

## **Germany's vote on Libya: no national interest involved; the use of military means questionable**

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Following the self-immolation of a Tunisian greengrocer, the Arab world and North Africa went through a public uprising. It resulted, among other things, in Tunisian President Ben Ali fleeing his country and the disposal of the regime in Egypt. Likewise, protests and rebellious forces emerged in Libya, soon with the aim of taking over of the country and overthrowing the Gaddafi regime. After a violent response from the Libyan forces, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1970 on 26 February 2011. It demanded an immediate cessation of hostilities, imposed economic sanctions on Libya, established travel restrictions and ordered the freezing of the funds of the persons belonging to the ruling regime.<sup>1</sup>

However, due to non-compliance by the Libyan regime and further deterioration of the situation in the country, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1973. At the core of this resolution was an intention to end violence as soon as possible. It authorised the UN member states "to take all necessary measures to protect civilians," while "excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory" and allowing the establishment of a no-fly-zone.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to Resolution 1970, five countries including Germany abstained from voting on Resolution 1973. The Federal Republic was subjected to harsh internal and external critique for adopting such a position. This paper will shed some light on how the German government arrived at such a political position/view, what main arguments have been voiced by its critics and how the Federal Republic might conduct its foreign policy in the future.

### **Consensual view on the situation in Libya**

German political forces were quite unanimous in their assessment of the situation in Libya. In a debate in the Federal Parliament on 24 February 2011, all speakers

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Security Council. 2011. Resolution 1970 (2011). 6491st meeting, on 26 February 2011. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc10187.doc.htm>, accessed on 21.07.2011.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Security Council. 2011. Resolution 1973 (2011). 6498th meeting, on 17 March 2011. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc10200.doc.htm>, accessed on 21.07.2011.

condemned the violence that occurred in the country.<sup>3</sup> There were some disagreements on how to deal with the situation, but the support for the no-fly-zone was and remained rather limited for the time to come. For instance, the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) foreign policy spokesman Philipp Mißfelder argued in favour of the matter, but added that if Germany supported such a motion, it would have to bear the responsibility for the decision taken. Ruprecht Polenz (CDU), Chairman of the Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, concurred.<sup>4</sup>

Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle's (Free Democratic Party – FDP) statement followed suit. In a governmental declaration on the situation in the Arab world (made a day before the adoption of Resolution 1973 in the UN), he stated that the Libyan dictator had lost all legitimacy. Severe crimes committed by the Libyan regime had led to an agreement by the international community that the dictator had to go. The German government would not change its previous resolute position on this matter. He stated further that the Libyan dictator had to be brought to justice for conducting a campaign of violence against his people. However, Germany preferred the path of political and economic pressure to the use of military instruments and the establishment of a no-fly-zone in order to deny the Libyan regime the basis for conducting a war against its own people. Despite the pictures and news of bloody violence and fallen cities in eastern Libya, Germany saw the seemingly easy step of establishing a no-fly-zone as producing more questions than it promised to answer. According to Westerwelle, the actions taken should not have led to more violence, but to more freedom, so as not to weaken the democratic movement in all of North Africa. The establishment of a no-fly-zone constituted, despite its name, a military intervention. Germany did not want to become a party in what the foreign minister characterised as a civil war in North Africa.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the German foreign minister warned about the inherent possibility of conflict escalation that could have necessitated the deployment of ground troops.

The alternative to abstaining from military action was not inaction, but increased pressure on Gaddafi through sanctions. From the German perspective, the obligation to act lay with the states in the region. Germany expressed its readiness and willingness to support regional powers in their probably long and complicated

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<sup>3</sup> Hausding, Götz. 2011. "Fraktionen fordern ein Ende der Gewalt in Libyen." [http://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2011/33546001\\_kw08\\_de\\_libyen/index.html](http://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2011/33546001_kw08_de_libyen/index.html), accessed on 20.07.2011.

<sup>4</sup> FOCUS. 2011. "Flugverbotszone. Deutscher Widerstand bröckelt." [http://www.focus.de/politik/ausland/krise-in-der-arabischen-welt/flugverbotszone-deutscher-widerstand-broeckelt\\_aid\\_606749.html](http://www.focus.de/politik/ausland/krise-in-der-arabischen-welt/flugverbotszone-deutscher-widerstand-broeckelt_aid_606749.html), accessed on 22.07.2011.

<sup>5</sup> According to some experts, it was the use of this particular expression and generally harsh language by Minister Westerwelle in the *Bundestag* that literally forced Germany to abstain in the UN Security Council on the next day. Thus it could be argued that the German decision to abstain came about because of a specific rhetoric that entrapped the government rather than because of some strategic considerations.

process of establishing strong democracies and civil societies.<sup>6</sup>

Hence Germany approved Resolution 1970 of the UN Security Council on 26 February 2011 (sanctions against the Libyan regime) and then joined the EU foreign ministers in setting up additional sanctions against Libya on 28 February 2011,<sup>7</sup> but abstained from voting on Resolution 1973.

The German military perspective on a possible intervention in Libya was largely expressed by Klaus Reinhardt, a retired German four-star general and former Commander of KFOR from 1999 to 2000. In an article published in *FOCUS* on 12 March 2011, he supported the government's views regarding the questionable effectiveness of military means for solving the crisis in Libya and declared air strikes counterproductive. Reinhardt stated that it was crucial to keep the diplomatic channels open and to avoid being dragged into a war with highly uncertain exit possibilities.<sup>8</sup>

### **The vote was not about the unity of NATO, but about the UN resolution**

After the German government's decision to abstain from voting on Resolution 1973 on 17 March 2011, German Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) and her cabinet members justified their decision with similar arguments. One of the most comprehensive and insightful explanations of the reasons behind the German decision was given by German Defence Minister Thomas de Maizière (CDU) in an interview with *ZDF Heute Journal* on 18 March 2011.

When asked how he could explain the fact that some elements of the governing coalition (namely CDU and CSU) had given up one of the core features of German foreign policy (loyalty to Germany's NATO allies and unity within the EU on important foreign policy issues), he replied:

First of all, it's not about NATO, but a resolution of the UN Security Council. The international community says: "It is possible to intervene here." We claim the right to say in the name of Germany's interests: "We will not join this time." ... Even though one's heart might agree, a cool head says: "Better not."

De Maizière argued further that Germany was not convinced in the effectiveness of a

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<sup>6</sup> REGIERUNGonline. 2011. "Regierungserklärung des Bundesministers des Auswärtigen, Dr. Guido Westerwelle, zum Umbruch in der Arabischen Welt." BULLETIN DER BUNDESREGIERUNG Nr. 26-1 vom 16.03.2011. [http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn\\_1514/Content/DE/Bulletin/2011/03/26-1-bmaa-bt.html](http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn_1514/Content/DE/Bulletin/2011/03/26-1-bmaa-bt.html), accessed on 02.08.2011.

<sup>7</sup> THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION. 2011. *Council decision concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Libya*. COUNCIL DECISION 2011/137/CFSP of 28 February 2011. [http://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/eu\\_arms\\_embargoes/Libya\\_2/CFSP.pdf](http://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/eu_arms_embargoes/Libya_2/CFSP.pdf), accessed on 21.07.2011.

<sup>8</sup> *FOCUS*. 2011. "Ex-NATO-General warnt vor Militäreinsatz in Libyen." 12.03.2011. [http://www.focus.de/politik/ausland/krise-in-der-arabischen-welt/focus-interview-ex-nato-general-warnt-vor-militaereinsatz-in-libyen\\_aid\\_607806.html](http://www.focus.de/politik/ausland/krise-in-der-arabischen-welt/focus-interview-ex-nato-general-warnt-vor-militaereinsatz-in-libyen_aid_607806.html), accessed on 22.07.2011.

no-fly-zone and predicted that the operation might lead to air strikes against targets in Libya. Gaddafi would use them to generate civilian casualties and "when the [Libyan] air force will be disabled, the killing will continue with tanks; hence ground troops might have to be deployed. This is why we say: consider the end [of it]!"

Subsequently, the defence minister picked up and challenged some arguments in favour of German involvement in Libya. These arguments had already been used, and were going to be used again, by the representatives of the opposition in the Parliament and the wider public. He stated in a very self-critical manner that 'no' had been said in the past in multiple cases despite the horrible crimes that were being committed.

[W]e were not there in Rwanda, Sudan and the Ivory Coast. What about Yemen and Bahrain? Can we engage in Libya just because of oil? We cannot get rid of all dictators in the world by international war. We did not flatter Gaddafi in the past like others did and thus we feel no obligation to get involved. However, we support others in their actions, but without taking part ourselves. ... A decision to participate must be based on our national interests.

Furthermore, de Maizière claimed that the majority of military personnel in NATO – the Germans, the Americans and others – were also very cautious in this matter and the pressure to get involved was more of a political nature. Interestingly, the defence minister stated that even if German public opinion might favour the nation's participation in operations in Libya, that was no reason to let oneself be pressed into taking such a decision.<sup>9</sup>

### **The decision to abstain in the UN, public opinion and the balance of political forces in Germany**

A representative public opinion survey conducted on 18 March 2011 by EMNID showed that 62% of Germans considered military action against Gaddafi to be a justified and correct course of action, while 31% of the respondents were against it. However, only 29% of Germans were in favour of direct involvement of the *Bundeswehr* in operations in Libya, whereas 65% were against it.<sup>10</sup> Thus the Germans generally supported military action against Gaddafi, but did not want to get involved themselves.

One may argue that the government's position – "Libya should be bombed,

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<sup>9</sup> ZDF Heute Journal. 2011. „Interview mit Verteidigungsminister de Maizière.“ 18.03.2011. <http://www.zdf.de/ZDFmediathek/beitrag/video/1288692/De-Maiziere-Wir-sind-nicht-ueberzeugt#/beitrag/video/1288692/De-Maiziere-Wir-sind-nicht-ueberzeugt>, accessed on 20.03.2011 – author's translation

<sup>10</sup> Welt Online. 2011. "62% der Deutschen für Militärschlag." 20.03.2011. <http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article12893939/62-Prozent-der-Deutschen-fuer-Militaerschlag.html>, accessed on 21.07.2011.

but not by us” – mirrored public opinion, but that was not quite so. The German government made it rather clear that, in contrast to popular opinion, it did not believe in the effectiveness of any kind of military means and actions. Besides, the defeat of the governing parties in the upcoming elections in three German states did not have a dramatic impact on the *Bundesrat*, which is composed of the delegates of federal state governments. The governing coalition had already lost its majority there as a result of the elections in North Rhine-Westphalia in May 2010.

Nevertheless, the possibility that internal political reasons influenced the government's decision in some way cannot be completely discarded. Given the vagueness of public opinion (except for a clear reluctance to participate in Libyan operations) and the fluctuating views of the opposition parties, one cannot fully exclude that the government's policy not to participate in military action was encouraged under these circumstances.<sup>11</sup>

### **Military entrapment in Libya was avoided, but the preservation of unity with allies was considered crucial**

Germany's biggest fear seemed to be that a 'yes' in the Security Council would have manoeuvred the country into a position where it could not refuse, if asked, to provide actual military support for operations in Libya. If the German ambassador to the UN had made it clear that despite a 'yes' to Resolution 1973, Germany would not participate in any consequent military engagement, the country might have stood closer to its allies. However, not only a great deal of critique for dodging its military responsibilities would have followed, but Germany would have been actually accountable for paving the way for military action and the nation would have had a moral responsibility to participate in it – despite considering it ineffective and without any national gains or interests. Thus Germany opted for making a rather strong statement in favour of pursuing its interests regardless of the resentment of its allies.

This was made very clear by Chancellor Merkel in an official press statement on 18 March 2011. She pointed out that Germany was not going to participate in any military operations and that was the reason why the country abstained from voting. The goals of Resolution 1973 corresponded to those of German policy – meaning the latter was not about being neutral. Merkel considered the issue of avoiding direct German military engagement in Libya solved after the vote in the Security Council. Furthermore, she hinted that Germany might compensate its abstention in the Security Council to its NATO allies. Merkel outlined the possibility of a stronger German contribution to on-going NATO missions in order to relieve the pressure on the alliance members arising from their very extensive commitments.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the possibility that the German government became entrapped in its own rhetoric expressed by Minister Westerwelle needs a closer look. The reasons behind the use of such scathing language on the option of military intervention could be connected with the popularity levels of the political parties.

<sup>12</sup> REGIERUNGonline. 2011. "Pressestatement von Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel zur aktuellen Entwicklung in Libyen." 18.03.2011.

While justifying the government's decision in the Parliament on 18 March 2011, Foreign Minister Westerwelle added that Germany was not alone in its position, but with other powers like Brazil, India, China and Russia.<sup>13</sup> In fact, such behaviour and verbal alignment with Russia (in particular) seemed to reflect Germany's recent efforts to improve their relations and to integrate Russia more into the European security framework,<sup>14</sup> while constantly developing a stronger international sense of independence and self-esteem.<sup>15</sup>

This alignment with Russia and other powers led to an extensive internal critique of Germany's decision. Former German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) criticised the government heavily in an online commentary published in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* on 22 March 2011. In his words, the abstention decision caused the Federal Republic to lose credibility in the United Nations and in the Middle East, while German aspirations for a permanent seat in the Security Council had been undermined. Fischer even criticised his own party members and former coalition partners – the social democrats (SPD) – for backing the government in its decision. He stated that Germany's claims of having followed multilateralism and international law had been just empty words because the resolution that aimed to protect the Libyan people from Gaddafi's brutal regime was denied approval. Fischer's main concern was that Germany's solidarity with the transatlantic alliance, the European Common Security and Foreign Policy (which Germany had helped to establish) and the European Union had suffered severe damage.<sup>16</sup>

Klaus Naumann, a retired German four-star general and former Chairman of the NATO Military Committee from 1996 to 1999, expressed a similar view in an interview to *Stuttgarter Zeitung* on 23 March 2011. He favoured a vote in support of Resolution 1973, but in contrast to Fischer he excluded the participation of German troops in subsequent operations. His reasoning on withholding military support had more to do with the actual capabilities of the *Luftwaffe* that could only provide Tornados for electronic support and reconnaissance. The actual course of action (abstention), Naumann argued, was going to result in the isolation of Germany in international politics. Moreover, it was the first time Germany had chosen a different

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<http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2011/03/2011-03-18-statement-merkel-libyen.html>, accessed on 22.07.2011.

<sup>13</sup> REGIERUNGonline. 2011. "Regierungserklärung von Bundesaußenminister Guido Westerwelle zu den aktuellen Entwicklungen in Libyen." 18.03.2011.

<http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Regierungserklaerung/2011/2011-03-18-westerwelle-libyen.html>, accessed on 23.07.2011.

<sup>14</sup> Papic, Marco. 2011. "Dispatch: German-Russian Security Cooperation." <http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20110613-dispatch-german-russian-security-cooperation>, accessed on 01.08.2011.

<sup>15</sup> Papic, Marco & Peter Zeihan. 2011. "Germany's Choice: Part 2." <http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20110725-germanys-choice-part-2>, accessed on 01.08.2011.

<sup>16</sup> Fischer, Joschka. 2011. "Deutsche Außenpolitik – eine Farce." *Sueddeutsche.de*. 22.03.2011. <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/streitfall-libyen-einsatz-deutsche-aussenpolitik-eine-farce-1.1075362>, accessed on 21.07.2011.

course of action than the US and the government had surrendered its leading role in Europe to France. However, he fully acknowledged that Gaddafi's regime was likely to produce serious civilian casualties and the no-fly-zone could merely support the rebels, while the Libyan society had to come to terms with itself.<sup>17</sup>

The Chairman of the Munich Security Conference Wolfgang Ischinger argued in *Deutschlandradio* on 19 March 2011 that voting for Resolution 1973 would have been more in line with the traditional German foreign policy orientation, but that troop contributions should have been withheld. He reiterated the doubts of the German government regarding the effectiveness of a no-fly-zone and said that due to the clear exclusion of the deployment of ground forces, a loophole for dodging Western pressure might have been created for Gaddafi.<sup>18</sup>

### Allies still matter

Regardless of the accompanying rhetoric, Germany's decision marked no actual break with its allies. Germany kept up its contributions in support of the objectives of Resolutions 1970 and 1973, with the only exception of staying out of military engagement. The German government approved a series of measures to reassure its allies of its continued trustworthiness and support as a partner. These measures included Germany's stronger commitments in Afghanistan and a 'yes' vote in the European Council on the possible launch of EUFOR Libya.

Germany reconsidered several of its earlier decisions, while trying to be of assistance to its allies. For instance, on 25 March 2011, the Federal Parliament voted with a great majority in favour of the government's motion 17/5190 concerning the participation of German forces in NATO-AWACS missions,<sup>19</sup> whereas in January Germany had decided not to support AWACS missions over Afghanistan because of Germany's focus on training the Afghan troops in order to proceed with the handover of security responsibilities to them.<sup>20</sup>

The reasoning behind reconsidering the acceptability of AWACS missions was that, among other things, they supported 'partnering' and 'mentoring' as well as the handover of the security responsibilities to the Afghan forces.<sup>21</sup> In Westerwelle's

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<sup>17</sup> Schiermeyer, Matthias. 2011. "Ehemaliger Nato-General im Interview 'Uneinigkeit spielt Gaddafi in die Hände'." *Stuttgarter Zeitung*. 23.03.2011. <http://www.stuttgarter-zeitung.de/inhalt.ehemaliger-nato-general-im-interview-uneinigkeit-spielt-gaddafi-in-die-haende.b38fa44c-ca8f-4922-9765-d7f6b2ce46a9.html>, accessed on 21.07.2011.

<sup>18</sup> *Deutschlandradio Kultur*. 2011. "Zustimmung wäre besser gewesen." 19.03.2011. <http://www.dradio.de/dkultur/sendungen/interview/1415111/>, accessed on 24.07.2011.

<sup>19</sup> Bode, Bernard. 2011. "Bundestag beschließt AWACS-Einsatz in Afghanistan." [http://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2011/33884251\\_kw12\\_de\\_afghanistan\\_awacs\\_zp/index.html](http://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2011/33884251_kw12_de_afghanistan_awacs_zp/index.html), accessed on 20.07.2011.

<sup>20</sup> REGIERUNGonline. 2011a. "Regierungspressekonferenz vom 14. Januar." 14.01.2011. [http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn\\_1516/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2011/01/2011-01-14-regpk.html](http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn_1516/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2011/01/2011-01-14-regpk.html), accessed on 20.07.2011.

<sup>21</sup> Deutscher Bundestag. 2011. "Antrag der Bundesregierung." Drucksache 17/5190. 17. Wahlperiode. <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/17/051/1705190.pdf>, accessed on 02.08.2011.

words, Germany did not provide personnel for AWACS missions in January in response to the needs of NATO because the focus had been on training the Afghan forces at that time. However, “[t]he situation in Libya [had] changed the situation as a whole.”<sup>22</sup>

Defence Minister de Maizière considered this change in policy reasonable regardless of the developments in Libya. Even so, the turn of events in Libya rendered Germany's actions timely and more useful:

[W]ithout Germany one cannot be at the same time in Libya and in Afghanistan. ... [E]ven if [the German participation in AWACS missions] was not necessary, it still is ... a political sign of solidarity with the alliance that should be offered just now.<sup>23</sup>

Germany also continued the service of its personnel in various NATO units and structures, which were involved in conducting operations in Libya, but which were not likely to be involved in armed missions. An example of such contribution is the service of German personnel in multinational NATO headquarters.<sup>24</sup>

Foreign Minister Westerwelle's vote in support of EUFOR Libya demonstrated Germany's strong solidarity with the EU countries. The European Union would assemble forces under the auspices of Resolutions 1970 and 1973 of the UN Security Council if the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) asked for it.<sup>25</sup> However, during a press conference on 20 April 2011, Valerie Amos, OCHA's Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, stated that EUFOR would only be called for help if the UN “reach[ed] the point [in which] the utilisation of civilian assets [was] impossible.” Amos continued her statement with

<sup>22</sup> REGIERUNGonline. 2011. “Rede des Bundesministers des Auswärtigen, Dr. Guido Westerwelle zur Beteiligung deutscher Streitkräfte am Einsatz von NATO-AWACS im Rahmen der internationalen Sicherheitsunterstützungstruppe in Afghanistan.” BULLETIN DER BUNDESREGIERUNG Nr. 31-1 vom 23. März 2011. [http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn\\_1514/Content/DE/Bulletin/2011/03/31-1-bmaa-bt.html](http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn_1514/Content/DE/Bulletin/2011/03/31-1-bmaa-bt.html), accessed on 02.08.2011 – author's translation.

<sup>23</sup> REGIERUNGonline. 2011. Rede des Bundesministers der Verteidigung, Dr. Thomas de Maizière, zur Beteiligung deutscher Streitkräfte am Einsatz von NATO-AWACS. BULLETIN DER BUNDESREGIERUNG Nr. 31-2 vom 23. März 2011. [http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Bulletin/2011/03/Anlagen/31-2-bmvg\\_property=publicationFile.pdf](http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Bulletin/2011/03/Anlagen/31-2-bmvg_property=publicationFile.pdf), accessed on 02.08.2011 – author's translation.

<sup>24</sup> Bötzel, Frank. 2011. “Libyen-Einsatz: Soldaten dürfen in Stäben bleiben.” *Bundeswehr.de*. 25.03.2011. [http://www.bundeswehr.de/portal/a/bwde/!ut/p/c4/NYqxDoMwDET\\_KE4WqNhAKFLXlKa3AwZZhQQZtyz9-CZD76Q33Dt4QmrAD6-oHANu0MMwcvTveZrxmMqcKsb4EaVGClr\\_TOSvAmqkUIBNXQY1jiii6ZfMWSchwDIN1beNK-4\\_73nztO2\\_Lor03Dzj2vf4B1qSpaA!/,](http://www.bundeswehr.de/portal/a/bwde/!ut/p/c4/NYqxDoMwDET_KE4WqNhAKFLXlKa3AwZZhQQZtyz9-CZD76Q33Dt4QmrAD6-oHANu0MMwcvTveZrxmMqcKsb4EaVGClr_TOSvAmqkUIBNXQY1jiii6ZfMWSchwDIN1beNK-4_73nztO2_Lor03Dzj2vf4B1qSpaA!/) accessed on 01.09.2011.

<sup>25</sup> DER RAT DER EUROPÄISCHEN UNION. 2011. BESCHLUSS 2011/210/GASP DES RATES vom 1. April 2011 über eine Militäroperation der Europäischen Union zur Unterstützung humanitärer Hilfseinsätze als Reaktion auf die Krisensituation in Libyen (‘EUFOR Libya’). <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:089:0017:0020:DE:PDF>, accessed on 20.07.2011.

articulating concern about the UN taking sides in the Libyan conflict.<sup>26</sup> Thus the likelihood of deployment of the EU forces to Libya remained rather low.

One might argue that Germany had apparently no problems with contributing forces to a purely humanitarian mission in Libya (or maybe it simply could not refuse). This view fits with the official expression of support for the revolutionary/freedom movement and the population of Libya, plus with refraining from aggressive military action with questionable effectiveness and uncertain outcomes. State Secretary Steffen Seibert stated precisely that by clearly distinguishing between possible military support for humanitarian missions and offensive military actions based on Resolution 1973.<sup>27</sup> It was definitely a statement in favour of European unity and a continuation of the previous declarations about supporting the aims of Germany's allies and those of Resolutions 1970 and 1973.

However, the actions Germany has taken within in the European Council have been far from providing a blank cheque for getting German boots on Libyan ground, as it is the Federal Parliament and not the government that eventually would have to approve such a mission for the *Bundeswehr*. All in all, Germany still values its allies, even though it has preferred a different approach to dealing with the problems in Libya.

### **Conclusions: a growing emphasis on national interests?**

As was shown above, in its approach to the situation in Libya, Germany arrived in its rhetoric at three strategic conclusions: (1) Germany stood to gain little or nothing by taking part in military action against Gaddafi and/or by becoming a party in a Libyan civil war; (2) the effectiveness of the no-fly-zone as a means for stopping the civil war was highly questionable and Germany's participation in its enforcement entailed a risk of entrapment in ground operations in Libya; however, Germany did not prevent its allies from taking military action and would support them in other theatres of operations so as to free their assets; (3) Germany shared the general aims of the international community in exerting pressure on Gaddafi to end violence and to force his resignation and in supporting the Libyan people by contributing (forces) to humanitarian operations.

It can be said that Germany's assessment of the military situation and the prospects in Libya turned out to be correct. Although NATO's air operations degraded Gaddafi's forces extensively, the collapse of his regime was achieved by supplying the rebels with arms and by deploying Western special forces that planned and

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<sup>26</sup> *United Nations Webcast*. 2011. "Valerie Amos (OCHA) on the humanitarian situation in Libya - Press Conference." 20.04.2011.  
<http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/2011/04/press-conference-valerie-amos-ocha-on-the-humanitarian-situation-in-libya.html>, accessed on 08.08.2011.

<sup>27</sup> REGIERUNGonline. 2011. "Regierungspressekonferenz vom 8. April." 08.04.2011.  
<http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2011/04/2011-04-08-regkpk.layoutVariant=Druckansicht.html>, accessed on 20.07.2011.

coordinated the rebel war effort.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the dramatic events that led to the fall of Tripoli, Defence Minister de Maizière self-critically pointed out that the German government and other Western powers erred three times in their assessments of the situation and its prospects. Gaddafi was first “massively underrated,” then “massively overrated,” and “then we said [the conflict] will last for a long time and no change will occur ... and within one week Tripoli was conquered.”<sup>29</sup>

Leaving aside the details of the Libyan conflict and its management, it is possible to claim that at the strategic level a certain shift in German foreign policy has occurred during the last 6–8 months. The up-to-date *German Defence Policy Guidelines* (adopted on 18 May 2011), which offer a new strategic outlook, might hint at what to expect from the Federal Republic in the future. The subtitle of the document is: “Safeguarding National Interests – Assuming International Responsibility – Shaping Security Together.”<sup>30</sup> Interests – responsibility – security cooperation... in that particular order.

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<sup>28</sup> Sengupta, Kim. 2011. “Next stop Tripoli – Libya's rebels sense victory is within reach.” *The Independent*. 20.08.2011. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/next-stop-tripoli-ndash-libyas-rebels-sense-victory-is-within-reach-2340837.html>, accessed on 20.09.2011; Rayment, Sean. 2011. “How the special forces helped bring Gaddafi to his knees.” *The Daily Telegraph*. 28.08.2011. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8727076/How-the-special-forces-helped-bring-Gaddafi-to-his-knees.html>, accessed on 20.09.2011.

<sup>29</sup> *Zeit Online*. 2011. “De Maizière räumt Fehleinschätzungen in der Libyen-Politik ein.” 26.08.2011. <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2011-08/maiziere-roesler-libyen>, accessed on 26.08.2011 – author’s translation.

<sup>30</sup> German Ministry of Defence. 2011. *Defence Policy Guidelines*. [http://www.nato.diplo.de/contentblob/3150944/Daten/1318881/VM\\_deMaiziere\\_180511\\_eng\\_DLD.pdf](http://www.nato.diplo.de/contentblob/3150944/Daten/1318881/VM_deMaiziere_180511_eng_DLD.pdf), accessed on 19.07.2011.