-Germany political biannual strategic dialogues, and regional security in Northern Europe funded by the Norwegian government. SWP covers a broad field with its three projects which take place in different spheres of foreign policy influence. There is significant (perhaps surprising) weight given to the German-Norwegian and German-Nordic relationship, especially in context of NATO country think tank exchanges in the post-doc program. Funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers and Norwegian Ministry of Defense pushes this point.

The US-German relationship is inclusive of the UK's presence in the post-doc exchange program and the presence of a London segment of the Biannual strategic summit between the US, UK and Germany. Thus, the UK may act as a broker or at least a complement to the Transatlantic relationship from Germany to the US. This is in contrast to DGAP's exclusive focus on the Germany-US transatlantic relationship, evidenced by the motivation to, "strengthen strategic dialogues between Berlin and Washington" (DGAP 2017). The DGAP approach is broader foreign policy which focuses the relationship with the US as a strategic actor. Projects on Afghanistan and the Arab Spring indicate this. The SWP regional focus, and regional ally focus, is in contrast to this. Funding coming from the German Marshall Fund and US Embassy connect the source of funding as being only US and German to the fact that the think tank is focused on the US in its Transatlantic relationship.

DGAP publications demonstrated a lack of diversity relative to SWP, with 78% on Transatlantic relations being authored by just two authors, and the majority of those by Josef Braml. The content of the DGAP publications stood in contrast to SWP publications, because DGAP publications emphasized Germany's new role as a strategic actor and where it can 'take the reigns' from the US in the international monetary system. The discontent that some Germans feel with US foreign policy is highlighted as well, as the effect of DGAP's publications left the author with a view of DGAP publications as un-diverse in author and opinion, as well as negative towards the Transatlantic relationship.

SWP publications, on the other hand, were relatively diverse in authorship and content (33% by 3 authors). The SWP publications tended to look for areas of cooperation with the US and thus framed the Transatlantic relationship mostly positively, as an avenue where economic and security benefits can be enhanced via TTIP and NATO updating.

Funding for SWP is entirely (100%) guaranteed by the German government, and SWP receives an additional 25% funding from external sources for special projects — 56% of which still comes from government bodies: the German government and European Union. This is in contrast to DGAP, which is guaranteed just 19% by the German government. 45% of DGAP's budget comes from project-specific funding, the funding sources of which, were not specific in the available data (Jahresbericht 2016). SWP's total budget (€14.83M), is over 3 times the size of DGAP's (€4.5Million). This is reflected in the number of online publications on Transatlantic relations (SWP:42, DGAP:11).

SWP is effectively a quangos (quasi non-governmental organization), which receives full funding from the German government but acts independently, because only €1.11M (7.5%) of the overall budget is derived from sources other than the German government and European Union. This €1.11M is 44% of total external funding (€2.53M), and the remaining 56% (€1.41M) comes from the German government and European Union. Where SWP is effectively a Quangos in respect to these budget-derived numbers, DGAP does not receive enough money from the Germany government, as a proportion of its budget, to be considered a quangos. DGAP only receives €840,000 (19% of a €4.5M total budget) from government sources (the German government). €2M (45% of total budget) comes from its non-governmental sponsors for specific projects, within a total of 81% (€3.7M) deriving from non-governmental sources towards the overall budget.

It seems that there is a 'thought bubble' in DGAP, where Braml and Schwarzer write nearly all Transatlantic relations publications. When funding is considered, there could be structural coupling between DGAP's production output and projects -- which are at once dedicated to community learning and focused on elite dialogue -- and DGAP's sources of

funding. While DGAP is committed to strengthening the Washington – Berlin dialogue, the lack of ‘no strings attached’ government funding makes the author question whether the non-governmental funding behind DGAP is causing DGAP to reduce its potential output on Transatlantic relations which would be outside of a Berlin – Washington focus, due to a possible emphasis on the corporate lobbying interest which German companies necessarily have in Washington. Although DGAP has quite clear autopoeitic authorship/production output, this is not as clear with corporate funded projects. It would be a presumption to state that the corporate lobbying is the basis for Washington – Berlin dialogue to be the focus. However, the author asserts that this would be a worthy avenue of further investigation. Structural coupling between DGAP’s projects and production would then be proved. At the least, there is a far greater chance of DGAP’s projects and production to be structurally coupled to the interests of its non-government donors, because they are just that – non-German governmental, and thus the independent research/production initiative that think tanks thrive on may not be as respected as it is in SWP, with its full adherence to public/independent scientific research protocols.

SWP shows autopoeisis mostly in its publications on cybersecurity, because one author has written all the articles on the topic, as well as the most articles of any author. This is more easily justifiable, though, because having a single expert on cybersecurity in Transatlantic relations is relatively, a very focused topic. Other than cybersecurity, there is no evidence of autopoeisis/self-referential systems in the authorship and production of SWP on Transatlantic relations. The funding, as a very important variable, comes almost entirely from the German government, which comes in respect to public/independent research legal clauses. This means that SWP likely maintains its research and production independence to a

far larger degree when compared with DGAP. Thus, for SWP, they who pay the piper probably do not call the tune. Structural coupling, then, is less likely between SWP and its funding sources. Where there is the potential for structural coupling, is where the 25% additional revenue that SWP pulls in, is dedicated to special research projects, as outlined above. However, SWP's emphasizes following public/research independence protocols, and in establishing its own agenda; it can be considered a quangos. This is much less so for DGAP.

## **Conclusion**

The sophisticated theoretical framework set out an ambitious plan to understand strategic culture from the perspective of a 'thought bubble' which may or may not be *operationally closed* to further evolutions, which are in turn restricted by either preferences or an external sense of determination. Where Niklas Luhmann's systems theory was bridled astride the thought of Andrew Moravcsik's liberalist societal actors, this paper was able to point out the possibility for *structural coupling* between think tank interests, the authors employed, and the funding received. The explanatory target being 'Strategic Culture,' we were able to disentangle the origin of foreign policy attitudes as being differentiated in societal actorship. Indeed, who determines foreign policy is directly linked to foreign policy action.

The strategic culture of DGAP and SWP towards the Transatlantic relationship differs. DGAP scholarship takes a negative approach, while SWP takes a positive approach. The strategic culture has been deconstructed in order to find its origins, using the evaluation tools of autopoiesis and structural coupling to understand the strategic culture as preference formation. DGAP's thought bubble in authorship (78% of online Transatlantic publications

by 2 authors) is contrasted by SWP's lack of one (33% of online Transatlantic publications by 3 authors). The scale difference between the two think tanks is reflected by the SWP's 42 available online transatlantic publications, versus DGAP's 9 (11 including those without identified authors). The budgetary difference is large as well, with SWP functioning as an almost entirely governmentally funded quangos (total budget: €14.83M), and DGAP deriving most of its funding from other sources and not being a quangos (total budget: €4.5M).

Funding plays a vital role to the think tanks' survival and funding derived externally, from non-governmental sources, may determine the agenda of DGAP, where it is either not so, or much less so, at SWP. 8% of project funding at SWP is non-governmentally derived, where 45% of project funding at DGAP is non-governmentally derived. Thus, external funding influence on strategic culture leaning would be more evident at DGAP than at SWP. SWP's regional, cooperative focus stands in contrast to DGAP's bilateral, Washington – Berlin focus, as understood by looking at their Transatlantic projects. The amount of influence that SWP and DGAP have in Germany's foreign policy towards the Transatlantic relationship may be reflected in the amount of funding that each think tank receives from the government.

The case study prevailed in applying a pioneering approach to strategic culture creation. It indicated that strategic culture is readily determined by societal actors who have interests. This means that strategic culture is more malleable than would be expected from a conservative definition of culture. The evolutionary behavior of strategic culture actors is, according to our analysis, operationally open and operationally closed based on the societal actors involved. Hopefully, this serves as an analytical exposure of strategic culture creation, and as an argument for the malleability of strategic culture.

## REFERENCES

- Anheier, Helmut (2008). "The CIVICUS Civil Society Index: Proposals for Future Directions" in V. Finn Heinrich and Lorenzo Fioramonti, ed., *CIVICUS Global Survey of the State of Civil Society Volume 2, Comparative Perspectives*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, p. 30.
- Becker, S. (2013). Germany and War : Understanding Strategic Culture under the Merkel Government. *Ministere de La Defense, Republique Francais, Paris Papers*, 9, 82.
- Brummer, K. (2012). Germany ' s participation in the Kosovo war : Bringing agency back in. *Acta Politica*, 47(3), 272–291. <https://doi.org/10.1057/ap.2011.1>
- Chappell, L. (2010). Differing Member State approaches to the development of the EU battlegroups concept: Implications for CSDP. *University of Surrey*, 2839(November), 1–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2010.498419>
- Dalgaard-Nielsen, A. (2005). The Test of Strategic Culture: Germany, Pacifism and Pre-emptive Strikes. *Security Dialogue*, 36(3), 339–359. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010605057020>
- Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Auswaertige Politik (DGAP) (German Council on Foreign Relations), 2017. USA/Transatlantic Relations Program. [online] DGAP e.V. Available at: <<https://dgap.org/en/think-tank/program/transatlantic>> [Accessed 12 Feb. 2017].
- Director of National Intelligence (DNI). (2008). German Think Tank Guide. *Open Source Center (OSC)*. Retrieved from <https://fas.org/irp/dni/osc/german-think.pdf>
- Gray, C. S. (1999). Strategic Culture as Context : The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back Strategic culture as context : the first generation of theory strikes back \*. *Review of International Studies*, 25(1), 49–69.
- Haftendorn, H. (1999). German Foreign Policy in a Strategic Triangle. *German Politics and Society*, 1.
- Hoffmann, A., & Longhurst, K. (1999). German Strategic Culture in Action. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 20(2), 31–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523269908404220>
- Johnston, A. I. (1995). Thinking about Strategic Culture Published by : The MIT Press Thinking about Alastair Iain Johnston Strategic Culture. *International Security*, 19(4), 32–64.
- Keohane, D. (2016). Judy Dempsey ' s Strategic Europe Policy or Project ? France , Germany , and EU Defense.

- Lee, D. (1997). The Society of Society: The Grand Finale of Niklas Luhmann\*. *Die Gesellschaft Der Gesellschaft*, (July), 320–330. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0735-2751.00102>
- Luhmann, N. (1977). Differentiation of Society. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 2(1), 29–53. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3340510>
- Luhmann, N. (1992). The concept of society. *Thesis Eleven*, 31(1), 67–80.
- Mahnken, T. G. (2006). United States Strategic Culture. *Defense Threat Reduction Agency, Advanced Systems and Concepts Office*, (November).
- Malici, A. (2006). Germans as Venetians : The Culture of German Foreign Policy Behavior. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, (2), 37–62.
- McGann, J. G. (2014). 2013 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report, (215), 117. Retrieved from <http://gotothinktank.com/dev1/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/GoToReport2013.pdf>
- Moravcsik, A. (1993). Liberalism and International Relations Theory. Retrieved from [https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/liberalism\\_working.pdf](https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/liberalism_working.pdf)
- Moravcsik, A. (1998). Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics: Erratum. *International Organization*, 52(1), 229. <https://doi.org/10.1162/002081898550536>
- Searle, A. (2013). Inter-service Debate and the Origins of Strategic Culture : The “ Principles of War ” in the British Armed Forces , 1919 – 1939. *War in History*, 21(1), 4–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0968344513505523>
- Snyder, S. (n.d.). Summary: Niklas Luhmann, Theory of Society, I(1997). Retrieved from [https://www.academia.edu/3316731/Summary\\_Selections\\_from\\_Niklas\\_Luhmanns\\_Theory\\_of\\_Society?auto=download](https://www.academia.edu/3316731/Summary_Selections_from_Niklas_Luhmanns_Theory_of_Society?auto=download)
- Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) (German Institute for International and Security Affairs), 2017. Projects, “Transatlantic Relations.” [online] - SWP. Available at: <<https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/projects/#c1934>> [Accessed 12 Feb. 2017].