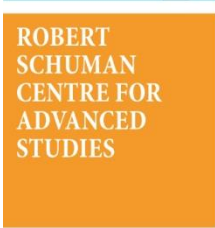




European  
University  
Institute



ROBERT  
SCHUMAN  
CENTRE FOR  
ADVANCED  
STUDIES

# WORKING PAPERS

RSCAS 2015/46  
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

Reluctant Powers: A Concept-Building Approach and  
an Application to the Case of Germany

Sandra Destradi



European University Institute  
**Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies**

**Reluctant Powers: A Concept-Building Approach and an  
Application to the Case of Germany**

Sandra Destradi

EUI Working Paper **RSCAS** 2015/46

This text may be downloaded only for personal research purposes. Additional reproduction for other purposes, whether in hard copies or electronically, requires the consent of the author(s), editor(s). If cited or quoted, reference should be made to the full name of the author(s), editor(s), the title, the working paper, or other series, the year and the publisher.

ISSN 1028-3625

© Sandra Destradi, 2015

Printed in Italy, June 2015

European University Institute

Badia Fiesolana

I – 50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)

Italy

[www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Publications/](http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Publications/)

[www.eui.eu](http://www.eui.eu)

[cadmus.eui.eu](http://cadmus.eui.eu)

## **Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies**

The Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS), created in 1992 and directed by Professor Brigid Laffan, aims to develop inter-disciplinary and comparative research on the major issues facing the process of European integration, European societies and Europe's place in 21<sup>st</sup> century global politics.

The Centre is home to a large post-doctoral programme and hosts major research programmes, projects and data sets, in addition to a range of working groups and *ad hoc* initiatives. The research agenda is organised around a set of core themes and is continuously evolving, reflecting the changing agenda of European integration, the expanding membership of the European Union, developments in Europe's neighbourhood and the wider world.

Details of the research of the Centre can be found on:

<http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Research/>

Research publications take the form of Working Papers, Policy Papers, and e-books. Most of these are also available on the RSCAS website:

<http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Publications/>

The EUI and the RSCAS are not responsible for the opinions expressed by the author(s).



## **Abstract**

Reluctance is an extremely widespread phenomenon in international politics. For example, several rising powers have displayed an inconsistent, flip-flopping approach towards their regions and have not conformed to the expectations and wishes of their potential regional followers. While the notion of reluctance is frequently employed to describe this type of incoherent and unresponsive foreign policy, the concept of reluctance has not been systematically defined and discussed in the fields of International Relations (IR) and Foreign Policy Analysis. This paper develops a conceptualization of reluctance by identifying the concept's semantic field and discussing how reluctance relates to similar but distinct notions in the field of IR (concept reconstruction) and, on that basis, by outlining the constitutive dimensions of reluctance and their operationalization (concept building). To illustrate how this conceptualization of reluctance can provide new insights in empirical analyses, the concept is applied to the case of Germany's approach to crisis management in Europe and the European neighborhood.

## **Keywords**

Reluctance, rising powers, foreign policy, Germany, Eurozone crisis, Ukraine.





## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Events like the Ukraine crisis or the fast spread of ISIL in the Middle East have generated a perception that we are living in an increasingly crisis-ridden world, in an “age of entropy,” in which the international system has become “disordered, messed up, chaotic, and unpredictable” (Schweller 2014, 10). This perception and arguably the chaos itself have been amplified by an apparent lack of countries able or willing to provide some kind of order or governance, either at the global level or in various world regions. While the United States has become increasingly preoccupied with domestic problems, rising powers like India, Brazil, China and South Africa have not displayed a readiness to step into the fray and contribute to the provision of order – thereby behaving, according to some authors, as free riders or “free risers” (Bunde and Oroz 2015, 22). Most importantly, these rising powers have not only failed to display a clear readiness to become substantively engaged in the management of global affairs beyond their regions, where their capabilities are still limited; they have also displayed rather ambivalent and indecisive foreign policies in their own regions, where their predominance, by contrast, is unequivocal. Brazil, for example, has at times been proactive in dealing with South American countries, for example by promoting MERCOSUR, but has also shown a high degree of ambivalence towards its region, not pushing regional integration beyond a certain point (Spektor 2010) and “not ceding the necessary authority for effective transnational institutionalization” (Burgess 2014, 8). South Africa’s approach to Africa has similarly been characterized as full of “ambiguities and contradictions” (Alden and Le Pere 2009, 145). India has also pursued an ambivalent policy in South Asia, combining hegemonic attitudes with cooperative rhetoric while refraining from the formulation of a leadership project for its conflict-ridden region (Destradi 2012). In many cases, despite its clear preponderance of power in South Asia, India has merely responded to initiatives developed by others and has been extremely reactive (Ganguly 2003). In Europe, despite the emergence of Germany as the regional power in the context of the Eurozone crisis (Bulmer and Paterson, 2013), several observers have noted that “[l]eadership from Berlin has been hesitant” and plagued by a “capacity-expectations gap” (Bulmer 2014, 1245). China has been rather assertive in its own region, but has also been described as pursuing an “incoherent grand strategy” beyond it (Pu 2012). According to some observers, China “deliberately speaks with different voices, depending on the target audience” (Schweller 2014, 69), thereby confusing its international partners.

What we are therefore observing in our current crisis-ridden world is, especially among rising powers, a frequently incoherent flip-flopping contradictory way of doing foreign policy. Among its features is a diffuse unwillingness or inability to deal with different kinds of crisis and to contribute to the provision of governance and order in regional and international affairs, despite requests from other actors. This paper tries to make sense of this diffuse attitude by resorting to the notion of “reluctance” and developing a conceptualization of reluctance in international politics. The notion of reluctance is frequently used to describe this peculiarly indecisive way of doing foreign policy, for example with reference to India or to Germany, which have both been dubbed “reluctant hegemons” (Mitra 2003; Paterson 2011), or to South Africa, which has been termed a “reluctant leader” in Africa (Esterhuysen 2010). Similarly, the Munich Security Report 2015 (Bunde and Oroz 2015), a brief publication

---

<sup>1</sup> Earlier versions of this paper have been presented at seminars at the European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, research area Europe in the World, and the Swedish National Defence College, as well as at the ISA General Conference in New Orleans in February 2015 and at the conference “Changing Asia: Perspectives on Regional and Global Cooperation” at the GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies in April 2015. I am grateful to the participants, particularly to Ulrich Krotz, Kjell Engelbrekt, Ronnie Hjort, Chiara Ruffa, Miriam Prys, Fabrizio Cotichia, Richard Maher, Michal Onderco, Katerina Wright, and Katharina Meissner for their helpful comments at different stages of this project. The paper was written while I was a Jean Monnet Fellow at the Robert Schuman Centre of the EUI, research area “Europe in the World” during the academic year 2014/15. I am particularly grateful to my mentor at the EUI, Ulrich Krotz, for his support and advice, and to Magnus Schöller for extensive comments on an earlier version. All the usual caveats apply.

associated with the Munich Security Conference, was entitled *Collapsing Orders, Reluctant Guardians*, reflecting anxiety about the lack of actors able or willing to deal with international and regional crises decisively. The report even argues that the collapse of international order has itself been “both a driver and an effect of the increasing reluctance of its traditional guardians” (ibid., 22), like the United States, as well as of potential new guardians, the rising powers.

Despite being frequently used in the literature, however, the notion of reluctance has not been explicitly defined or discussed so far. Most authors employ it in a rather casual unspecific way. While in its current under-specified and under-theorized application the term is not of much use beyond description, I argue that it can yield analytical benefits if it is appropriately conceptualized. In fact, the existing analytical toolbox in the fields of International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis does not offer suitable concepts to make sense of the widespread phenomenon of powerful or rising states that pursue inconsistent confusing courses of action and do not bring to bear their power resources to coherently manage international crises that potentially affect them.

Against this backdrop, this contribution aims to conceptualize reluctance in order to clarify the meaning of the concept and to make it applicable to empirical analyses of international politics. To do this, the paper builds upon and combines different approaches to concept reconstruction and concept building, which are briefly discussed in the next section. The actual conceptualization exercise proceeds as follows. First, based on a qualitative content analysis of selected IR literature that explicitly uses the notion of reluctance, I inductively identify the key issues usually associated with this term. This helps as a first approach to delineating the broader semantic field of reluctance, and thereby contributes to concept reconstruction as suggested by Giovanni Sartori (1984, 41-50). Based on this broader semantic field, in a second step I move on to identifying the theoretical approaches in the field of IR that address types of state behavior related to reluctance, but not necessarily identical to it. These are the notions of exceptionalism, isolationism, under-aggression and under-balancing. I thus move beyond the mere semantics of reluctance and I find that the concept of reluctance shares some characteristics with each of the four notions, but is distinct from each of them. Based on the insights gained from situating the concept of reluctance in the broader IR literature, I proceed with the actual concept-building exercise, which follows the guidelines outlined by Gary Goertz (2006) in his work on social science concepts. I therefore discuss the negative poles of reluctance – i.e. what reluctance is not; I develop two core “secondary,” constitutive dimensions of reluctance; and I operationalize these two dimensions, developing indicators for empirical analysis. In a nutshell, I conceive of reluctance as a specific way or style of doing foreign policy that involves a hesitant, ambivalent, indecisive attitude and a certain recalcitrance about conforming to the expectations articulated by others. In the following section, I apply the concept of reluctance to an assessment of Germany’s policies in crisis management in Europe and in the European neighborhood. My aim is to illustrate how the application of this concept as an analytical tool helps shed new light on the controversial question of how to interpret German policies. Finally, I discuss how this more precise conceptualization of reluctance as a specific way of doing foreign policy can help us make sense of the policies of rising powers, and I develop some thoughts on the potential implications of reluctance for regional and global governance.

### **Mapping the Field: Reconnecting Concept Reconstruction and Concept Building**

While the importance of concepts in the social sciences cannot be underestimated, extensive reflection on the process of defining and clarifying concepts remains rare, with notable exceptions (Sartori 1970, 1975, 1984; Goertz 2006, 2008; Goertz and Mazur 2008; Collier et al. 2012). Among the few studies that explicitly deal with the issue of concept formation in the social sciences, there is disagreement on the first step to take. Giovanni Sartori suggests that this first step should always be “concept reconstruction,” which amounts to tracing the use of the concept in previous works in order to assess how others have defined it and to extract and systematize underlying characteristics (Sartori 1984, 41-50). As a subsequent step, Sartori recommends “allocation of the term,” that is, the choice of a specific word to be associated with the concept one intends to study. To do this, one needs to relate the term

that designates the concept to its semantic field to make sure that reconceptualization does not lead to a loss of meaning of other terms, or to an increase in ambiguity instead of greater clarity (ibid., 51-53).<sup>2</sup> Only after concept reconstruction and allocation of the term can we proceed to the main step of reconceptualization or concept building, according to Sartori. In a similar fashion, Adcock and Collier (2001, 531) argue that conceptualization – that is, the formulation of a systematized concept – must be based on an assessment of what they call the “background concept:” the existing “broad constellation of meanings and understandings associated with a given concept.”

Much more than Sartori, Goertz (2006, 4) highlights that thinking about concepts involves going well beyond semantics – it implies carrying out a “theoretical and empirical analysis of the object or the phenomenon” that is being conceptualized. Correspondingly, Goertz (ibid., 5) thinks of concepts in *ontological* terms, since conceptualizations imply focusing on what constitutes a phenomenon; in *causal* terms, since the central dimensions of concepts have causal powers, which in turn shape theories that employ these concepts; and in *realist* terms, since concepts always relate to empirical phenomena. To adequately address these aspects, it is important to address the structure of concepts and the relationships between the different dimensions and levels within concepts in the concept-building exercise. According to Goertz (ibid., 27), developing a concept amounts to “*deciding* what is important about an entity [emphasis added].” However, he does not tell us much on how to make this essential decision in the first stage of concept building. In other words, how do we know what *is* important about an entity? In order to avoid at least some of the arbitrariness that might be associated with starting the concept-building exercise without appropriate groundwork, it is useful to start with concept reconstruction, as suggested by Sartori (or to assess the background concept, in Adcock and Collier’s terms). The need to build upon previous uses of a concept seems particularly compelling for notions like reluctance, which are already frequently employed in the literature but in a confused and unspecific manner – that is, when concept building is used to clarify the meaning of an existing term.

### ***Concept Reconstruction: The Broader Semantic Field***

As a first step, it is therefore useful to map the field, that is, to analyze existing literature that uses the concept of reluctance in order to find out how the concept is defined and what notions and types of behavior are usually associated with it. While the notion of reluctance is not specific to International Relations or to Political Science and is indeed frequently used in a range of fields, from Medicine to Sociology and Psychology to analyze specific forms of behavior, a striking commonality across disciplines is an absence of definitions or sophisticated operationalizations of reluctance. For example, clinical studies that deal with patients’ reluctance to take preventive medication, to undergo preventive tests, or to seek treatment, either simply equate reluctance with a choice not to do something (Quaid and Morris 1993) or, in a slightly more sophisticated manner, associate reluctance with a general *resistance* to taking medication (Port et al. 2001) or with the notion of not seeing a doctor despite knowing one should do so or despite family and friends thinking one should do so (Meltzer et al. 2000). A sociological study of people’s reluctance to relocate for a better job does not discuss the concept of reluctance itself, but simply operationalizes it by looking at different degrees of stated (*un*)willingness (Bielby and Bielby 1992). Or, to mention another example, in a study on reluctance to communicate undesirable information, reluctance is operationalized as a *time lag* in the transmission of information or as the transmission of *incomplete information* (Rosen and Tesser 1970).

In studies that focus on the reluctance of states in foreign policy, that is, in the fields of International Relations and History, we observe a similar lack of definitions. In fact, most studies that prominently mention reluctance in their titles do not explicitly define or discuss the concept, and, in

---

<sup>2</sup> Sartori clearly distinguishes between concepts and the words chosen to express them. Therefore, Goertz’s criticism of Sartori’s “semantic” approach to concepts does not seem entirely justified – even though Sartori clearly displays a comparatively greater interest in semantics, as is revealed by his somewhat confusing discussion, for example, of the impact of translations. See Goertz (2006: 3); Sartori (1984: 18-22).

the case of books, do not even include the term in the index (e.g. Fehl 2012; Haass 1997; Lowe 1967; Dueck 2006). Nevertheless, these studies address a specific type of state behavior or a specific way of doing foreign policy that has distinct and identifiable characteristics. In order to gather more systematic information on how reluctance is understood in the field of IR, I have carried out a qualitative content analysis of selected studies that prominently use this term, proceeding inductively, that is, approaching the text corpus without a pre-defined set of categories. The results of the analysis are displayed in Figure 1.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1** Notions associated with reluctance in international politics



Reluctance is usually associated, among other things, with a highly *ambivalent attitude*, *hesitant behavior* and a *selective commitment*. For example, as Fehl (2012, 10) highlights, a reluctant United States was the main proponent of an International Trade Organization after World War II, but later stopped supporting the idea; it signed most human rights conventions, but then did not ratify them during the Cold War.<sup>4</sup> In the post-Cold War world, according to Haass (1997), the United States has become a “reluctant sheriff,” struggling with the costs of providing order and with decreasing domestic interest in and consensus on foreign policy issues. This reluctance is associated with ad-hoc short-term approaches and with a lack of “clarity and soundness of purpose” (ibid., 3).<sup>5</sup> Schweller

<sup>3</sup> The analysis proceeded in a “data-driven way,” that is, by “letting [the] categories emerge from the data” (Schreier 2012, 25). In other words, the text corpus was analyzed by looking specifically for expressions associated with the notion of reluctance or used to describe behavior defined as “reluctant.” This approach is suitable given the descriptive aim of the exercise (ibid., 43): the identification of the broader semantic field of concepts that are associated with reluctance in the literature. The different aspects emerging inductively from the text were summarized in categories, which are highlighted in italics in this paper: ambivalent attitude, hesitant behavior, selective commitment, incoherence, obstructionism towards others’ initiatives, and slowness. Figure 1 visualizes the relationship between more specific aspects such as “decline financial contributions” or “no alternative vision” and the inductively elaborated categories, which are visualized in bigger characters as emerging out of the concept cloud.

<sup>4</sup> For a prescriptive approach proposing the notion of “selective engagement,” see Art 2003, ch. 4.

<sup>5</sup> On a rather different note, Ikenberry (1998/99, 63) argues that the United States acted as a “reluctant superpower” in the postwar period since “it was not eager to actively organize and run” the international order that it had created. While this underscores the selectivity of commitment highlighted by other authors, Ikenberry interestingly argues that this

(2014, 6) similarly sees a danger in the current attitude of the United States, which risks becoming an “elephant on the sidelines, a potential but reluctant hegemon unwilling to lead.” An analysis of Norway’s, Sweden’s and Switzerland’s approaches to European integration identifies reluctance with skepticism towards integration. A preference for more limited forms of integration and the adoption of hesitant policies are seen as distinctive of this reluctant attitude (Gstöhl 2002, 3-4). Related to ambivalence, hesitation, and selectivity of commitment is a high degree of *incoherence* in a reluctant country’s policies – as Patrick puts it, Washington “has often seemed skittish about committing itself to proposed international legal regimes,” for example on the ICC or on human rights conventions (Patrick 2002, 5). Similarly, Britain in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has been termed a “reluctant imperialist,” with reluctance amounting to caution and aloofness from European affairs (Lowe 1967, 9) and, interestingly, to a certain “amateurishness” in foreign policy-making (*ibid.*, 13). Other elements associated with reluctance are an *obstructionism towards others’ initiatives* and a certain *slowness* in implementing policies, with delays and sometimes even the adoption of “time-buying” tactics. For example, the US Senate during the 1990s “stalled, diluted, or defeated” a range of multilateral initiatives in the field of control of weapons of mass destruction, with the most evident case being the rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (Patrick 2002, 3).

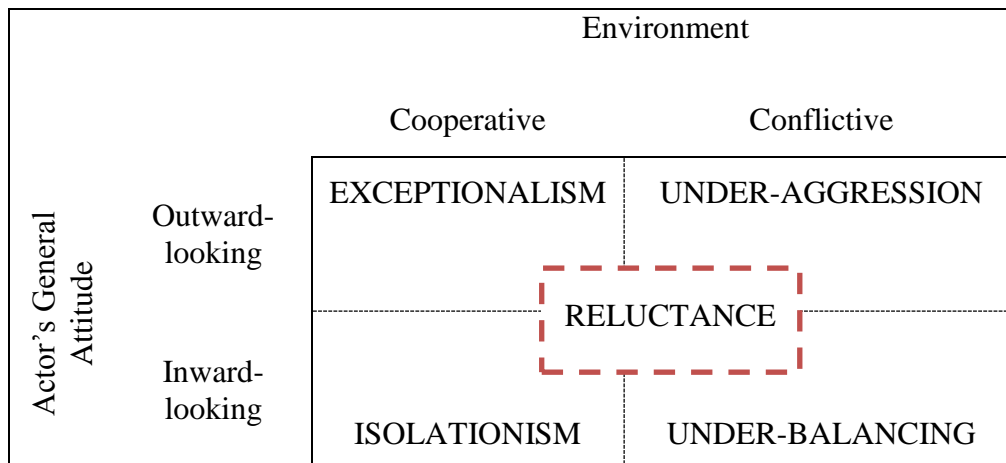
In sum, an assessment of the broader semantic field of reluctance reveals that this notion is related to policies that are ambivalent and at times even obstructionist towards the initiatives of others, that involve shirking responsibility, a hesitant attitude, delays in implementation, selectivity of commitments, and incoherence.

### ***Concept Reconstruction: Related Theoretical Approaches***

Based on the above assessment of the broader semantic field of reluctance, a further useful step in concept reconstruction consists in relating the concept to existing theoretical approaches in the field, in this case in the subject area of International Relations. In particular, there are four notions that are explicitly or implicitly related to the concept of reluctance as it has developed from the analysis of the broader semantic field, and that describe different types of foreign policy that powerful or rising states can adopt. They are exceptionalism, isolationism, under-aggression, and under-balancing. Figure 2 provides an overview of these concepts and an illustration of how reluctance relates to them, with the dashed lines indicating that the concepts are not just closely interrelated but sometimes even overlapping. The four concepts, which will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections, can be ordered according to the cooperative vs. conflictive nature of the environment; and to the general attitude of the actor, which can be more or less outward- vs. inward-looking.

(Contd.) \_\_\_\_\_

reluctance had positive implications since it reassured other states “that the United States would operate within limits and not use its overwhelming power position simply to dominate”(ibid.).

**Figure 2 Concepts related to reluctance**

The concept of *exceptionalism* refers to a body of literature that studies the foreign policy of states that have a particular sense of entitlement or a perception of being exceptional and therefore not subject to the rules and constraints binding other states. This leads, on the one hand, to policies aimed at “liberating” others in the name of some messianic belief or some special responsibility (Holsti 2010) – a feature that is barely related to reluctance. With reference to the United States, underlying this neoconservative approach to exceptionalism is the notion that an exceptional country “should be exempted from the international rules that bind other nations” (Halperin and Boyer 2007, 2). On the other hand, therefore, exceptionalism entails efforts to achieve freedom of action by shedding the burden of cooperation in multilateral institutions and regimes (Holsti 2010; Halperin and Boyer 2010). In studies on the United States, the main arguments used to explain this attitude are superpower status, which makes multilateralism unattractive since it constrains the dominant power; and a range of domestic-level arguments concerning the balance of power between the US President and Congress, poor coordination among different agencies, partisan wrangling, bureaucratic competition etc. (Patrick 2002). Studies on rising powers take a similar view, arguing that these countries often shirk responsibilities in international settings, that is, they “want the privileges of power but are unwilling to pay for them by contributing to global governance” (Schweller and Pu 2011, 42). Overall, therefore, some parts of the literature on exceptionalism address the problem of powerful or rising countries that are not willing to lead or to provide public goods in international organizations, are not ready to make concessions in global governance regimes, or do not want to bear some of the costs of public good provision. Therefore, with reference to multilateral settings, the focus is on ambivalence, hesitation and a general unwillingness to commit, which are important elements generally associated with the notion of reluctance. Exceptionalism is placed on the side of “outward-looking” attitudes in Figure 2 as it does not only refer to a passive and self-referential unwillingness to get entangled (isolationism), but to a more general recalcitrance about actively promoting multilateral cooperation or collective action. The potential decisiveness of exceptionalist powers in bilateral settings, in turn, distinguishes exceptionalism from reluctance, which is usually associated with hesitant, indecisive action.

The literature on *isolationism* focuses on powerful countries that decide to pursue a “minimalist” foreign policy characterized by limited goals, a high degree of restraint,<sup>6</sup> and a limited amount of resources devoted to foreign policy (Haass 1997, 55). Isolationism does not only involve an

<sup>6</sup> A separate, but mostly prescriptive, strand in the literature on US foreign policy revolves around the notion of restraint (or self-restraint), understood as a moderate and subtle policy focused on few threats and thereby opposed to “expansiveness” (Posen 2014, xiii) and interested, instead, in reassuring others about one’s benign intentions (Ikenberry 1998/99; Walt 2002). While the concept of restraint is clearly related to the four concepts discussed here, it is conceptualized as a straightforward policy which does not entail the elements of hesitation and recalcitrance, which are typical of reluctance.

unwillingness to use military force: isolationist countries prefer not to get engaged abroad at all, they are clearly inward-looking and therefore limit the resources devoted to different instruments of foreign policy, including diplomacy and foreign aid (ibid, 57). Correspondingly, isolationism is mostly equated with a policy of non-entanglement and with abstention from commitments. Authors like Legro (2005, 51) prefer to talk about “separatism,” understood not as strict isolation but as “nonengagement, aloofness, and detached unilateralism.” This type of foreign policy is considered to be the opposite of internationalism (Legro 2005, 50). Among the typical examples of isolationist countries are Japan between the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the Meiji Restoration – a case of strict isolationism (Legro 2005, 128-31) – and the United States between the world wars, which was certainly not fully isolated, but refused to get engaged abroad and was characterized by strong isolationist ideas, which were only slowly replaced by an internationalist approach (ibid., ch. 3).<sup>7</sup> The notion of isolationism does not exclusively or necessarily apply to the field of military intervention, that is, to conflictive settings. It can also mean that states do not make use of cooperative opportunities. Authors like Dueck (2006, 27) somewhat explicitly equate a “preference for nonentanglement” with reluctance, thereby reflecting the close relationship between the concepts of reluctance and isolationism. At the same time, there are differences. For example, the element of hesitation, which is mostly associated with reluctance, does not necessarily form part of an isolationist policy: consistent and resolute isolationism (Nordlinger 1995, 9) has little in common with the indecisiveness that is typical of reluctance.

The literature on *under-aggression* or under-expansion focuses specifically on rising powers and tries to explain why an increase in power capabilities does not necessarily translate into an aggressive and expansionist foreign policy as expected by offensive realism. Among the typical cases analyzed is the “imperial understretch” of the United States after the Civil War, which Zakaria (1998), for example, explains with the weakness of US state structure. Dueck (2006, 2) relates the notion of under-expansionism to the concept of reluctance by asking why Americans have been “reluctant crusaders:” “crusaders in the promotion of a more liberal international order” but “reluctant to admit the full costs of promoting this liberal international vision.” Like Zakaria, Dueck combines systemic with domestic-level variables, but with a focus on strategic culture as an explanation for under-aggression. Recently, Meiser (2015) has added to the literature on US under-expansionism (or, in his words, restraint) by focusing, again, on why the rising United States did not expand territorially between 1898 and 1941, with his explanation mostly focusing on domestic institutions and the path-dependency effects of restraint. Among the authors who look beyond the case of the US is Schweller, who investigates what he calls “the suboptimal reluctance to use force or to build up military power” (Schweller 2009, 227) on the part of most great powers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His contentious conclusion is that only fascist regimes could manage to develop the “‘ideologized’ power politics for mass consumption” (ibid., 230) that are required for expansionism in the modern world and involve a substantial mobilization of the population. The notions of under-aggression and under-expansion therefore refer to policies of countries that are not necessarily inward-looking, but for different reasons do not realize their outward-looking potential in military terms. These notions relate to reluctance, but with a specific reference to conflictive policies, thereby excluding the more subtle nuances mostly associated with the concept of reluctance, which involves a whole array of indecisive hesitant flip-flopping policies. While most approaches explain under-aggression as an “unwillingness” to expand, some also take into account the “inability” or, more generally, the constraints faced by powerful countries. Among the main limitations of approaches that focus on under-aggression or restraint is that they necessarily have to work with counterfactuals to explain why something that would have been expected has *not* taken place (see, for example, Meiser 2015). By contrast, the notion of reluctance, if appropriately conceptualized and operationalized, refers to observable actual foreign-policy behavior.

Finally, a related notion is that of *under-balancing*, which describes the attitude of countries that do not respond to threats in conflictive settings by mobilizing military power or by forging alliances

---

<sup>7</sup> At the same time, isolationism is closely related to and sometimes equated with exceptionalism. As was mentioned above, the borders between the four concepts are blurred and these notions are sometimes overlapping.

(Schweller 2004; 2006). Unlike under-aggression, therefore, it does not focus on a lack of initiative or on why states are “timid” (Schweller 2006, 20). Instead, it focuses on why states do not react to dangerous aggressors or to dangerous changes in relative power as expected by balance-of-power theory (ibid., 10). It refers, therefore, to inward-looking policies as outlined in Figure 2. Among the four concepts, under-balancing is probably most closely associated with reluctance, as Schweller (ibid., 63) explicitly acknowledges that it can take the form of “half measures, muddling through, and incoherent grand strategies” and thus reflects the incoherence and ambivalence that is frequently associated with reluctance. However, under-balancing addresses only a very specific context for reluctant behavior, namely the situation of being threatened by another country – a situation in which reluctant behavior is a “mistake” (Schweller 2004, 168) that potentially affects a state’s survival. Therefore, it does not refer to a broader spectrum of foreign-policy contexts and situations that go beyond the particular setting of being threatened by another state. Moreover, by focusing on under-balancing as a “mistake,” it ignores cases in which buying time, preferring not to commit too heavily, or shirking responsibility might be rational approaches to follow or, at least, suitable ways of dealing with different types of pressure and expectations.

The concept of reluctance therefore touches upon each of the four concepts discussed above yet differs from each of them in important respects. As each of them is “a generalizable behavior, as opposed to a unique or individual occurrence, that shares certain distinguishing features, such that it forms a class of historical cases” (Schweller 2006, 16), the same holds for reluctance. What the four concepts of exceptionalism, isolationism, under-aggression and under-balancing share is the diffuse notion of *not* doing something that might be appropriate, of being forms of behavior that do not conform with certain expectations, be they of disgruntled followers who would like to see greater engagement on the part of powerful countries, be they of theoretical approaches. This notion of not fulfilling the expectations of others is another important element associated with reluctance. At the same time, the concept of reluctance stands between exceptionalism, isolationism, under-aggression and under-balancing since it can refer to both inward- and outward-looking actors in both cooperative and conflictive settings. This implies that reluctance is not limited to one specific policy field. The question “reluctance to do what?” can therefore be answered in very different ways. Reluctance itself does not necessarily just refer to an unwillingness to lead or to not pursuing hegemonic policies, as suggested by studies that resort to notions like “reluctant hegemony.” Just as isolationism can be interpreted as a reluctance to get entangled, exceptionalism as a reluctance to engage in multilateral settings, under-aggression as a reluctance to attack or to expand, and under-balancing as a reluctance to react to threats, reluctance itself encompasses all of these elements. It is therefore not a behavior that only applies to a specific field. It rather constitutes a peculiar *type* or *style* of foreign policy that can be found across issue areas and settings, a kind of meta-behavior that shapes actual policies and becomes visible in them.<sup>8</sup>

### **Reluctance: Concept Building**

The above identification of the broader semantic field of reluctance in International Relations and our discussion of related theoretical approaches has allowed us to obtain some insights into the “background concept” (Adcock and Collier 2001, 531) of reluctance. This is a useful starting point: “concept reconstruction is a means whose ultimate purpose is to provide a cleaned-up basis for construction – that is, for the *formation* of concepts” (Sartori 1984, 50). In other words, concept reconstruction helps us to grasp “what is important about an entity” (Goertz 2006, 27). On this basis, we can now proceed with concept building, and to that end we will follow the guidelines proposed by Goertz (2006) as this work provides important ideas on how to think about the structure of concepts.

---

<sup>8</sup> I am grateful to Magnus Schöller for suggesting this interpretation to me.



### ***The Negative Poles***

The first step in concept building consists in identifying the “basic level” of a concept, that is, the concept “as used in theoretical propositions” (Goertz 2006, 6). In our case, the basic-level concept is *reluctance*. A useful way to sharpen our understanding of a basic-level concept entails thinking explicitly about the negative pole of that concept, that is, about what the concept is *not*. For the case of reluctance, there is not a single obvious negative pole. Within the broader idea of “non-reluctance,” however, we can think of two dimensions that constitute the opposite of reluctance on two different continuums: 1) determination, and 2) being responsive to demands made by others. *Determination* amounts to a resolute, decisive and consistent attitude, which involves the ability to make decisions without displaying much hesitation. The concept of determination therefore encompasses the opposite of the ambivalence, incoherence, hesitancy, and slowness that characterize reluctance. By *responsiveness to others’ demands* I understand reacting readily and sympathetically to appeals and requests by other actors, particularly by less powerful actors in a hierarchical setting like that existing between rising regional powers and smaller neighboring states. Potential followers can ask the regional power to participate in common initiatives, to deliver public goods, to support a certain cause, to act in a less intrusive manner – and many other things. A country that is responsive to such demands will not shirk responsibility, will not be unwilling to commit fully, and will not display an obstructionist attitude towards the demands made by others – in other words, a responsive country will not be reluctant.

Determination and responsiveness therefore constitute different dimensions of the negative pole of reluctance. They can help us to clarify the actual “constitutive” or “secondary-level” dimensions of the concept of reluctance.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Constitutive Dimensions and Concept Structure***

As illustrated in Figure 3, reluctance has two constitutive dimensions: *hesitation* and *recalcitrance*. These dimensions are “constitutive” in the sense that they tell us what the basic-level concept of reluctance consists of: “Concepts are theories about ontology: they are theories about the fundamental constitutive elements of a phenomenon” (Goertz 2006, 5). As such, concepts are not just important as constructs that help us to grasp empirical reality, but they also have an impact on theorizing and hypothesis testing. As a consequence, concepts and the ways they are constructed have huge implications for all the successive phases of a research project (think of the implications of conceptualization for case selection); elements of causality are often inherent in concepts, and need to be appropriately acknowledged.

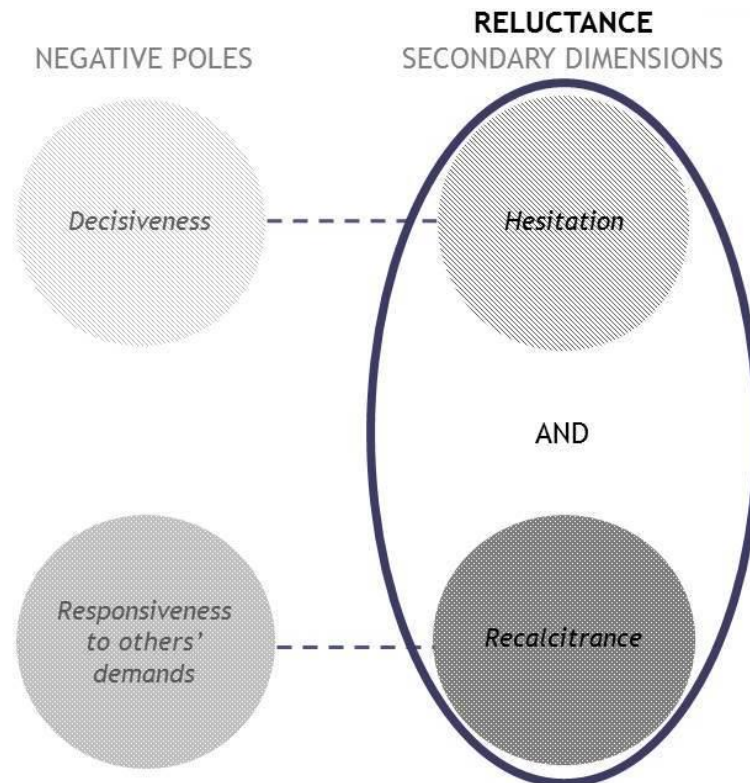
*Hesitation* is, along a continuum entailing different degrees of resolve in an actor’s behavior, the polar opposite of determination. It involves an ambivalent incoherent attitude. Reluctance is therefore much more than just under-aggression or under-expansionism. Nor does reluctance necessarily amount to the adoption of a “hands-off” policy, that is, to inactivity. A consistent refusal to get involved in a military dispute, for example, is not reluctant behavior understood as hesitation, since it actually amounts to a clear and coherent policy course. For example, the fact that Japan and Germany were for several decades “reluctant to resort to the use of military force” (Berger 1996, 318) does not amount to reluctance as hesitation as understood in this study, since their attitude was coherent. If, however, we observe contrasting and incoherent statements on the need to become active, or possibly even some engagement followed by backtracking, this will amount to reluctance.

---

<sup>9</sup> Goertz (2006 35) argues that the secondary-level dimensions of a concept will “almost always refer to the positive concept” and that only in a second step will we have to think about the negative pole of each secondary-level dimension. In this case, however, I proceeded inversely by first thinking about what the constitutive dimensions of reluctance are not, before moving on to define them. This approach is extremely helpful in order to clarify the secondary dimensions themselves.

*Recalcitrance* is the second core dimension of reluctance, and it is the opposite of being responsive to others' demands – along a continuum referring to the degree of openness towards the wishes of others, especially of potential followers. It involves opposing the wishes articulated by others. For example, Fehl (2012, 4) highlights that the United States displayed a “scepticism or outright opposition to multilateral treaty initiatives strongly favoured by European states.” The latter demanded a stronger commitment on the part of Washington, which, however, was recalcitrant – that is, unresponsive to the demands articulated by its European partners.

**Figure 3 Negative Poles and Secondary/Constitutive Dimensions of Reluctance**



An essential step in building concepts is the clarification and discussion of their structure, which has huge consequences for their extension and intension (Sartori 1970). In fact, depending on whether one adopts a necessary-and-sufficient-conditions structure or a “family resemblance” structure that does not entail any necessary conditions (Goertz 2006, 35-46), the number of secondary dimensions will have an impact on the categories of phenomena that are covered by the concept. The concept of reluctance as developed in this paper follows a traditional necessary-and-sufficient conditions structure: the two secondary dimensions, hesitation and recalcitrance, are necessary and jointly sufficient to define reluctance – and are therefore connected by the logical operator AND. In fact, recalcitrance – a lack of responsiveness to the demands made by others – would alone be insufficient to characterize foreign-policy behavior as reluctant. States are continually confronted with expectations articulated by very different actors, be they other countries, international organizations, transnational NGOs, their own public or other domestic actors. As these expectations and pressures will in most cases be contradictory, given the very different structural positions and interests of the actors articulating them, any foreign-policy decision will invariably ignore or reject the demands made by some of these actors. If recalcitrance were a sufficient condition to conceptualize reluctance – or, in other words, if the concept had a family resemblance structure with a logical OR between the two dimensions – the concept’s extension would grow indefinitely, up to the inclusion of any kind of

foreign-policy activity. Recalcitrance alone cannot therefore count as a sufficient condition to define reluctance. At the same time, hesitation, if it entails incoherent and contradictory statements and policies, will inevitably disappoint at least some expectations articulated by other actors, as the reluctant power will oscillate between being responsive to these expectations and ignoring or rejecting them. In other words, hesitation and recalcitrance are sometimes closely intertwined and need to be considered jointly. By conceptualizing foreign-policy reluctance as constituted by the necessary and jointly sufficient conditions of hesitation and recalcitrance, we avoid the ambiguities inherent in much of the literature, which amplify the concept's extension by treating reluctance in a loose and unspecified manner.

These thoughts on the concept structure of reluctance have theoretical implications. For example, the inclusion of recalcitrance in the concept will have an impact on the development of a theory of reluctance in international politics. The simple observation of an indecisive flip-flopping foreign policy on the part of a government could in principle be easily termed reluctance, but the inclusion of the element of recalcitrance with its refusal to conform to the expectations of other actors has important consequences. If we focus on the reluctance displayed by rising regional powers in their own regions and if we take the foreign policy of these countries as an independent variable to explain, for example, variations in regional cooperation, then recalcitrance matters. In fact, a recalcitrant attitude vis-à-vis the wishes articulated by smaller regional countries will most likely lead to disillusionment and disaffection among them, and thus contribute to hampering regional cooperation. For example, India has long been recalcitrant in its approach to its smaller neighbors in South Asia, refusing to make concessions on matters like trade. This has fueled the suspicions of small countries of New Delhi and has induced them to see China as an attractive alternative partner. The consequences for regional cooperation in South Asia have been disastrous (Destradi 2012). On a different note, if we take reluctance as a dependent variable, we might hypothesize that it can emerge as a consequence of competing expectations articulated by different actors. Recalcitrance, understood as an unwillingness or impossibility to respond to all of these expectations, would then reflect the dilemma of countries that have difficulties in accommodating and mediating between different expectations.

## **Operationalization**

The third level of concepts is constituted by indicators to be applied in the analysis of empirical phenomena. An operationalization of reluctance in terms of hesitation and recalcitrance has the advantage of allowing us to avoid counterfactual arguments and to focus exclusively on observable behavior. As mentioned above, the use of counterfactuals is an important part, but also one of the weaknesses, of the literature on under-expansionism. Similarly, several publications focusing on “reluctant” powers work with counterfactuals when lamenting untapped leadership potential (see, for example, publications on Germany as a reluctant hegemon or, more generally, on Germany's role in the Eurozone crisis, e.g. *The Economist* 2013; see also Jones 2010, 26). The indicators of hesitation and recalcitrance developed in this paper, by contrast, allow us to identify reluctance in foreign policy on the basis of observable foreign-policy behavior.<sup>10</sup>

Hesitation can be identified by the following indicators:

- Lack of initiative: with a particular focus on powerful countries such as rising regional powers, this indicator implies that smaller states develop and implement suggestions and solutions on a specific issue or crisis that is relevant not just to them but also to the rising regional power. The powerful actor, therefore, free-rides on that initiative by not contributing resources proportionate to its weight and does not come up with own policies and solutions. This indicator of hesitation refers to a passive policy as a powerful country stands on the sidelines and lets other actors take the lead.

---

<sup>10</sup> Specific thresholds can be set in single empirical studies depending on the issue area and the subject.

- Delaying: hesitation can take a more explicit form if the dominant country buys time and does not stick to a previously agreed time frame, thereby postponing important decisions in dealing with a specific issue or crisis.<sup>11</sup>
- Flip-flopping in statements and/or policies: this is the most evident form of hesitation. It can be observed if the statements on a specific issue made by members of the executive or other official government representatives are not consistent over time but change frequently or suddenly, or if policies on that issue are not coherent, but keep changing rapidly.<sup>12</sup> Flip-flopping is also associated with contradictions in statements or policies among different representatives of the same government on a specific issue.

Recalcitrance, which is a lack of responsiveness towards the demands made by others, can be assessed through the following indicators:

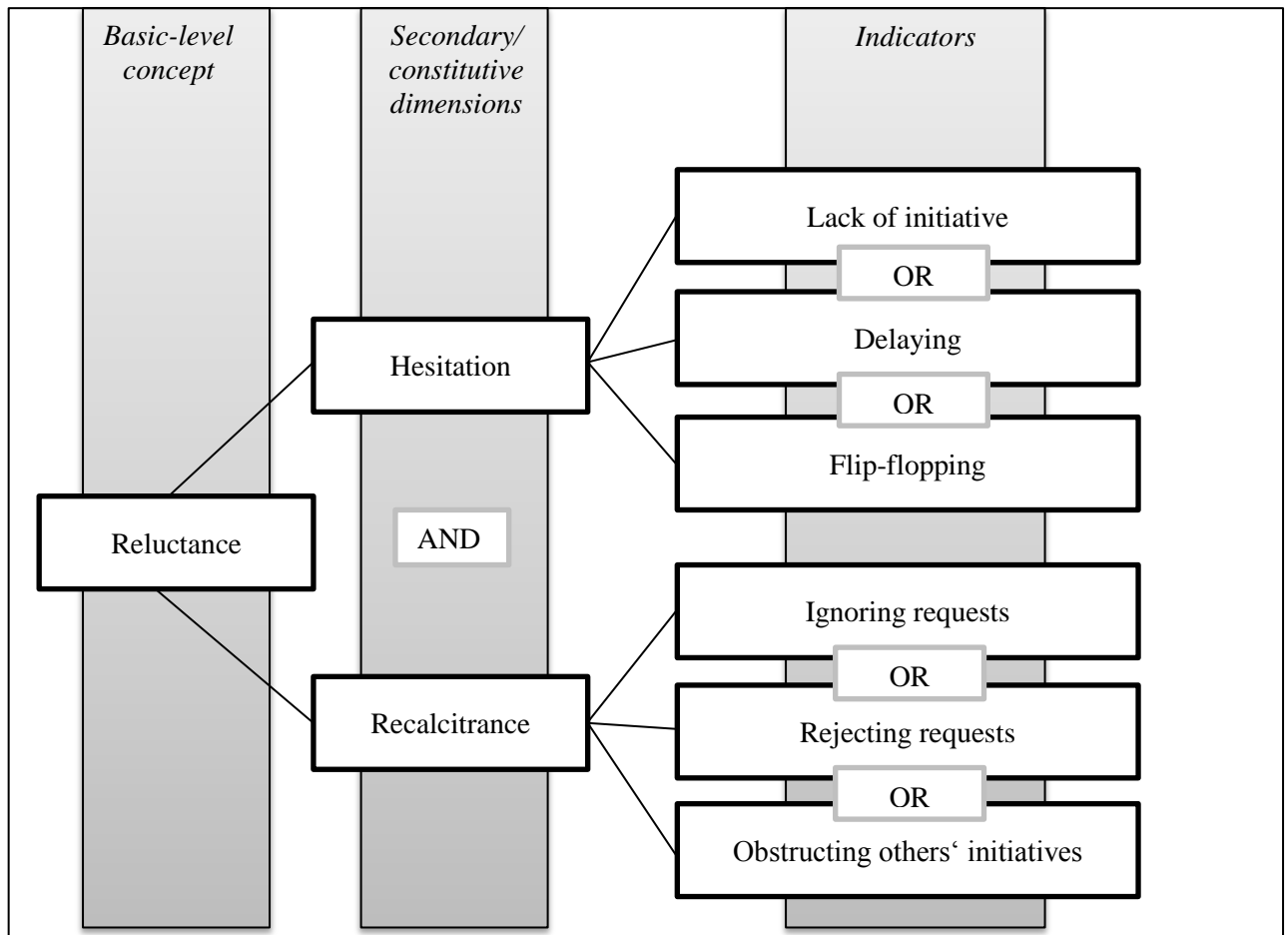
- Ignoring requests made by others: the government of the dominant country does not react to calls made by other actors and its policies do not reflect the preferences articulated by them.
- Rejecting requests: the government of the dominant country explicitly refuses to comply with the wishes articulated by other actors.
- Obstructing others' initiatives: the government of the dominant country hampers others' activities. This does not necessarily happen through an explicit veto or other formal procedures, but can take place informally, for example in the context of multilateral decision-making processes in which smaller countries will tend to conform to the preferences of a powerful actor.

---

<sup>11</sup> This indicator is not limited to a specific cause of the delay, which can be either purposeful, that is, employed as part of a bargaining strategy, or unintended, for example due to specific procedures or obstacles in the decision-making process. This reflects the fact that reluctance can be both the result of an unwillingness or an inability to pursue a determined and responsive policy. As acknowledged by Goertz (2006), causal thoughts are always inherent in the process of concept formation.

<sup>12</sup> The notion of flip-flopping has been developed in the literature on party politics and elections. See, for example, Tavits (2007, 154-155) or Burden (2004, 214-215). Of course, it is always difficult to distinguish frequently changing policies from a normal process of adaptation related to learning effects or to changed circumstances, which can, ex post, easily be confused with hesitation (I am grateful to Michael Brzoska for highlighting this aspect to me). If policies keep changing back and forth instead of developing in a linear manner, however, we can conclude that this will be an indicator of reluctance rather than of learning. In any case, the inclusion of indicators for recalcitrance, which must be in place as well, helps in assessing reluctance.

**Figure 4 The Concept Structure of Reluctance**



Among the indicators of both hesitation and recalcitrance, there is a logical OR, which implies that for each dimension it is sufficient to observe at least one of the three indicators in order to classify foreign policy as hesitant or recalcitrant, but that more than one indicator can be observed at the same time. For example, a hesitant country can display both a lack of initiative in the management of serious crises and at the same time it can delay initiatives proposed by others. Similarly, to mention another example, a recalcitrant country can both ignore requests made by others and at the same time hamper their initiatives.

Importantly, both hesitation and recalcitrance can occur to different degrees. The indicators of recalcitrance are arrayed along a continuum ranging from a mere ignoring of requests to the rejection of requests and active obstructionism of initiatives promoted by other actors. Depending on the combination of these indicators, on the frequency with which they appear, and on the salience of the issues on which a state is recalcitrant, we can classify recalcitrance as low, medium or high, with an appropriate weighting to be applied in specific empirical analyses. The same is true for hesitation, where a lack of initiative is a less explicit form of hesitation as compared to the delaying of decisions, while flip-flopping is the most evident type of hesitant behavior. These different intensities and the possible different combinations of lack of initiative, delaying and flip-flopping can therefore lead to varying degrees of hesitation. For example, a country whose foreign policy is strongly flip-flopping in crucial decision processes will obviously count as more reluctant than a country whose foreign policy displays little flip-flopping, strong initiatives, but some delays in the implementation of policies. As illustrated in Table 1, the combination of indicators of hesitation and recalcitrance leads to the identification of different degrees of reluctant behavior. This more fine-grained assessment of

reluctance, which goes beyond a mere dichotomous understanding of the concept, can prove helpful in the assessment of variation in foreign-policy reluctance. Moreover, it will prove useful in tracing processes of policy change by highlighting shifts in the intensity of reluctant behavior.

**Table 1 Intensity of Reluctance**

			No hesitation (determination)	Hesitation		
				Lack of initiative OR Delaying OR Flip-flopping		
				Low	Medium	High
No recalcitrance (responsiveness)			Determination + responsiveness = no reluctance	Hesitation, but responsiveness = no reluctance	Hesitation, but responsiveness = no reluctance	High hesitation, but responsiveness => grey zone
Recalcitrance	Ignoring requests OR Rejecting requests OR Actively blocking initiatives	Low	Recalcitrance, but determination = no reluctance	+	++	+++
		Medium	Recalcitrance, but determination = no reluctance	++	++	+++
		High	Recalcitrance, but determination = no reluctance	+++	+++	++

Table 1 also highlights that hesitation and recalcitrance are both necessary conditions for reluctance. That is, a recalcitrant but determined attitude – for example a coherent refusal to comply with smaller regional countries’ wishes – would not amount to reluctance. Similarly, a hesitant but responsive attitude would not necessarily correspond to reluctance if hesitation takes a moderate form through lacking initiative on secondary issues or small delays. In fact, while it is hard for an actor to be fully responsive in the case of an entirely incoherent flip-flopping policy, a delayed reaction to the wishes of others or conforming to their wishes while not developing initiatives would not qualify as reluctance. The case of a highly hesitant policy combined with some degree of responsiveness makes for an interesting “gray zone,” which includes those cases at the fuzzy border between positive and negative cases (Goertz 2006, 20).<sup>13</sup> Another particular set of cases are those in which an actor is both highly recalcitrant (that is, an actor is rather openly hampering the initiatives promoted by others) and, at the same time, highly hesitant. In this case, we can expect the two dimensions of hesitation and recalcitrance to partially offset each other, so that the outcome will be a comparatively more moderate form of reluctance (illustrated as ++ in Table 1).

**An Application: Germany as a Reluctant Power?**

Is the introduction of yet one more concept in International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis really necessary? What is the conceptualization of reluctance carried out in this paper useful for? From a conceptual and theoretical perspective, discussion of the differences between reluctance and the

<sup>13</sup> According to Goertz (2006, 29), while a necessary-and-sufficient-conditions concept structure is usually associated with a dichotomous view of categories, it is indeed possible to “separate the issue of dichotomous concepts from their structure, which may or may not invoke the necessary and sufficient condition principle.”

related concepts of exceptionalism, isolationism, under-aggression, and under-balancing has already shown that reluctance is useful to characterize a particular type of foreign-policy conduct that is not adequately captured by existing concepts in the field of IR. But what about the analytical usefulness of the concept of reluctance in empirical analyses? To illustrate how reluctance as a concept can help us to make sense of empirical phenomena, it will be applied to a brief assessment of Germany's contemporary foreign and security policy in Europe and in the European neighborhood, with a particular focus on crisis management. The analysis will address Germany's approach to the Eurozone crisis, to the intervention in Libya in 2011, and to the Ukraine crisis, thereby covering both the issue areas of economic/financial and security policy.<sup>14</sup>

The case of Germany for an illustrative application of the concept of reluctance is suitable for several reasons. The main reason is that assessments of German foreign policy vary widely and are sometimes framed in terms of reluctance, but without a discussion or definition of the concept. When it comes to Germany's role in the Eurozone crisis, for example, several observers have highlighted that "[l]eadership from Berlin has been hesitant" (Bulmer 2014, 1245) and up until 2013 argued that "Germany's current foot-dragging poses larger dangers" (*The Economist* 2013). By contrast, other observers maintain that Germany has not been reluctant at all during the Eurozone crisis. Some of them are apologetic of Berlin's approach and argue that what looks like reluctance was instead the result of "longer pauses for reflection" (Münkler 2015, 162) and of a careful approach to policy-making. Others highlight that throughout the crisis the German government consistently pursued its policy of austerity, imposing its will on the rest of Europe with only apparent hesitation (Beck 2012). This assessment reflects a more general criticism of German policies coming from southern Europe (*Spiegel Online International* 2015). Some conceptual clarity and an application of the above-developed indicators might help to gain better insights into German policies and into what is frequently referred to as German reluctance. Moreover, an assessment of the policies of what has arguably become the most influential country in Europe (Münkler 2015) is suitable to illustrate the policy-relevance of proper conceptualization.

### ***Germany in the Eurozone Crisis: From Reluctance to Determination***

During the Eurozone crisis, which erupted in autumn 2009, Germany's approach shifted over different phases. During the first months of the crisis, the German government was clearly reluctant, as its behavior involved both elements of hesitation and recalcitrance. An indicator of hesitation is the *delay* with which Germany developed responses to the crisis. At the beginning of the crisis, Chancellor Merkel argued that it was a Greek domestic problem. According to some authors (e.g. Schild 2013, 28), Merkel explicitly "delayed common European action" ahead of a regional election that was to take place in the North-Rhine Westphalia *Land* on May 9, 2010. Moreover, Berlin's approach to the crisis during its early phase was reactive, leading to several contradictions between German government statements and policies (*flip-flopping*). At the level of statements, government officials time and again tried to reassure the German public that Berlin would not commit itself too heavily, but in many cases the German government later had to backtrack on these commitments. To cite just one example, on March 21, 2010, Merkel stated "Help is not on the agenda" (Janssen 2012) – only to agree, in May 2010, to the first bailout package for Greece and to the establishment of the European Financial Stability Facility with a German guarantee of 27.13% (Paterson 2011, 69). In between, in April 2010, Merkel replied evasively to Greece's request for a safety net, giving an impression of "indecisiveness" (Traynor 2010). This reactivity and incoherence was mainly related to an

---

<sup>14</sup> The analysis is based on a range of primary sources, including speeches, parliamentary debates and news reports, as well as secondary sources. For the German-language sources, if not otherwise indicated, the translations are my own. Furthermore, the analysis is informed by fourteen face-to-face and telephone interviews with German government officials, academics and other experts carried out in April and May 2015. The interviews were carried out in German, the translations are my own.

increasingly hostile domestic attitude in Germany towards crisis management and European solidarity, which clashed with the expectations of other member states and the sheer need to do something to avoid disaster. Germany was caught by surprise by the unfolding of events and reacted to them in a piecemeal manner. As an interviewee at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy said, “There were no established instruments or mechanisms to deal with the crisis. It was uncharted territory [...] We could not have acted faster.”<sup>15</sup> Besides the above-mentioned contradictions between statements and actual policies, several incoherent and contradictory statements were also made by members of the government, most notably Finance Minister Schäuble and Chancellor Merkel, further contributing to flip-flopping. For example, in March 2010, Schäuble developed a proposal about a European monetary fund modeled along the lines of the IMF (*Welt am Sonntag* 2010; Schäuble 2010) – an idea the Chancellery reportedly learned about from the media, and which clearly contradicted Merkel’s rejection of financial transfers to debtor countries (Feldenkirchen et al. 2010, 22). Moreover, Schäuble had dismissed the idea of an IMF participation in European crisis management, but was brusquely contradicted by Chancellor Merkel during a speech in Parliament in March 2010 (*ibid.*, 21). As a result, “one got the impression that in Berlin the right hand didn’t know what the left was doing” (*ibid.*, 22). When it comes to the third indicator of hesitation, a *lack of initiative*, this was partially in place in the early phase of the Eurozone crisis, but disappeared when the German position on austerity and conditionalities consolidated and was articulated in a more consistent manner. Besides these elements of hesitation, a medium level of recalcitrance was also clearly in place: by initially labeling the crisis as a Greek problem and refusing to help, the German government *rejected requests* for crisis management. Berlin did not ignore (low recalcitrance) these requests, as from the beginning of the crisis German government representatives met with their counterparts from other EU member states and EU institutions to discuss the problem of Greece. Berlin rather straightforwardly rejected those demands that did not fit with its preferences. On the issue of Eurobonds, for example, Germany’s rejection was consistent over time, even though it was articulated in increasingly drastic terms, up to Merkel’s infamous June 2012 statement “no Eurobonds as long as I live” (*Spiegel Online* 2012). While Germany’s approach to the Eurozone crisis was initially highly reluctant, over time reluctance decreased. On the one hand, Germany’s recalcitrance remained constant as Berlin continued to reject requests for greater concessions. On the other hand, however, most elements of hesitation were left aside as the German position towards the crisis increasingly consolidated: delaying became a less explicitly used tactic compared to the 2009-10 period, Germany took the initiative more openly, and flip-flopping diminished. A first instance of increasing determination could be observed with the bilateral German-French informal summit meeting in Deauville in October 2010, the outcome of which was criticized as a “Franco-German diktat” (Schild 2013, 37). The meeting paved the way for a period of intense consultations between Merkel and Sarkozy, in which both sides made concessions and compromises but Germany ultimately pushed through many of its preferences. According to some observers, with the European Council meeting of December 8-9, 2011 and the introduction of the Fiscal Compact, Merkel “won the battle by ‘institutionalizing’ austerity” (Hübner 2012, 174), and was certainly not reluctant anymore. As Bulmer (2014, 1249) puts it, the management of the Eurozone crisis marked “a new stage in German European policy,” in which “national interests and assertiveness” as well as “[g]reater unilateralism” emerged. In terms of our conceptualization of reluctance, therefore, Germany shifted from strong to intermediate-to-moderate reluctance, as recalcitrance remained constant while hesitation almost disappeared. As a result of managing the Eurozone crisis, Germany was no longer so reluctant in its economic/financial policy.

### ***Germany and the Intervention in Libya: A Reluctant Approach***

If we shift to the field of security, the 2011 intervention in Libya on the basis of UNSC Resolution 1973 and the Responsibility-to-Protect principle has been one of the salient cases of crisis management in the European neighborhood in recent years. Germany, which was a non-permanent

---

<sup>15</sup> Interview with senior government official, Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, Berlin, April 24, 2015.



UNSC member at the time, abstained on Resolution 1973, which envisaged the creation of a no-fly zone and authorized all necessary means (except a foreign “occupation force”) to protect Libyan civilians. This abstention, with which Berlin deviated from the position of its Western international partners, instead taking a common stance with China, Russia, India and Brazil, is frequently taken as an example of Berlin’s “reluctance” or “unwillingness to play a leadership role” (Bulmer and Paterson 2013, 1400) on security policy issues. According to some authors, the decision stood in the tradition of Germany’s *Kultur der Zurückhaltung* (culture of restraint) and of its “civilian power” approach to the use of military force (Maull 2012). Again, an application of the previously developed concept of reluctance can prove helpful to assess German policies. According to the conceptualization of reluctance developed in this paper, in fact, a coherent and consistent implementation of a policy of *Zurückhaltung* would not amount to reluctance. But in the decision on Libya the German government was far from coherent in its approach.

Berlin’s policies involved both the elements of hesitation and recalcitrance. The German government’s recalcitrance mainly manifests itself in the skepticism (*rejection of requests*) articulated by German representatives towards French and British efforts to create a consensus on a no-fly zone. For example, at the G-8 meeting of foreign ministers in Paris on March 14-15, 2011, Germany reportedly acted as a “brakesman” (Rinke 2011, 48) vis-à-vis French requests. Germany’s abstention ultimately did not block Resolution 1973 – and Berlin took care that it would not be responsible for making the resolution fail (Brockmeier 2014, 80) – so German recalcitrance did not reach the level of “blocking others’ initiatives.”

Germany’s handling of the crisis was characterized, moreover, by extreme hesitation. We can observe *flip-flopping*, that is, rapidly changing and contradictory statements and policies on the part of the German government. First of all, less than three weeks before the abstention on Resolution 1973, Germany voted in favor of UNSC Resolution 1970, which condemned Gaddafi’s use of force against civilians and already invoked the principle of Responsibility to Protect. Berlin “even criticised its fellow European countries for not having condemned Gadhafi earlier and with clearer language” (Brockmeier 2014, 66) and German diplomats were “ ‘supportive’ and even ‘pushy’ ” during the process of drafting and discussing Resolution 1970 (ibid.). Apparently, German Foreign Minister Westerwelle “initially [offered] no opposition to a no-fly zone” (ibid., 67) and started criticizing it only in early March. A further indicator of Germany’s contradictory approach were the shifting requirements for the involvement of Arab states articulated by Westerwelle: he first argued that a no-fly-zone mandate would need the “approval” of Arab states, later set their “active participation” in the implementation as a condition, and ultimately argued that their “leadership” would be necessary (ibid., 67; 76). More generally, Germany’s decision on abstention in the UNSC was characterized by several mishaps. These included a parliamentary debate that was carried out without knowledge of a sudden shift in the United States’ approach, and some degree of confusion on the part of the Foreign Minister about the nexus between supporting a resolution and the need to subsequently participate in military operations (Brockmeier 2014). To add to the confusion, in an interview published four days after the German abstention, Foreign Minister Westerwelle stated “Gaddafi has to go” (Neukirch et al. 2011). This strongly reluctant policy, which displayed intermediate levels of recalcitrance and high levels of hesitation, was perceived by Germany’s allies as “disconcerting and half-hearted” (Maull 2012, 36) and led several commentators to accuse Germany of having impeded a common European action and possibly contributed to a worse outcome of the Libyan crisis (Erlanger and Dempsey 2011; Münkler 2015, 149). For others, it was an indicator that Germany would “continue [...] to punch below its weight in foreign and security policy” (Paterson 2011, 74).

### ***Germany and the Ukraine Crisis: Leaving Reluctance Behind?***

An important shift in Germany’s approach to the management of security crises in Europe’s neighborhood came with the Ukraine crisis, in which Germany displayed an entirely new determination and at least partially shed its reluctance in foreign and security policy. At the end of

January 2014, German President Gauck, Foreign Minister Steinmeier, and Defence Minister von der Leyen in their speeches at the Munich Security Conference called for a new German foreign policy – a “faster, more decisive and more substantial” (Bundespräsident 2014; AA 2014) way of dealing with international affairs in order to “enhance our international responsibility” (BMVg 2014). Events in Ukraine, most notably Russia’s annexation of Crimea after pro-Russian militias started taking over the peninsula on 26 February, forced Germany to act sooner than it had probably expected. The German government, and particular the new foreign minister in the “grand coalition” of CDU/CSU and SPD, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, had already played an active role in negotiations during the repression of the “Euromaidan” movement, together with his French and Polish colleagues. When the crisis further escalated with Russia’s annexation of Crimea, Chancellor Merkel “immediately declared Russia’s armed takeover of Crimea to be unacceptable” (Pond 2015, 173). In the following months, the German government rather coherently pursued an approach that 1) consistently focused on negotiations, paying attention not to break ties with Moscow; 2) rejected a military solution; and 3) put pressure on Moscow through increasingly tougher sanctions. Importantly, Germany had the opportunity to play a leading role in crisis management because “Obama, fully occupied with other world crises, essentially outsourced [Western diplomacy] to Berlin” (Pond 2015, 173). Within the EU, Germany did not encounter much opposition to its policies and was able to rally support for the sanctions (Münkler 2015, 152-3; Szabo 2014, 117), while Russia itself saw Berlin as the most acceptable Western interlocutor (Münkler 2015, 152-3). At the domestic level, Merkel managed to induce the business lobby to accept sanctions, despite the heavy losses they would imply for German companies (Pond 2015, 174). In other words, the case of Ukraine crisis management reveals that reluctance seems to become less likely as pressures from external and domestic actors on a government diminish and become streamlined. Germany was certainly recalcitrant on topics like the supply of weapons to the Ukrainian government, something the United States called for in early 2015. However, this recalcitrance was not paired with hesitation as in previous crises. On some issues contradictions emerged, for example on the potential provision of support for NATO member states faced with the threat of Russian aggression, an issue that was raised by Defence Minister von der Leyen but quickly abandoned (Szabo 2014, 120). In general terms, however, German policies were remarkably consistent and coherent. Overall, while at the time of writing (May 2015) the Ukraine crisis is far from resolved, at least so far it has seemed to mark a shift away from previous reluctance on the part of Berlin.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has aimed to develop a conceptualization of reluctance in international politics – a notion that is frequently used but has not been explicitly discussed or properly defined so far. The conceptualization built upon 1) existing uses of the concept in the literature in order to identify the broad semantic field to which it relates; and 2) the concept’s relationship to related terms in the academic debate. Based on this concept reconstruction, reluctance was characterized as entailing the two constitutive dimensions of hesitation and recalcitrance. Corresponding indicators for empirical analyses were identified and the concept structure was outlined. In order to demonstrate the usefulness of the concept for empirical analyses, it was applied to studying Germany’s approach to crisis management in different fields in Europe and the European neighborhood. This assessment of German policies through the lens of reluctance is useful in various ways. First, it brings some clarity to a debate that has often framed reluctance in terms of missed leadership opportunities, thereby working mostly with counterfactuals. If we conceptualize reluctance in terms of hesitation and recalcitrance, without tying the concept to any specific issue area of policy-making or to notions such as leadership or hegemony, we find that Germany was highly reluctant at the beginning of the Eurozone crisis and during the Libyan crisis, but it was not during the Ukraine crisis. The second advantage of the conceptualization of reluctance proposed in this paper is that it allows for identification of shifts in reluctant behavior, for example the shift towards a less reluctant approach in the Eurozone crisis around 2011. The distinction between hesitation and recalcitrance allows us to further disentangle these dynamics, as was highlighted for the case of the Eurozone crisis, in which Germany remained

recalcitrant over time while nevertheless becoming less and less hesitant. This growing determination and assertiveness was quite the opposite of reluctance and led to a high degree of opposition to German policies in southern Europe and to a growing skepticism vis-à-vis Berlin. Third, the relatively open conceptualization of reluctance allows us to apply the concept across policy fields and thereby to highlight possible links or even contagion effects between these fields. Based on the cases of crisis management analyzed for Germany, we notice, for example, that Berlin first shed its reluctance in the field of economic/financial policy, while still being reluctant in the field of security – an issue area in which it is subject to particular institutional limitations (Paterson 2011, 73) and, for historical reasons, to strong normative constraints. Only after having adopted increasingly assertive policies in the management of the Eurozone crisis did Germany also shift to a less reluctant approach on security matters, in the Ukraine crisis.

Beyond the details of German policies, this application of the concept of reluctance provides several interesting insights that open avenues for future research. In particular, the Eurozone crisis seems to have led to a clear rise in (perceived) German power, so we can think of Germany not just as the regional power in Europe, but possibly also as a rising power in international affairs. The question then emerges of what the broader potential impact of rising powers' reluctant policies is. In terms of regional governance, we can expect a reluctant approach to have detrimental consequences as it generates uncertainty and suspicion among smaller regional states. At the same time, reluctance can also be a prudent policy approach for rising powers to adopt, with the aim of preventing opposition or even the formation of balancing alliances as they grow stronger. On a larger scale, a reluctant attitude on the part of a rising regional power can provoke disillusionment among international partners – and the impression that “reluctant guardians” (Bunde and Oroz 2015) are indeed contributing to a disruption of international order. An assessment of the implications of reluctance for regional and global governance is therefore an important avenue for future research.

## References

- Adcock, Robert, and David Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *American Political Science Review* 95 (3): 529-46.
- Alden, Chris, and Garth Le Pere. 2009. "South Africa in Africa: Bound to Lead?" *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies* 36 (1): 145-69.
- Art, Robert J. 2003. *A Grand Strategy for America*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Auswärtiges Amt (AA). 2014. "Rede von Außenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier anlässlich der 50. Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz." Accessed May 27, 2015, [http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Infoservice/Presse/Reden/2014/140201-BM\\_M%C3%BCSiKo.html](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Infoservice/Presse/Reden/2014/140201-BM_M%C3%BCSiKo.html).
- Beck, Ulrich. 2012. "Merkiavellis Macht: Das Zögern der Kanzlerin bei der Euro-Rettung." *Der Spiegel* 41: 50-51.
- Berger, Thomas U. 1996. "Norms, Identity, and National Security in Germany and Japan." In *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, edited by Peter J. Katzenstein, 317-56. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bielby, William T., and Denise D. Bielby. 1992. "I Will Follow Him: Family Ties, Gender-Role Beliefs, and Reluctance to Relocate for a Better Job." *American Journal of Sociology* 97 (5): 1241-67.
- Brockmeier, Sarah. 2014. "Germany and the Intervention in Libya." *Survival* 55 (6): 63-90.
- Bulmer, Simon. 2014. "Germany and the Eurozone Crisis: Between Hegemony and Domestic Politics." *West European Politics* 37 (6): 1244-63.
- Bulmer, Simon, and William E. Paterson. 2013. "Germany as the EU's Reluctant Hegemon? Of Economic Strength and Political Constraints." *Journal of European Public Policy* 20 (10): 1387-1405.
- Bunde, Tobias, and Adrian Oroz. 2015. *Munich Security Report 2015: Collapsing Orders, Reluctant Guardians?* Munich: Munich Security Conference.
- Bundesministerium der Verteidigung (BMVg). 2014. "Speech by the Federal Minister of Defence, Dr. Ursula von der Leyen on the Occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> Munich Security Conference, Munich, 31 January 2014." Accessed May 27, 2015, [https://www.securityconference.de/fileadmin/MSR\\_/2014/Reden/2014-01-31-Speech-MinDef\\_von\\_der\\_Leyen-MuSeCo.pdf](https://www.securityconference.de/fileadmin/MSR_/2014/Reden/2014-01-31-Speech-MinDef_von_der_Leyen-MuSeCo.pdf)
- Bundespräsident. 2014. "Deutschlands Rolle in der Welt: Anmerkungen zu Verantwortung, Normen und Bündnissen." Accessed May 27, 2015, <http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Joachim-Gauck/Reden/2014/01/140131-Muenchner-Sicherheitskonferenz.html>.
- Burden, Barry C. 2004. "Candidate Positioning in US Congressional Elections." *British Journal of Political Science* 34 (2): 211-27.
- Burges, Sean W. 2014. "Revisiting Consensual Hegemony: Brazilian Regional Leadership in Question." *International Politics* online first, doi:10.1057/ip.2014.43.
- Collier, David, Jody LaPorte, and Jason Seawright. 2012. "Putting Typologies to Work: Concept Formation, Measurement, and Analytical Rigor." *Political Research Quarterly* 65 (1): 217-232.
- Destradi, Sandra. 2012. *Indian Foreign and Security Policy in South Asia: Regional Power Strategies*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

- Destradi, Sandra. 2014. "India: A Reluctant Partner for Afghanistan." *The Washington Quarterly* 37 (2): 103-17.
- Dueck, Colin. 2006. *Reluctant Crusaders: Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- The Economist. 2013. "The Reluctant Hegemon." 15 June. Accessed February 13, 2015. <http://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21579140-germany-now-dominant-country-europe-needs-rethink-way-it-sees-itself-and>.
- Erlanger, Steven, and Judy Dempsey. 2011. "Germany Steps Away from European Unity." *The New York Times*, March 23. Accessed May 27, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/24/world/europe/24germany.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/24/world/europe/24germany.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&).
- Esterhuysen, Abel. 2010. "South Africa: The Reluctant Leader." *Heartland: Eurasian Review of Geopolitics*. Accessed June 14, 2015, <http://temi.repubblica.it/limes-heartland/south-africa-the-reluctant-leader/1643>
- Fehl, Caroline. 2012. *Living with a Reluctant Hegemon: Explaining European Responses to US Unilateralism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Feldenkirchen, Markus, Christian Reiermann, Michael Sauga, and Hans-Jürgen Schlamp. 2010. "Machtkampf in der Kulisse." *Der Spiegel*, March 22, 20-23.
- Ganguly, Sumit. 2003. "India's Foreign Policy Grows Up." *World Policy Journal* 20 (4): 41-47.
- Goertz, Gary. 2006. *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Goertz, Gary. 2008. "Concepts, Theories, and Numbers: A Checklist for Constructing, Evaluating, and Using Concepts or Quantitative Measures." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, edited by Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier, 97-118. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Goertz, Gary, and Amy G. Mazur. 2008. "Mapping Gender and Politics Concepts: Ten Guidelines." In *Politics, Gender, and Concepts: Theory and Methodology*, edited by Gary Goertz and Amy G. Mazur, 14-44. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gstöhl, Sieglinde. 2002. *Reluctant Europeans: Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland in the Process of Integration*. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner.
- Haass, Richard N. 1997. *The Reluctant Sheriff: The United States after the Cold War*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press.
- Halperin, Morton H. and Spencer P. Boyer. 2007. "Introduction: A World of Rules." In *Power and Superpower: Global Leadership and Exceptionalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, edited by Morton H. Halperin, Jeffrey Laurenti, Peter Rundlet, and Spencer P. Boyer, 1-13. New York: The Century Foundation Press.
- Holsti, K. J. 2010. "Exceptionalism in American Foreign Policy: Is It Exceptional?" *European Journal of International Relations* 17(3): 381-404.
- Ikenberry, G. John. 1998/99. "Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Persistence of American Postwar Order." *International Security* 23 (3): 43-78.
- Janssen, Hauke. 2012. "Merkel und Schäuble in der Eurokrise: Die Schönredner." *Spiegel Online*, November 19. Accessed May 25, 2015. <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/muenchhausen-check-merkel-und-schaeuble-ueber-die-euro-krise-a-867147-2.html>
- Jones, Erik. 2010. "Merkel's Folly." *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 52 (3): 21-38.

- Legro, Jeffrey W. 2005. *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Lowe, C. J. 1967. *The Reluctant Imperialists: British Foreign Policy 1878-1902*. Vol. 1. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Mauß, Hanns W. 2012. "Außenpolitische Entscheidungsprozesse in Krisenzeiten." *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 10: 34-40.
- Meiser, Jeffrey W. 2015. *Power and Restraint: The Rise of the United States 1898-1941*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Meltzer, Howard, Paul Bebbington, Terry Brugha, Mike Farrell, Rachel Jenkins, Glyn Lewis. 2000. "The Reluctance to Seek Treatment for Neurotic Disorders." *Journal of Mental Health* 9(3): 319-27.
- Mitra, Subrata K. 2003. "The Reluctant Hegemon: India's Self-Perception and the South Asian Strategic Environment." *Contemporary South Asia* 12 (3): 399-417.
- Münkler, Herfried. 2015. *Macht in der Mitte: Die neuen Aufgaben Deutschlands in Europa*. Hamburg: edition Körber-Stiftung.
- Neukirch, Ralf, Erich Follath, and Georg Mascolo. 2011. "Gaddafi muss weg - ohne Frage." *Spiegel Online*, March 21. Accessed May 27, 2015, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-77531597.html>.
- Nordlinger, Eric A. 1995. *Isolationism Reconfigured: American Foreign Policy for a New Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Paterson, William E. 2011. "The Reluctant Hegemon? Germany Moves Centre Stage in the European Union." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 39 (s1): 57-75.
- Patrick, Stewart. 2002. "Multilateralism and Its Discontents: The Causes and Consequences of U.S. Ambivalence." In *Multilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy: Ambivalent Engagement*, edited by Stewart Patrick and Shepard Forman, 1-44. Boulder, CO, and London: Lynne Rienner.
- Pond, Elizabeth. 2015. "Germany's Real Role in the Ukraine Crisis: Caught Between East and West." *Foreign Affairs* 94 (2): 173-7.
- Port, Elisa Rush MD, Leslie L. Montgomery MD, Alexandra S. Heerdt MD, MPH, Patrick I. Borgen MD. 2001. "Patient Reluctance Toward Tamoxifen Use for Breast Cancer Primary Prevention." *Annals of Surgical Oncology* 8(7): 580-5.
- Posen, Barry R. 2014. *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Pu, Xiaoyu. 2012. "Limited Rebranding: Status Signaling, Multiple Audiences, and the Incoherence of China's Grand Strategy." PhD diss., Ohio State University.
- Quaid, Kimberly A., and Michael Morris. 1993. "Reluctance to Undergo Predictive Testing: The Case of Huntington's Disease." *American Journal of Medical Genetics* 45(1): 41-5.
- Rinke, Andreas. 2011. "Eingreifen oder nicht? Warum sich die Bundesregierung in der Libyen-Frage enthielt." *Internationale Politik* 4: 44-52.
- Rosen, Sidney, and Abraham Tesser. 1970. "On Reluctance to Communicate Undesirable Information: The MUM Effect." *Sociometry* 33(3): 253-63.
- Sartori, Giovanni. 1970. "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics." *American Political Science Review* 64 (4): 1033-53.

- Sartori, Giovanni. 1975. "The Tower of Babel." In *Tower of Babel: On the Definition and Analysis of Concepts in the Social Sciences*, edited by Giovanni Sartori, Fred W. Riggs, and Henry Teune, 7-37. International Studies Association Occasional Paper No 6.
- Sartori, Giovanni. 1984. "Guidelines for Concept Analysis." In *Social Science Concepts: A Systematic Analysis*, edited by Giovanni Sartori, 15-95. Beverly Hills, London, and New Delhi: Sage.
- Schäuble, Wolfgang. 2010. "Wie Europa gestärkt aus der Krise kommt." *Financial Times Deutschland*, available online at "Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble MdB," Accessed May 26, 2015, <http://www.wolfgang-schaeuble.de/index.php?id=36&textid=1375&page=2>.
- Schild, Joachim. 2013. "Leadership in Hard Times: Germany, France, and the Management of the Eurozone Crisis." *German Politics and Society* 31 (1): 24-46.
- Schreier, Margrit. 2012. *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Schweller, Randall, L. 2004. "Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing." *International Security* 29(2): 159-201.
- Schweller, Randall L. 2006. *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Schweller, Randall L. 2009. "Neoclassical Realism and State Mobilization: Expansionist Ideology in the Age of Mass Politics." In *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, edited by Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, 227-50. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schweller, Randall L. 2014. *Maxwell's Demon and the Golden Apple: Global Discord in the New Millennium*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Schweller, Randall L., and Xiaoyu Pu. 2011. "After Unipolarity: China's Visions of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline." *International Security* 36 (1): 41-72.
- Spektor, Matias. 2010. "Brazil: The Underlying Ideas of Regional Policies." In *Regional Leadership in the Global System: Ideas, Interests and Strategies of Regional Powers*, edited by Daniel Flemes, 191-206. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Spiegel Online*. 2012. "Merkel zur Schuldenpolitik: 'Keine Euro-Bonds, solange ich lebe'." June 26. Accessed May 26, 2015, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/kanzlerin-merkel-schliesst-euro-bonds-aus-a-841115.html>.
- Spiegel Online International*. 2015. "'The Fourth Reich': What Some Europeans See When They Look at Germany." March 23. Accessed May 28, 2015, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/german-power-in-the-age-of-the-euro-crisis-a-1024714.html>.
- Szabo, Stephen F. 2014. "Germany's Commercial Realism and the Russia Problem." *Survival* 55 (6): 117-28.
- Tavits, Margit. 2007. "Principle vs. Pragmatism: Policy Shifts and Political Competition." *American Political Science Review* 51 (1): 151-65.
- Traynor, Jan. 2010. "Markets Tremble as Angela Merkel Plays for Time over Greece Rescue Deal." *The Guardian*, April 26. Accessed March 4, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2010/apr/26/markets-greece-rescue-imf-package>.
- Walt, Stephen M. 2002. "Keeping the World 'Off Balance': Self Restraint and U.S. Foreign Policy." In *America Unrivaled: The Future of the Balance of Power*, edited by G. John Ikenberry, 121-54. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

*Welt am Sonntag*. 2010. "Schäuble liebäugelt mit einem EU-Währungsfonds." March 6. Accessed May 26, 2015, <http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article6668719/Schaeuble-liebaeugelt-mit-einem-EU-Waehrungsfonds.html>.

Zakaria, Fareed. 1998. *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.



**Author contacts:**

**Sandra Destradi**

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies  
European University Institute  
Via dei Roccettini 9  
50014 San Domenico di Fiesole  
Italy

*From 1 September 2015:*

GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies  
Institute of Asian Studies  
Rothenbaumchaussee 32  
20148 Hamburg  
Germany  
Email: [sandra.destradi@giga-hamburg.de](mailto:sandra.destradi@giga-hamburg.de)