

The Role of Elite Consensus in the Post-War Foreign Policy of the United States and West Germany

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Abstract

Did the elite conception of a national role influence the foreign policy behavior of the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) after the second World War? As both the United States and the FRG emerged from WWII, both nations quickly formed their own foreign policy consensus that involved a distinct notion of “our place in the world,” driven primarily by a moral burden in the shadow of WWII and a commitment to multilateralism in light of the Cold War. Entering the conversation of the role of ideas in foreign policymaking, this paper argues that the respective elite consensus of the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany are essential to understanding the foreign policy behavior of both nations in the immediate post-war era.

“Only a social scientist could ever have believed that material interests alone drove history and that ideas were only epiphenomenal” –Francis Fukuyama

Introduction

Did the elite conception of a national role influence the foreign policy behavior of the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) after the second World War? As both the United States and the FRG emerged from WWII, both nations quickly formed their own foreign policy consensus that involved a distinct notion of “our place in the world.” For the Federal Republic, this narrative consisted of a conscious effort to craft a ‘new’ image for the German nation in the international arena. Broadly put, the foreign policy agenda of the Federal Republic was that of multilateralism, antimilitarism, integration into international—primarily Western—systems such as NATO and the European Community, and reconciliation for the horrors of the Second World War. For the United States, the post-war foreign policy narrative centered around a defense of liberal-democratic capitalism and a covenant to protect the world from the looming threat of Soviet Communism.

A close look at both nations’ foreign policy behavior in the post-war era suggests that elite consensus plays a significant role in both the shaping and justification for foreign policymaking. Indeed, I maintain that the respective post-war national stories of United States and the FRG influenced leaders of both nations to generate foreign policy decisions based on their perceived “role in the world.” Having emerged from the second World War in polar opposite conditions—the United States, an economic and political hegemon in the West and Germany, an unconditionally defeated nation haunted by the shadow of two world wars and the Holocaust—the foreign policy-national narrative link in both countries reveals that the elite conception of each nation’s post-war national role fueled specific foreign policy decision-making

in light of that role. Specifically, though both nations developed a distinct consensus concerning a perceived moral burden in the shadow of WWII and shared a commitment to Western military, economic, and political alliances in the post war era, U.S. and FRG foreign policymakers exhibit differing motivations and behaviors in pursuing these policies, hence the role of a distinct set of ideas among policymakers of both nations. Thus, I maintain that these two elite consensuses are essential to understanding the foreign policy behavior of both nations in the immediate post-war era.

This paper enters the conversation over the role of ideas in foreign policy behavior. In the following analysis, I identify a distinct elite consensus in the respective foreign policymaking of the United States and FRG that I argue played a major role in the shaping and justification of each nations' foreign policy behavior in the immediate post-war era. On the note of causality, I treat the role of ideas in foreign policy as "reasons for actions" (Ruggie 1998) among foreign policymakers. In this particular case, the ideas that serve as the reasons for actions are the elite consensuses outlined above. The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: Section 1 is a brief review of the literature on ideas and foreign policy behavior. Section 2 details the elite consensus of the United States in the immediate post-war era and argues that this consensus holds explanatory power for U.S. foreign policy during this period. Section 3 presents a similar analysis and argument for the Federal Republic of Germany in the immediate post-war era. Section 4 concludes the paper.

1. A Review of the Literature: The Case for Ideas in Foreign Policy

The basic assumption underlying this paper is that ideas matter: Policymakers act within a specific social-political context with prevailing norms and ideologies that shape the way in which decisions are made. With respect to the study of international relations, Finnemore and

Sikkink (1998) acknowledge that “Norms and normative issues have been central to the study of politics for at least two millennia... Our conclusions (or our assumptions) about these issues [of human behavior] condition every form of political analysis” (889). Indeed, the pedigree of scholarship on norms, ideology, psychology, behavior, perception, etc.—broadly stated hereinafter as “ideas”—and foreign policy decision making is vast and diverse, and a complete review is therefore beyond the scope of the present analysis; what follows in this section is a brief overview of the debate over ideas and foreign policy behavior.

Although the International Relations scholarship that emerged in the mid-twentieth century, and subsequently came to define the discipline, is often described as “realist” or “classical realist” in its orientation, most if not all acknowledged the role of ideas and ideology as being essential to the formulation of state interests. As Levi (1970) puts it, “There can be no doubt that interests and ideology both affect national behavior as this is planned in foreign policies” (1). Some early IR scholars became jaded with “pure power” explanations of international behavior and sought to incorporate other features of foreign policy such as the social nature of the international system (Spiro 1966; Gross 1954), the decision-making process (Frankel 1963), and moral norms (Levi 1965; Good 1965). Even avowed realists such as E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau emphasized the power of ideology and morality in the calculus of state interest and action in the international arena. Carr’s (1946) famous statement that “Political action must be based on a coordination of morality and power,” coupled with Morgenthau’s (1952) warning that a foreign policy “guided by moral abstractions” as opposed to genuine national interest “is bound to destroy the very moral values it sets out to promote” demonstrates the awareness of scholars that ideas have profound policy implications, especially in matters of international conflict.

Naturally, as American political science in the 1960s and 70s treaded toward rational-choice and microeconomic models to explain political phenomena, IR scholarship began to focus less on ideas and norms as drivers of policy in favor of more quantifiable phenomena. As Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) put it, “The ‘turn’ away from norms and normative concerns began with the behavioral revolution and its enthusiasm for measurement. Normative and ideational phenomena were difficult to measure and so tended to be pushed aside for methodological reasons” (889). Scholars instead began to emphasize the structure of the anarchic international system as the primary explanation of state behavior (Waltz 1970, 1979; Mearsheimer 1994) as well as use game theory (e.g., Conybeare 1984) to argue that states behave as would a rational self-interested individual in a given dilemma¹.

Renewed interest in norms and ideas in state behavior in IR scholarship was largely a result of major changes in world politics in the 1980s and 90s. In fact, the most potent critiques of the rational choice and balance-of-power literature that dominated IR thinking in the 1970s spelled out the inadequacy of the neoliberal and neorealist theories to explain change in the global arena (see, for example, Ruggie 1983). Paradigm-shifting events in the global order such as the end of Apartheid in South Africa, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, and emerging chemical weapon taboos were simply not accounted for in previous models, and therefore scholars returned, in a more systematic manner, to the influence of norms and ideas in international relations (Klotz 1995a; Risse-Kappen 1994; Price 1995). What is more, scholars began to challenge the methodological foundations on which neorealists and neoliberals claimed causality; that is, how do formal rational choice models (and their manifold of assumptions) or

¹ A full discussion on microeconomics, rational-choice, and game theory and its relevance for political science and IR is beyond the scope of the present discussion. For a thorough review see the debate between Lowi and Simon: Lowi 1992; Simon 1993a; Lowi 1993a,b; and Simon 1993b.

balance-of-power theories act in isolation from prevailing modes of thinking in the policymaking space? These challenges do not deny the functions of power or interests, but rather change the way in which we approach the context of foreign policy decision-making and state behavior (e.g., Wendt 1987; Yee 1996; Björkdahl 2002).

This is precisely the domain of the present analysis. It seeks to identify an explanation of the foreign policy behavior of the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany by way of the distinct elite foreign policy consensus that developed in the immediate post-war era. That is, through these respective ideational lenses, foreign policy elites of both countries shaped and justified their foreign policy behavior. A number of studies have demonstrated the role of perception, beliefs, and the psychology of decision-making in America's Cold War policies (Herrmann 1986; Larson 1985, 2000; Hunt 1987) as well as post-war German foreign policy (Banchoff 1999; Feldman 2012). The following paper, then, proceeds with the understanding that ideas and policymaking are closely linked, and seeks to demonstrate the role of elite consensus in the respective foreign policies of the United States and the Federal Republic in the immediate post-war era.

2. Elite Consensus in U.S. Foreign Policy

By 1946, a specific foreign policy consensus solidified under the Truman administration that was to guide U.S. foreign policymaking for the next 45 years—this consensus was undoubtedly shaped by a post-war consciousness concerning America's role in the international arena. Chief among foreign policymakers' concerns, moreover, was a looming Soviet threat, and what the Soviet regime would mean for global peace, capitalism, and democracy. George Herring, for one, provides a poignant synopsis of America's changing foreign policy priorities in the immediate post war era:

Responding to the turmoil that was the new world “order” and to a perceived global threat from the Soviet Union, the Truman administration between 1945 and 1953 turned traditional U.S. foreign policy assumptions upside down. A country accustomed to free security succumbed to a rampant insecurity through which nations across the world suddenly took on huge significance. Unilateralism gave way to multilateralism. Through the policy of containment, the Truman administration undertook a host of international commitments, launched scores of programs, and mounted a peacetime military buildup that would have been unthinkable just ten years earlier. The age of American globalism was under way.

Herring’s brief, yet telling, description of U.S. post-war foreign policy attitudes highlights the moral burdens and commitment to multilateral institutions present in the fledgling American consensus. Indeed, a significant parameter of this story is the sense with which Truman and his successors acted under a moral obligation to shape and protect the world—preferably a world in America’s image. As Herring points out, that the United States emerged from the second World War an economic and political hegemon posed two contrasting narratives: on one hand, the nation relished its recent military victory and rise to world prominence, but on the other, foreign policy leaders quickly grasped that, moving forward, the peace and security of the world was (ostensibly) dependent upon American might. Such an attitude is present in the stark words of General George C. Marshall: “We are now concerned with the peace of the entire world;” or in slightly more prophetic terms, Archibald MacLeish: “We have . . . the abundant means to bring our boldest dreams to pass— to create for ourselves whatever world we have the courage to desire” (Herring 598).

In short order, the foreign policy establishment of the United States began to take on what the newly converted cold-warrior, Dean Acheson, called “a novel burden far from our shores.” At home, the Truman administration began to edify a national security bureaucracy whose task was to monitor and, if necessary, intervene in parts of the globe where liberal-democracy and capitalism—now the *sine qua non* for America’s global interests—seemed to be threatened

(Herring). Of course, as will be seen shortly, America's avowed commitment to liberal-democratic capitalism and the self-determination of peoples across the globe more often than not took on an in-name-only status; that is, American interventionism was always *justified* by the new role of America as defender of global freedom. In any case, it is important to recognize that American foreign policy efforts in the post-war era were often wedded to notions of a moral burden and, in turn, a commitment to active participation within a multilateral architecture.

This newfound task came to fruition with the passage of the National Security Act and U.S. economic and military involvement in Turkey and Greece in 1947. Truman himself, echoing the policy of containment and America's special role in protecting global freedom and peace, stated in a 1947 speech on the civil war in Greece: "If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world— and we shall surely endanger the welfare of this nation." Truman's words highlight both the new consensus on containment and the United States' special burden in seeing that the world was crafted in America's image. As a result, the foreign policy apparatus of the United States—buffeted by a slew of powerful bureaucratic structures such as the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the National Security Council, and the Central Intelligence Agency—was now well on its way to serving the United States' newfound interventionist role in the post-war international arena.

Not only was the Truman administration concerned with potential spheres of Soviet influence like Turkey and Greece, but also with strengthening ties among other Western nations. As Herring puts it, Truman and his advisors remarkably "formed an alliance with the Western European nations that involved binding commitments to intervene militarily, the first such obligations since the French alliance of 1778" (Herring 611). In addition to military ties, the Truman administration pursued economic means toward alliance and Western integration—an

effort that culminated in the Marshall Plan of 1947. Overall, the United States under Truman fostered a Western Europe in America's image; in Herring's estimation, "Drawing upon their own historical experience in the Articles of Confederation, Americans in promoting the Marshall Plan urged the Western Europeans to find security through unification" (612). Such steps toward alliance and unification continued well into the late 1940s, particularly after the events of the Berlin Blockade, which led many Western European nations to embrace (however reluctantly) the NATO charter.

America's assumed role as a force for peace and prosperity in the world—pitted against the narrative of a backward, nefarious Soviet regime—carried the United States into further military intervention, first in Korea in 1950 and then in Vietnam (officially) in 1964. By 1949-50, the United States was committed to excising Soviet influence from all corners of the globe as well as reviving the struggling economies of Western European nations. These foreign policy priorities soon became intertwined and, coupled with a budding arms race between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, pushed the U.S. foreign policy establishment to intervene in a series of prolonged military engagements in Southeast Asia. Intervention in the Greek civil war in 1947 set the stage for what would become military engagement (officially a "police action") in Korea and, unsurprisingly, the justification for such action was the containment of the global Communist threat. The rhetoric of the Washington foreign policy establishment became increasingly insecure in tone: talk of "losing" certain parts of the world became a commonplace moniker for nations or regions thought to be under the thumb of left-wing insurgencies. After "losing" China to Mao's Communist revolution in 1949, U.S. foreign policymakers took on the burden to ensure that other parts of the globe—Southeast Asia, the Mediterranean, and later Latin America—remained in their sphere of influence, both politically and economically.

As Herring notes, concerning the consensus of the “Wise Men” of American foreign policy during the early Cold War, “Although they spoke of the ‘burdens’ of world leadership, they went about their task with zest...Coming from the very nerve center of world capitalism, they were appalled by Marxist dogma and Soviet totalitarianism...they frequently exaggerated the Soviet threat to sell their programs. Sometimes, they were persuaded by their own rhetoric or became its political captives” (613). Herring’s last sentence, especially, captures the role of America’s identity in the international arena as a catalyst for further global involvement. Not long after the end of the Korean conflict, for instance, the United States began to commit major financial and intelligence resources to the French in their battle to “reclaim” Vietnam. Assuming the role as world leader again, the United States would eventually take on the whole of the conflict, resulting in the official commitment of U.S. forces in 1964. In short, I submit that U.S. foreign policy in the two decades following WWII was a product of a distinct consensus regarding “our role in the world.” This sense of national identity and purpose, moreover, was characterized by a perceived moral burden to ensure world freedom and a need to secure political, economic, and military alliances with Western nations.

For the United States, strengthening military, political, and economic ties with the West vis a vis international organizations and programs (such as NATO and the Marshall Plan) was deemed a necessary step in fulfilling America’s new role as “protector” of democracy and freedom amidst an increasingly tense Cold War landscape...To be sure, America’s post-war efforts to integrate and unify Western military alliances and economic interests should not be viewed as acts of selfless benevolence, but of a precise national interest. In a word, the slew of multilateral commitments advanced by the U.S. foreign policymakers in the post-war era was an attempt to shape in the world, and particularly the West, in America’s image. In the famous

words of Dean Acheson, the task of the United States in the immediate post-war era was “just a bit less formidable than that described in the first chapter of Genesis” (*Present at Creation*).

Presumably, Acheson and the rest of the Wise Men were fully intent at realizing the American Genesis through, among other means, Western multilateral institutions.

Under the aegis of the Wise Men, there arose a simple, yet consequential, Cold War ideology that viewed the world in a rather Manichean lens: the depraved Soviet empire against an American-led free world. Thus, the United States had all but a divinely-sanctioned order to intervene where it saw fit.

Perhaps the most explicit rendering of the Washington foreign policy consensus is found in George Kennan’s (in)famous “Long Telegram” of 1946, later published as a 1947 essay in *Foreign Affairs*. In it, Kennan expresses the stark, Manichean Cold War rhetoric that thrived under the Truman administration and guided the American foreign policy establishment through at least the next two Administrations. Interestingly, as Michael Hunt points out, Kennan’s essay exudes moral sentiments concerning America’s place in the world and the immense burdens facing the nation: “This famous essay was also suffused with the moral formulations long familiar to the audience of influential that Kennan wished to reach. ‘The Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the western world’ posed, in Kennan’s view, ‘a test of the over-all worth of the United States as a nation among nations.’ For confronting them with this test his countrymen owed ‘a certain gratitude to ... Providence’” (154). Apparently, Kennan’s work landed so well among the foreign policy bureaucracy in Washington that, upon arrival back to the States, he was immediately given the post of “Washington’s resident Soviet specialist” (*ibid*). As Hunt and other scholars have later averred, Kennan’s essay, although not entirely inaccurate in its content, certainly assumed the worst of all Soviet intentions and, consequently, shored up

the already popular view among U.S. foreign policymakers that the United States was called to act as the great antipode of the international Soviet threat.

Kennan's fervent anticommunism landed particularly well with the foreign policy consensus of the time, combining the notion of America's moral burden to shape and protect the world with growing Cold War anxieties in the immediate post-war era. What is more, given Truman's penchant for "drawing simple conclusions from complex problems" (Herring 600), Kennan's call for American action was met with little scrutiny from the administration and played a decisive role in the development of the containment doctrine. The prevailing consensus, codified through the containment doctrine, centered around notions of America's role in preserving freedom and the moral impetus to do so; as Hunt rightly points out, "Ideology defined for the advocates of containment the issue at stake: *survival of freedom around the world*. That ideology also defined the chief threat to freedom: Soviet communism—which the United States had *an incontestable obligation to combat* (153, my emphasis).

Wedded to notions of containment and the supposed fragility of the new international order was an emphasis on collective security, particularly among the West. American foreign policymakers in the immediate post war era were acutely aware of the "geopolitical realities" of an increasingly globalized world, made possible by modern infrastructure, trade, transportation, and the possibility of thermonuclear annihilation. It is important to recognize that the American globalist mindset following the end of World War II was not a new development in U.S. foreign policymaking, but was rather a revitalization of the Wilsonian project of decades earlier. In this fashion, the post-war foreign policy establishment attached great importance to Western integration and solidarity. Hunt calls attention to the place of collective security in the national security consensus of post-war Washington: "Consistent with the geopolitics now in vogue

among his national-security advisers, Truman invoked the old Wilsonian collective-security creed. Peace was indivisible, and aggression anywhere endangered the security of the United States” (158).

This mindset endured, and even strengthened, under subsequent administrations. U.S. foreign policymakers saw it increasingly important that American’s interests be mirrored across Western Europe and potential spheres of Soviet influence. Viewed in this light, multilateral organizations such as NATO and later SEATO (chartered in 1954) indicate an emphasis among American foreign policymakers to keep the world in America’s image. Noting America’s vast commitment to global security in the immediate post-war period, Herring states that by 1950, “the Cold War had altered beyond recognition America’s national security apparatus and global presence...Through a global network of alliances, the United States was committed to defend forty-two nations, a level of commitment, Paul Kennedy has observed, that would have made those arch-imperialists Louis XIV and Lord Palmerston a little nervous” (653-4). Indeed, as American foreign policy entered the 1950s, the Eisenhower administration often made overtures toward the importance of collective security and Western military alliances. The Eisenhower administration specifically emphasized the importance of NATO and, within this architecture, West German rearmament.

The issue of rearmament, at least from the perspective of the United States and its Western allies, is best viewed through the lens of growing Cold War tensions in the early-mid 1950s. Western powers (save for France)—and the United States in particular—supported rearmament in the Federal Republic primarily as a measure of security against a potential Soviet threat. As will be investigated in more detail later, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer’s fervent support for western liberal-democracy as well as the conflict in the Korean Peninsula (1950-3)

gave the United States, along with the other western powers, ample incentive to support FRG armament, however explicitly for defense purposes. In short, I contend that American support for Western military alliances in the 1940s and 50s demonstrates the extent to which multilateralism was heralded by U.S. foreign policy makers as a means to achieve global peace and freedom. Both of these objectives are part and parcel of a broader narrative of America's "place in the world," as discerned by the U.S. foreign policy establishment, and represents a distinct consensus as America emerged from the Second World War.

Much the same can be said of America's forays into Southeast Asia in the 1950s and 60s, first in Korea and later in Vietnam. Although both military commitments were made in response to a set of complex economic and geopolitical circumstances, the narratives that propelled American involvement in Southeast Asia were born out of the distinct Cold War foreign policy consensus that incorporated America's vital "role in the world." This sentiment is captured particularly well by NSC-68, perhaps the most important national security policy of the early Cold War. In effect, NSC-68 circumscribed the U.S. foreign policy consensus described heretofore into a bold initiative to resuscitate the struggling economies of Western Europe (and close the so-called "dollar gap") while extending the containment doctrine to Southeast Asia. In the tradition of Kennan's famous Long Telegram, NSC-68 served as a sort of guide for America's role in securing world freedom amidst an ever aggressive Soviet regime. Herring observes the implications of NSC-68: "Written in the starkest black-and-white terms, it took a worst case view of Soviet capabilities and intentions. 'Animated by a new fanatical faith,' it warned, the USSR was seeking to 'impose its absolute authority on the rest of the world'" (638). Thus, the national security bureaucracy, fueled by the language of containment and of America's unconditional obligation to wage Cold War, was primed to enter into a hot conflict in Korea.

Much like the respective economic and military interventions in Turkey and Greece in 1947, Korea symbolized America taking up its “novel burden” further from its shores than ever before. Simply put, Truman and his advisors committed troops to Korea based on misperceptions of Sino-Soviet intentions in the region. Not coincidentally, the fear of Soviet plays for world domination was a mood already established in Kennan’s Long Telegram, later to be materialized in NSC-68. With the consensus and infrastructure already in place, the Truman administration quickly concluded that if America did not respond decisively to the Soviet trespassing over the 38th parallel on the Korean peninsula, world security would surely be imperiled. Thus, as Herring reports, “If [the administration] did nothing, they reasoned, nervous European allies would lose faith in their promises and the Communists would be emboldened to further aggression. The United Nations had been involved in creating South Korea, and U.S. officials also saw the North Korean invasion as a test for the fledgling world organization” (640-41). In a word, Korea represents America’s full acknowledgement of its moral burden to monitor the safety of the world, and its commitment to do so through global alliances and military commitments. The war in Korea, moreover, served as a catalyst for America’s global presence, especially among Western multilateral institutions. Between 1950 and 1952, NATO spending in the United States and Western Europe swelled to unprecedented levels, resulting in fifteen divisions world-wide and a new NATO headquarters in the United States. What is more, the United States under Eisenhower utilized the conflict in Korea to bring the Federal Republic of Germany closer into the political and military fold of the West, much to the dismay of French leadership at the time. In keeping with its newfound penchant for multilateral commitments, the United States also played a key role in promoting a European Defense Community, an initiative that ultimately

failed, but nevertheless demonstrates American foreign policy makers' verve for collective defense and security amidst the war in Korea and the growing Cold War tensions of the 1950s.

Broadly put, American foreign policymakers of the post-war era viewed the nascent nation-states of the "Third World"—a result of the wave of decolonization following the war—almost exclusively through a Cold War lens. Consequently, the U.S. foreign policy establishment deemed intervention in the developing world a necessary component of America's role in the new international order. The Washington foreign policy consensus surrounding the Third World was almost exclusively comprised of the paternalistic language of development, that is, a social scientific theory which ascribes universal "stages of economic development" through which every nation will undergo. Unsurprisingly, the rhetoric of development framed the industrialized West—and the United States, in particular—as the ultimate *telos* for economic growth, causing the U.S. foreign policy establishment to cast a critical eye towards the fledgling nation-states of the Third World. Although development theory would reach its heyday under the Kennedy administration, one can see its origins in the language of Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, who proclaimed the susceptibility of Third World nations to the Communist threat. Speaking specifically on the growing nationalist movements in the Middle East during the mid-1950s, Dulles exclaimed, "We must have evolution, not revolution" (Herring 671). In the eyes of development theory—and its most fervent adherents in Washington—transition periods in stages of development were the most susceptible for unrest and revolution. One can recall Walt Rostow's (1960) proclamation that Communism is the "disease of the transition" (163). Thus, the U.S. foreign policy establishment saw it their duty to guide young nations, primarily in the Third World, toward America's image, rather than that of the Soviet Union or Mao's China.

Suffice it to say, development theory fit nicely into the consensus surrounding the broader Cold War containment policy. In Southeast Asia, a region thought to be especially prone to left-wing influence, U.S. foreign policymakers sought to create, first in Korea and later in Vietnam, decidedly anticommunist nations in order to curb Soviet influence and bolster the path to development. Such was the justification, or at least part of it, for taking on the full commitment of safeguarding South Vietnam after the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. As Herring observes, “Through a massive nation-building effort, it set out to construct in southern Vietnam an independent, non-Communist nation that could stand as a bulwark against further Communist expansion in a critical region” (662). First under Eisenhower and Dulles, and later under Kennedy and Rusk, Vietnam became the quintessential project of American foreign policymakers to create a nation in America’s image in the post-war period. As we have seen, the language of the containment and development doctrines drove the U.S. foreign policy establishment in the post-war period to take on the moral burden of protecting (ostensibly) global freedom and democracy against the influence of Soviet and Sino Communism. Such behavior was the direct result of a foreign policy consensus regarding America’s role in the new, post-war world order and was directed at creating a world in precisely America’s image.

It is perhaps difficult to overestimate the primacy of foreign policy matters in the overall agendas of the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations. Both administrations fully embraced the foreign policy consensus described heretofore and even situated domestic policy within the broader Cold War framework. The emphasis of foreign policy for U.S. presidential administrations was indeed a shift that occurred during the Truman years; Henry L. Stimson, one might say, foreshadowed the concerns of the two subsequent administrations with his pithy remark, “Foreign affairs are now our most intimate domestic concern” (Herring 650). Much of

the domestic concerns during the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations centered around notions of how America was viewed in the international arena.

Civil rights issues, especially, during the Eisenhower years proved to be consequential for foreign policymaking. While U.S. leaders preached the virtues of self-determination, freedom, and democracy for the rest of the world, rampant segregation and discrimination in the American South became a focal point for anti-American and anti-Western voices. Instances such as the violence surrounding school desegregation gave anti-American propagandists in the Soviet Union and elsewhere ample ammunition to point out the hypocrisy of the new American global creed. The Eisenhower administration and other intellectuals of the day were acutely aware of the paradoxes and blatant hypocrisy surrounding their foreign policy overtures and the American domestic realities. At one point, during the Little Rock school crisis, John Foster Dulles bluntly warned Eisenhower that the events in Arkansas were “ruining our foreign policy” (Herring 682). Herring has also underscored the role of domestic issues in Eisenhower’s foreign policy calculus: “the administration recognized that it could no longer remain indifferent to the international implications of racial problems at home. Eisenhower and even more his successors plainly saw how important they had become to the nation’s global position and pretensions” (683).

Kennedy, moreover, was no less concerned than the Eisenhower administration with the domestic implications of foreign affairs, and was even more blunt about his preferences for foreign policymaking. One need only recall his infamous statement on the matter: “I mean who gives a shit if the minimum wage is \$1.15 or \$1.25;” Kennedy, like the rest of his cohort, was anxious to meet the foreign policy challenges of his day. Sentiments of America’s moral obligations to the world are *writ large* in inaugural address; under his guidance, America was willing to “pay any price, *bear any burden*, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any

foe, in order to assure the survival and success of liberty” (Herring 702, my emphasis). In pursuit of such lofty goals, Kennedy famously surrounded himself with young, top-rank academics, technocrats, and other officials. Cast in the mold of the foreign policy elite before them, the Kennedy administration and its experts were “exhilarated by the prospect of leading the nation through perilous times to the ultimate victory. They shared a Wilsonian view that destiny had singled out their nation and themselves to defend the democratic ideal” (Herring 704).

Of course, Kennedy’s idealism was soon met with the harsh realities of Cold War geopolitics, including but not limited to the failed Bay of Pigs operation, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the lasting stalemate in Vietnam. Nevertheless, Kennedy and his cohort were firmly gripped in the Cold War consensus based on America’s perceived moral burden in the world. This burden, set to take on a new form in the quagmire of Vietnam, was then bequeathed to Lyndon Baines Johnson upon Kennedy’s assassination in 1963. The Vietnam debacle, a brain-child of the U.S. foreign policy elite consensus in the post-war era, would prove to destroy that very consensus in less than a decade.

3. Elite Consensus in FRG Foreign Policy

The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) entered global politics in the immediate post-war period in quite the opposite position of the United States. Indeed, the horrors of German atrocities during the war, combined with an unconditional surrender to the allied powers, left Germany under the aegis of the Polish government until 1949, until Germany was split between the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the East, and the Federal German Republic (FRG) in the West. Nevertheless, as the FRG began to operate as a sovereign political entity in world affairs, it too developed a distinct consensus concerning “our place in the world.” This consensus centered around a ‘new’ image for the German nation in the international arena—in a word, a

decidedly peaceful, multilateral actor committed to Western political and economic integration. Just as prominent was the desire of German foreign policymakers to reconcile for past wrongs (i.e., expansion and aggression leading up to the two world wars and the holocaust), thereby highlighting a moral burden under which the FRG would act. Thus, the foreign policy behavior of the FRG in the post-war era is indicative of a new national project governed by consensus, Western integration, and moral burdens.

Furthermore, after being granted limited steps toward external sovereignty (starting in 1949), the Federal Republic of Germany under Chancellor Konrad Adenauer also oriented their foreign policy behavior in light of a perceived moral burden—namely, reconciliation for the Holocaust as well as aggressive expansion and occupation during the second World War. As Lydia Gardner Feldman points out in her comprehensive study, *Germany's Foreign Policy of Reconciliation: From Enmity to Amity* (2012), the practice of reconciling for past wrongs in the international arena has been an integral part of German foreign policy since 1949, all the way through Angela Merkel's Chancellorship. During the Adenauer era (1949-66), specifically, the foreign policy elite of the Federal Republic often made gestures of reconciliation—which included a recognition and acceptance of past wrongdoing, as well as an indication of future amity despite those wrongs—to France and Israel. For instance, in a 1956 speech, FRG Foreign Minister Heinrich Von Brentano extolled the virtues of “the long-term goal of reconciliation and partnership with France,” echoing Adenauer's oft-stated objective of close and friendly ties with France, despite the two nations' long history of violence toward one another, not least during the second World War (Feldman 32). In a similar vein, FRG leaders attempted to amend Germany's relations with the Jewish people primarily through diplomatic relations with Israel. Feldman

points out that reconciliation with Israel had both moral and political implications during the Adenauer era:

Adenauer's overtures to Israel in the early 1950s were prompted by a moral imperative, as he reports in his memoirs: "As I stressed many times, I felt our duty to the Jews as a deep moral debt." The chancellor's reasoning was also, however, highly pragmatic: "One of my chief aims . . . was to put in order our relationship to Israel and the Jews, both for moral and political reasons. Germany could not become a respected and equal member of the family of nations until it had recognized and proven the will to make amends" (32).

Adenauer clearly viewed Germany's future among "the family of nations," as he puts it, in terms of the moral burden of the Holocaust. According to this account, not only did Germany owe a debt of reconciliation to the Jewish people because of the Holocaust, but Germany also needed to solidify its new image in the international arena as a peaceful, cooperative nation cast in an entirely different mold than anything resembling the Third Reich.

Moreover, a defining characteristic of FRG foreign policy in the immediate post-war era was a conscious effort toward Western integration, primarily through NATO and the European Community. Although not completely sovereign in all matters of foreign policy decision making, the common narrative that the FRG in the late 1940s and early 50s was a puppet for Western powers—specifically, the United States, France, and Britain—tends to obscure the specific foreign policy aims Federal Republic itself and the surprising level of sovereignty with which Adenauer carried out these goals. For instance, in 1952, Stalin famously offered Adenauer a unified Germany in exchange for avowed neutrality in East-West relations. Adenauer, an ardent supporter of the liberal-democratic west, refused Stalin outright. Despite the fact that some leaders in the West (particularly France) considered and even explicitly supported the possibility of a unified, neutral Germany, Adenauer defended his position and placed the goal of western integration over unification. Adenauer went so far as to claim that the Federal Republic was the

sole legitimate representative of the German people (*Alleinvertretungsanspruch*). As such, Adenauer made considerable strides in European economic integration and, given the rising tensions of the Cold War, in integrating into the Western military complex through NATO, becoming an official member nation in 1955.

Although the prospect of rearming Germany not more than a decade after the end of the war raised some initial concerns both in Germany and in the international community, Adenauer's clear and vocal commitment to Western interests outweighed any serious opposition (at least among Western leaders) to bolstering the FRG's defense capabilities. What is more, specific provisions in the Basic Law—the constitution of the Federal German Republic—outlined the Republic's foreign policy scope as expressly for *defense* and only *within efforts of collective security* (articles 24 and 26, respectively). Thus, the foreign policy of the Federal Republic was specifically designed to operate multilaterally and to prevent future wars of aggression. In this vein, Thomas Banchoff (1999) highlights the role of historical memory and path dependency in German post-war foreign policy—that is, FRG foreign policy was explicitly directed at preventing the isolationist militarism and jingoist expansionism that fueled German foreign policy leading up to the respective World Wars. I contend, therefore, that the efforts of the Federal Republic to integrate into the Western military, political, and economic framework in the immediate post-war era was a decidedly national project guided by a distinct sense of the Federal Republic's role in the new world order. The foreign policy behavior of the FRG in the immediate post-war period is just as telling of a distinct consensus. Unlike the United States' pronounced role as a leader on the world stage, however, the FRG sought to place itself as a cooperative actor *among* other nations. As the FRG began to operate as a sovereign political entity (however incrementally) in world affairs in 1949, a consensus among the three major

political parties—the Christian Democrats (CDU), Social Democrats (SPD), and the Free Democrats (FDP)—was adopted that centered around a ‘new’ image for the German nation in the international arena—in a word, a decidedly peaceful, multilateral actor committed to Western political and economic integration. Such a consensus is evident in the virtually unequivocal support for the European project (eventually the European Union), reconciliation efforts with France and Israel, and Western collective security efforts during the Adenauer era.

Western integration was by far the most pressing foreign policy priority for the Federal Republic during the Adenauer era (1949-66). The primacy of Western integration was primarily a product of the geopolitical realities of the Cold War, as well as a conscious effort from Adenauer and his cohort to assert the interests of a sovereign FRG in the new world order. This effort—fueled by Western integration—consisted of a mixture of strategic and moral decision making. That is, Adenauer recognized the burden of the Federal Republic to establish bonds of trust in the international arena (and especially among the West) in order to reconcile for past wrongs and to ensure the full outward sovereignty of the Federal Republic. In Banchoff’s estimation, Adenauer viewed Western integration as a necessary step (both moral and strategic) toward advancing the Federal Republic’s interests in the international sphere: Thus, “[Adenauer] sought to reestablish West German sovereignty as quickly as possible, but insisted that the legacy of German aggression necessitated an incremental approach. Given the crimes committed in Germany’s name, he considered the creation of trust an absolute necessity” (42). Adenauer often expressed himself the role of historical memory in moving forward with FRG foreign policy. In one address in 1951, for instance, Adenauer stressed the lessons from the second World War as he urged for further FRG integration into the Western architecture: “The catastrophe brought the German people to the realization that an excessive nationalism had more

than once destroyed peace...From this...there emerged the recognition that our existence, along with that of all other European peoples, can only be maintained within a community that transcends national borders” (Banchoff 43).

I contend that Adenauer’s overtures for a supranational community of Western nations were pursued in light of a quest for a ‘new’ German national identity in the international arena. The Basic Law, for instance, frames German domestic and foreign policy as a decidedly national project, within multilateral institutions; the Basic Law established for the Federal Republic (and the eventual reunified state) the goal to “achieve, by free self-determination, the unity and freedom of Germany” (Bachoff 30). Echoing the Wilsonian vision of a community of liberal-democratic nations pursuing their own interests within a cooperative framework, the national project of the FRG in the post-war period was thus primed for sovereignty within the bounds of multilateralism and, especially given Germany’s past, collective security. Such examples of multilateralism include the Federal Republic’s prominent role in the (largely symbolic) European Council, the European Coal and Steel Commission, and the attempt at creating a European Defense Community (ultimately rejected by the French in 1954). What is more, the Federal Republic was viewed by the Western powers, particularly the United States, as a bulwark for European security amidst an increasingly tense Cold War landscape. As a result, the Federal Republic was granted *de facto* foreign policy sovereignty upon entrance into NATO in 1955.

Although the Federal Republic faced considerable institutional and legal constraints in the immediate post-war era in terms of outward sovereignty, it is important to recognize the extent to which Adenauer asserted the particular interests of the FRG in the new global environment. As Banchoff observes, “From the outset German leaders could and often did insist on treatment as partners, not simply subordinates. Adenauer vividly demonstrated the German

claim to equality during his first meeting with the High Commission in September 1949,” thus setting the tone for subsequent foreign policy negotiations among the West for the remainder of his tenure (32). Adenauer also advanced the interests of the FRG when dealing with the East, that is, the Soviet Union in the immediate post-war period. The most significant of Adenauer’s assertions of FRG international sovereignty is his refusal of Stalin’s infamous 1952 letter, in which the Federal Republic was offered reunification in return for avowed neutrality. Here it is clear to determine the foreign policy priorities of the FRG under Adenauer. As many observers conclude, the two most pressing political issues of the immediate post-war years under Adenauer were reunification and Western integration; these two goals were often in conflict with one another, as reunification involved a settlement with the Soviet Union *and* the Western powers during one of the tensest periods of the early Cold War. Adenauer’s rhetoric and actions during his Chancellorship make clear that his priorities were with Western integration, even at the expense of unification. Echoing this sentiment, Banchoff observes that, “the intensity of the cold war and strictures on German sovereignty left no reasonable alternative to a Western orientation, but allowed different approaches to its realization. Adenauer made integration within Western institutions an absolute priority over East-West dialogue on reunification” (53).

Also worthy of note is the political consensus within FRG foreign policy in the immediate post-war era. As the Federal Republic began to exercise internal sovereignty in 1949 and gained official external sovereignty in the early 1950s (culminating in the FRG’s NATO membership in 1955), three political parties came to dominate West German politics: The Christian Democrats (CDU), the Social Democrats (SDP), and the Free Democrats (FDP). Although each party, as their names suggest, represented different interests in domestic matters, the three major parties often drew similar conclusions as to the Federal Republic’s place in the

new international order. Consequently, one can easily conclude that FRG foreign policy in the immediate post-war era was a product of a distinct consensus from political elites concerning the notion of “our place in the world.” Among this consensus the priorities of FRG foreign policy remained, under Adenauer, that of Western integration and participation (and indeed leadership) of multilateral institutions. As discussed above, these policies indicate both a moral imperative on behalf of the Federal Republic to build trust among other nations in the international arena as well as a strategic impetus toward exercising full sovereignty and self-determination in the new global sphere. The most consequential of these multilateral ventures for future FRG foreign policymaking was the European Community (later to develop into the European union). Banchoff writes, “As a founding member [of the EC], the Federal Republic linked itself more closely, economically and politically, with its West European allies” therefore solidifying its place as a cooperative actor in world politics.

Another crucial component to the foreign policy agenda of the Federal Republic in the immediate post-war period is the efforts of reconciliation for past aggression and, perhaps most important, the Holocaust. In the Adenauer era, specifically, the Federal Republic sought to repair its relationship with France and initiate a path to forgiveness with Israel in light of the recent horrors of the Holocaust. Efforts at reconciliation with France were undoubtedly driven by both moral and strategic imperatives. On the strategic side, Franco-German cooperation was (and indeed still is) vital for the maintenance of the European project, initiated by the ECSC in 1952, that would culminate in the EC and EU in later decades. As early as 1950, the strategic implications of Franco-German military cooperation were extolled by the progenitors of the European Community: “The solidarity in production thus established will make it plain that any

war between France and Germany becomes not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible” (Feldman 71).

The strategic benefits of improved relations with France notwithstanding, Adenauer also expressed a moral obligation to achieve a newfound friendship with French leadership and the French people in the post-war era. Feldman points out that Adenauer’s early overtures to French leadership were in pursuit of both “affective and concrete benefits, with an emphasis on the former” (ibid). Take, for example, Adenauer’s remarks in a speech in March 1950:

It would doubtless be a big step forward if Frenchmen and Germans sat in one house and at one table in order to work together and to carry joint responsibility. The psychological consequences would be inestimable. French security demands could be satisfied in this fashion and the growth of German nationalism could be prevented. I felt that the understanding that would grow between Germany and France . . . would be even more significant than all the economic advantages that would undoubtedly accrue (ibid).

Here we find Adenauer emphasizing the moral and psychological components of improved Franco-German relations in the post-war era. Given the centuries-long antipathy between the two nations—even before official German unification in 1871—I contend that Adenauer’s remarks indicate a growing consciousness in FRG foreign policy that the ‘new’ German nation must heal old wounds with an historical enemy such as France. Such efforts materialized in the burgeoning European project, which allowed symbolic as well as institutional economic, political, and military ties between France and Germany to flourish in the immediate post-war era.

Feldman observes that a common-thread in Franco-German relations in the post-war period is the recognition of integration with the European architecture, as well as the respective interests of both nations. Feldman writes that in the post-war era “German leaders recognized...France’s need still to be seen as a great and powerful nation, and French leaders have understood Germany’s need to be treated as an equal. All were committed to European

integration, whether of the supranational or intergovernmental variety” (81). This attitude highlights the Federal Republic’s quest for sovereignty within the European framework in the immediate post-war era. The German commitment to improving Franco-German relations, moreover, encapsulates the foreign policy consensus present in FRG post-war foreign policy in that it represents the sense of a moral burden for past wrongs and a decidedly multilateral approach to both fulfilling the moral burden whilst advancing the Federal Republic’s own interests in the international arena. During the Adenauer era specifically, such efforts toward Franco-German reconciliation culminated in the Elysée Treat of 1963. The Treaty, a joint declaration of friendship and cooperation between France and the Federal Republic, built a formal structure of diplomacy and integration atop an already solid foundation of Franco-German relations in the immediate post-war period. As Feldman puts it, the bilateral governmental institutions created by the Elysée Treaty is akin to “the fraternal twin of the dense network of societal organizations connecting France and Germany” in the immediate post-war era.

As mentioned above, perhaps the most salient feature of the Federal Republic’s foreign policy of reconciliation post-1945 is the effort toward rapprochement with Israel. The public statements of Adenauer and other FRG leaders on Germany’s post-war relationship with Israel and the Jewish people emphasize the moral burden of German anti-Semitism and the events of the Holocaust in the immediate post-war era. As early as 1951, Adenauer called for Germany’s responsibility for moral and material compensation toward the Jewish people and the state of Israel: In a statement to the Bundestag, Adenauer expressed that “The Federal Government and ...the great majority of the German people are aware of the immeasurable suffering that was brought upon the Jews...during the time of National Socialism...Unspeakable crimes have been

committed in the name of the German people, calling for moral and material indemnity” (Feldman 112). The act of reconciliation served two goals for the Federal Republic’s moral burden toward the Jewish people; one being the necessary acknowledgement of guilt and commitment to recompense for the atrocities of the Holocaust, and the other being the chance for the Federal Republic to cast itself as a nation in formed in an entirely different mold than previous German governments. Thus, through accepting the moral burden of past wrongs, the foreign policymakers of the Federal Republic were able to act on Germany’s newfound “role in the world,” both as a response to the past and with a new eye directed at the future.

Germany’s moral obligation toward Israel and the Jewish people in the immediate post-war era also housed a strategic component. Feldman, for example, notes that Adenauer acted on both moral and pragmatic impulses in early reconciliation efforts during the 1950s: “Adenauer continued to be motivated by moral obligation, but pragmatism now became more pronounced as Germany drew closer to regaining sovereignty in parallel negotiations with the three Western powers” (113). Here we find the role of not only moral obligation, but also the broader consensus in FRG foreign policy surrounding Western integration and the need to express national interests and sovereignty in the new post-war international order.

4. Conclusion: “Our Role in the World”

Although the respective post-war moral burdens of the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany differed in their timbre and objectives, both nevertheless played a crucial role in shaping each nations’ foreign policy attitudes. These attitudes, moreover, were representative of a growing national consciousness in both U.S. and FRG foreign policymaking in the immediate post-war era that emphasized a specific role in global politics. For the United States, this national narrative centered around America as a guardian of liberal-democracy and capitalism, and a

force staunchly opposed to Soviet Communism. Consequently, the U.S. foreign policy establishment in the decades following WWII actualized a national security state in order to fulfill the task. In Herring's words, "The first task of the Cold Warriors was to restructure the government for a new era of global involvement. The changes reflected a broad recognition that, as the world's most powerful nation with global responsibilities, the United States must better organize its institutions and mobilize its resources to wage the Cold War" (Herring 614). In the FRG, the recognition by Adenauer and his cohort that reconciliation for Germany's role in two World Wars and, most hauntingly, the Holocaust was necessary for both moral and political reasons guided the foreign policy behavior of the Federal Republic in the immediate post-war era. The emphasis on reconciliation in FRG foreign policy highlights the extent to which German leaders sought to create a new image for the nation as a cooperative member in world affairs.

Much like the moral burdens facing the foreign policymakers of the United States and the FRG in the wake of the second World War, the scope and motivations for multilateral action in the U.S. and FRG differed. In the United States, the foreign policy establishment sought, with some success, to create a world in America's image. These efforts consisted of global intervention in potential spheres of Soviet influence and, among the Western European nations specifically, the creation of military and economic commitments. In the FRG, the shadow of Germany's past nationalistic militarism drove Adenauer and his cohort to demonstrate the Germany's new role as a sovereign, yet cooperative multilateral actor in the international sphere—that is, a partner committed to the budding European project and the broader Western Cold War coalition. The multilateral policies of both nations, I conclude, were derived from a distinct notion of national identity, as it pertained to each nations' role in the post-war context.

Overall, the foreign policy attitudes and behavior of the United States and the Federal Republic in the immediate post-war era are products of a distinct consensus. That is to say, in both the U.S. and FRG, foreign policymakers adopted a distinct agenda as to their appropriate role in the post-war international arena. Both consensuses, I argue, reflect the respective narratives of America's and Germany's "role in the world." As discussed above, the sense of a moral burden and a commitment to Western multilateral action are crucial components of the post-war foreign policy consensus in both the United States and Federal Republic.

In essence, that both the United States and the Federal Republic developed a distinct foreign policy consensus in the immediate post-war era is not incidental, but is illustrative of a burgeoning national consciousness (at least in the eyes of their leaders). This consciousness, I submit, is wedded to notions of "our role in the world" held by the foreign policy elite of both countries. For the United States in the period between 1945-1964, the foreign policy establishment quickly adopted a consensus born out of America's foregoing triumphs in the first and second World Wars and the emerging Cold War. Foreign policymakers saw America as both a leader and a model for freedom across the globe, and created a vast national security state in order to achieve those goals. The U.S. foreign policy consensus guided the country into political and military interventions in the Mediterranean and Southeast Asia as well as into multilateral agreements with Western European nations. Similarly, the Federal Republic of Germany under Adenauer's cohort between 1949-1964 developed a decidedly multilateral approach to foreign affairs that focused on Western and, specifically, European economic and military integration. Like the United States, this consensus was born out of the nation's experience in the first half of the twentieth century and an increasingly tense Cold War backdrop.

In a word, the FRG's own consensus was a product of foreign policymakers' attempts at redefining Germany's place in the international arena. Although I have argued that FRG foreign policy decision making in the immediate post-war era was influenced to a large degree by a distinct consciousness among policymakers, other observers claim that Germany's foreign policy during this period is best viewed through a realist lens. That is to say, the Federal Republic's foreign policy was dictated by the forces of the international arena, including broader Cold War power relations and the FRG's own quest to maximize their own security in the new international arena. While I submit that the realist framework can explain some German foreign policy decisions in the post-war era, I maintain that realism cannot account for some of the chief aims of German foreign policymaking; most notable among these is the European Project. As the Federal Republic gained official sovereignty in the mid-1950s and grew to be a regional economic and political power shortly thereafter, the realist prediction would certainly not be a continued relinquishment of power to supranational organizations such as the European treaties.

Nevertheless, we find that the Federal Republic played (as it still does) a leading role in the integration of European policy and trade. Simply put, then, the Federal Republic's most consistent and fervently pursued foreign policy agenda in the post-war era runs counter to the realist expectation. This paper argues that this is no aberration, but a conscious effort from German foreign policymakers to curate a specific image of the German nation in the international arena. Indeed, I submit that both the respective foreign policies of United States and the Federal Republic of Germany in the post-war era were greatly influenced by their leaders' conception of "our role in the world."

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