MARTIN-LUTHER-UNIVERSITÄT HALLE-WITTENBERG

PROFESSUR FÜR INTERNATIONALE BEZIEHUNGEN UND DEUTSCHE AUßENPOLITIK

Hallenser IB-Papier 6/2001

Reinhard Wolf

Between Revisionism and Normalcy: Change and Continuity of Germany's Foreign Policy Identity during the 20th Century

prepared for the
Joint Project by JAIR and the Section International Relations of DVPW:
Japanese and German Foreign Policies in Comparative
Perspective
Tokyo, September 18-20, 2000

Version Februar 2001

e-mail: wolf@politik.uni-halle.de
website: http://www.politik.uni-halle.de

Germany's conception of its appropriate place in the world has been a recurring theme both among Germans and foreign observers. In the wake of two world wars in which German forces attacked and conquered major parts of Europe it was hardly surprising that Germany's neighbors wanted to figure out if there was an intrinsic aggressiveness in the German character, "soul" or political culture. Indeed, after the numerous crimes committed by Nazi Germany, even in Germany itself many politicians and intellectuals had come to share such concerns. To be sure, in the decades to follow, the Federal Republic's peaceful and cooperative record did alleviate some of these worries. Still, as the international debate on the future of a (re-)united Germany underscored, it remained an open question to some foreigners if the Germans had really changed and shed their quest for power and aggrandizement. Until this very day, occasional doubts can be heard whether Germany, once and for all, has become a "normal" European country or if it might again return to its "Sonderweg" (special path) habits. Just like Japan in its own region, Germany often is still considered a country whose international conduct merits special scrutiny if unpleasant surprises are to be avoided.

In this overview of Germany's foreign policy identity during the 20th century I want to put forward four arguments. First, there is indeed a strong and often overlooked element of continuity in the country's self image and role conception: there was no sudden shift from revisionist ambitions to a longing for normalcy. As a matter of fact, even during the first half of the century most Germans wanted their state to be a "normal" European power, and even in the wake of World War II German revisionism remained quite strong. Second, what actually did change were the images of West European role models picked by the Germans as well as the methods chosen for territorial revisionism. Third, these benevolent changes to a new identity resulted primarily from external constraints although complex learning and shifts in the domestic distribution of power also played a role. Finally, at the turn of the century, Germany's peaceful and cooperative identity appears to be firmly entrenched. Unless its basic assumptions are challenged by traumatic experiences the Federal Republic is likely to remain a reliable partner.

For the purpose of this paper "foreign policy identity" is fundamentally understood as a nation's vision of its actual and appropriate positions and actions within the international system. This vision, in turn, is based on the special characteristics, roles and missions elites ascribe to their nation and its state. Accepted roles and missions imply respect for distinctive norms and foreign policy practices and thus, together with the state's international environment, contribute to a nation's foreign policy style (Duffield 1998, Wendt 1999; Risse/Engelmann-Martin 1999).

The Evolution of Germany's foreign policy identity

Wilhelminian Germany

Just like most of its later successor states, by the turn of the century, Imperial Germany by and large conceived itself as a "normal" European nation state. For Emperor Wilhelm II., most of his advisors and for the public at large Britain and to a lesser extent the United States, France and Russia were the role models to be emulated (Hildebrand 1995: 153-54, 190; Gruner 1993: 171). In the age of imperialism this implied that Germany, just like those older nation states, had to become a world power, too. The Germans regarded themselves as a young and upward moving nation with the future on its side. Due to their country's large and growing population, its scientific and cultural achievements and, above all, its dynamic economy Wilhelminian Germans saw no reason to be content with a minor status. Thus, Bismarck's often expressed satisfaction with Germany's unification and the Reich's dominant, if somewhat precarious position in conti-nental Europe gave way to ambitions for imperial expansion and prestige.[1] As one of Bismarck's successors, Imperial Chancellor Bülow, put it in 1897, the Germans did not intend positioning anybody in the shadow; yet they insisted on their own "place in the sun" (Nipperdey 1992: 654). Equality and independence thus became the dominant values (if not altogether ends in themselves) for German foreign policy (Hildebrand 1995: 190-248; Nipperdey 1992: 621-39). Consequently, Wilhelminian Germany no longer saw itself as the saturated power safeguarding European stability but as an upward moving nation whose increasing strength and dynamism had to be accomodated by favorable changes in the status quo.

By itself Germany's increasing insistence on equal status as a European world power did not imply a quest for special rights and obligations. As far as overall foreign policy goals were concerned, German nationalism and imperialism did hardly transgress the boundaries of European "normalcy" (Hildebrand 1987; Nipperdey 1992: 652, 886-887). Wilhelminian German's felt entitled just to the very rights and benefits enjoyed by the established world powers and seemed prepared to accept the same duties and restraints. Berlin expected equal say in all major crises while acknowledging its duty to contribute to diplomatic solu-tions within the concert of European powers; it strove for spheres of influence and new territories overseas; it reserved its right to command powerful armies and navies; it insisted on its right to resort to force should "national honor" or survival require so; and it cherished, almost to the same extent as detached Britain, its "free hand", that is, it abstained from cooperative endeavors which

---

[1]To be sure, Germany entered the road to colonial expansion already during Bismarck's chancellorship. Yet, the initial acquisition of overseas territories was less motivated by imperialist designs or nationalist ambitions then by diplomatic expediency. The "Iron Chancellor" saw colonial expansion primarily as a stratagem to put pressure on Britain while drawing closer to revanchist France. Consequently, Bismarck readily abandoned this early colonialist policy as soon as it jeopardized his European goals (Nipperdey 1992: 445-453).

would have either entangled Germany in strong institutions or would have placed it in the role of a junior partner.[2]

What most contemporary Germans failed to realize, however, was that, given Germany's geographic location and its belated national unification, insistence on equal status as a world power called for a thoroughly revisionist policy based on instruments and methods which transgressed the constraints of contemporary European normalcy. Unlike Britain, France and Russia, the Reich still had to acquire the territory, spheres of influence and the navy required for such a privileged position. Since Germany entered the imperialist game at the eleventh hour, there was little space left open for its colonial expansion. Being a late-comer, Germany, just like Japan in East Asia, looked for a redistribution of both territory and spheres of influence. Moreover, in contrast to the other great powers, the Reich was located in the very center of Europe. Thus, it was not only land-locked but also posed both a potential threat and a potential prey for all the other powers. All this implied, as Bismarck still had been perfectly aware, that German insistence on equal status was bound to destabilize the status quo among the European powers. The Reich's ambitions mandated a redis-tribution of territory, influence, power and security at the expense of the established powers. As long as the latter felt little inclination to step back for the powerful upstart in the middle of the continent, Berlin's quest for world power status required a foreign policy of unilateral revisionism which could not fail to irritate the other powers (Hildebrand 1987: 20-22, 1995: 153-55, 190-97).

Germany's uncompromising insistence on equal prestige, further growth and political independence led to an activist foreign policy style that bred distrust in foreign capitals. Berlin's pursuit of equal say, colonial expansion and new spheres of influence nourished a notorious habit of unpredictable trouble making and restless meddling into all kinds of foreign crises (Nipperdey 1992: 630-32, 651-52; Hildebrand 1995: 153-54, 172-75). Not unlike contemporary Japanese politicians and officers, the Reich's elites felt that the aspirations of a rising power would be more compatible with fluid and ambiguous political confi-gurations than with a frozen status quo. To open up opportunities for a redis-tribution of territory and influence German decision makers kept trying to unsettle established political arrangements. Apart from the alliance with the Austrian empire, the Reich refrained >from clear commitments to the other great powers which might have helped to avoid the specter of a war on two fronts. Instead of opting for either Britain or Russia, Berlin pursued a policy of "free hand". Given its conviction that geopolitical conflicts between London and St.

---

[2]As regards the revulsion to becoming a junior partner of another power, the Anglo-German alliance negotiations are a prime example (Hildebrand 1995: 172-82; Nipperdey 1992: 656-661); Berlin´s dislike of strong multilateral institutions became all too obvious during the second Hague peace conference in 1907 when the German delegation refused to accept any constraints on the free use of military force (Nipperdey 1992: 651; Krüger 1985: 21).

Petersburg were much more intense than any disputes the latter powers had with Berlin, the Reich's government sought to play off these two powers against each other while carefully guarding its own independence. However, this policy backfired. Rather than increasing Germany's value as a potential ally the Reich's frequent maneuvering only fostered the image of an opportunistic, unpredictable and unreliable parvenu (Nipperdey 1992: 654-662, 886-887; Hildebrand 1995: 153-62, 172-89).

To foreign decision makers German diplomatic behavior seemed all the more worrisome when seen in the context of the Reich's armament policies. The acquisition of a large battle fleet was the most ominous case in point. While to the Germans the rapidly growing Imperial navy was a vital symbol of their rank as a world power as well as a useful lever to induce British accommodation, the new battle fleet appeared to the British as an unprovoked threat to the very independence of their nation and empire. In the end, the offensive power of the fleet cost the Reich dearly. It increased the country's prestige only at the expense of British good will and thus eventually paved the way for the Britain's alignment with France and Russia (Hillgruber 1977: 62-65; Nipperdey 1992: 671-78). The German quest for a world power status comparable to the British position thence played a major role in bringing about a disastrous war which ultimately put at risk the very existence of the German nation state.

As it turned out at the beginning of the war, the Germans had few substantial ideas concerning the political order they were fighting for. Apart from securing the Reich's status as a world power and as an unassailable European hegemon (Fischer 1961) there was no positive program for a new European order in accordance with German political values. In spite of Germany's unquestioned achievements in science, the arts and philosophy and notwithstanding some vague allusions to a special German mission in the world ("am deutschen Wesen soll die Welt genesen"), the nation lacked an attractive ideology. Unlike Britain or France with their visions of parliamentary liberalism and universal human values, the German political identity failed to include a positive idea as to what specific uses world power should be put to. It was only after the outbreak of the war that German academics sensed a pressing need for articulating a special mission of their nation, for a distinctive ideology which could compete with the traditional ideas of their enemies. Sensing that a "normal" European power required a peculiar political ideology, German intellectuals and propagandists eventually came up with the "ideas of 1914". This sudden search for an intrinsic political quality of the German Empire only underlined that its underlying ideology was based on little more than strong nationalism and uncritical pride in the power of the state. The "ideas of 1914" amounted to little more than a romantic conglomerate of conservative, authoritarian and militaristic ideas which hardly appealed to the outside world, yet proved a problematic heritage for the new democracy which emerged from the collapse of Imperial Germany.

(Hildebrand 1995: 337-339; Sontheimer 1987a; Nipperdey 1992: 896).

In a nutshell then, the foreign policy identity of Wilhelminian Germany centered around the notion that the Reich's ever growing power entitled it to attain a secure and elevated world power status as it was already being enjoyed by the more established powers, particularly by contemporary Britain. Not unlike Japan's comparable aspirations in the Far East, Germany's quest for equality and great power normalcy implicated a challenge that was hard to be accomodated by the "haves" of the northern hemisphere whose imperialist confidence hardly trailed Germany's pretensions. In the German case, changing the status quo was even more difficult given the Reich's crucial location. Moreover, its funda-mental contributions to the progress of Western civilization and its rapidly expanding power base resulted in a degree of self-confidence and ambition that had no parallel in Japan. After all, the latter had entered the path of moder-nization just a few decades ago, motivated by a profound sense of insecurity vis-à-vis the Western powers. Thus, while in pursuing their revisionist programmes both Germany and Japan followed Realpolitik norms and practices, the Wilhel-minian Empire did so more radically. In contrast to a cautious Japan which patiently waited for opportunities to expand while cherishing the new inter-national recognition it gained as the junior partner within the Anglo-Japanese alliance (Nish 1972), Germany's more assertive identity demanded an activist and unconstrained foreign policy which eagerly sought to exploit, if not even create disputes to further the Reich's ambitions for expansion and undiminished equality.

The Weimar Republic

In a special and rather curious way the foreign policy identity of the first German democracy marks an in-between position in the political evolution from Wilhelminian Germany to the Federal Republic. After their defeat and the harsh Versailles peace treaty, the Germans' insistence on equal rights and on territorial revisions was as strong as ever, if not even stronger than before World War I. On the other hand, during the 1920s, when Gustav Stresemann served as foreign minister, foreign policy style shifted to more peaceful and cooperative habits. Of course, this development was largely due to the military impotence of a defeated and partly occupied country. Yet at least among parts of the ruling parties and within the Foreign Office the new style also reflected the beginnings of a new western orientation based on notions of common European values and responsibilities. It this regard it foreshadowed, if only for a brief period, the policy of integration so successfully pursued by the Federal Republic in the wake of the next military disaster.

The universal German identity during most of the inter-war period was that of a

great power that was being denied its legitimate status. Far from appreciating their luck that total defeat had failed to bring about the disintegration of the German Reich, Germans of all political persuasions joined in bitterly complaining about the stipulations of the Versailles peace treaty. Since many, if not most Germans neither acknowledged Germany's major responsibility for the outbreak of World War I nor the country's complete defeat at its end, they could not accept the severe constraints the treaty entailed for their country's international position. The secession of territory to France, Poland, Denmark, Lithuania and Belgium, the loss of the few colonies, the radical disarmament of the Empire's armed forces, the Reich's initial exclusion from the League of Nations, the many billions to be paid as reparations to the former enemies and the war guilt clause that ought to justify these payments -- all this was regarded as harsh and unforgiving treatment of a formidable great power which in fighting a "defensive war" "against a world of enemies" had come so close to victory (Heinemann 1983; Hildebrand 1995: 396-405).

Revising the allegedly unfair peace treaty and thus restoring the great power status and honor of Germany thence became the paramount and uncontroversial goals of its inter-war foreign policy (Salewski 1980; Krüger 1985; Michalka 1987). In light of the economic potential and military performance of their nation the Germans once again felt entitled to an international position akin to that of a "normal" European power, such as Britain or France. In this regard the Reich's foreign policy identity displayed a strong element of continuity vis-à-vis the Wilhelminian Empire and showed, some notable exceptions notwithstanding, the Germans' low capacity for complex learning. Unlike many post-World War II Germans, their earlier compatriots in Weimar times still saw their country as a victim of unfair discrimination rather than as an international trouble maker whose restoration to an independent great power role might once again disturb the continent's peace and tranquillity. Hence, there was almost universal consensus that most, if not all of the constraints the Versailles Treaty placed on Germany ought to be lifted as soon as possible. Germany demanded the redemption of most of the lost colonies and European territories (with the partial exception of Alsace-Lorraine which many considered as irretrievable), the withdrawal of allied occupation forces, full equality concerning the right to arm, an end to reparation payments and equal say in international institutions and conferences.

As to the preferred methods and practices for bringing about these revisions, at first there was little inclination for a new political style. Apart from the unavoidable adjustments to unilateral disarmament and military occupation, diplomats and decision makers hardly sensed any need for breaking with the *Realpolitik* traditions of the immediate past. Instead, during the first five years of the new republic they stuck to the old habits of secret diplomacy and of playing off one power against the other. Clandestine military cooperation with Russia and the

sudden conclusion of the Rapallo Treaty are famous cases in point. In its relations with the victorious powers, Berlin largely followed a similar line as it kept trying to split the Anglo-Saxon powers from France and its continental allies. Particularly with regard to the latter, Germany brought to bear its superior economy (Michalka 1987: 314-15; Hildebrand 1995: 418, 440, 445-451). While avoiding a military confrontation with the stronger victors, Berlin actively sought to exploit their dependence on German import markets or specific economic resources, such as coal. In the reparation struggle the Reich somewhat disingenuously tried to prove its inability to pay and did not shy away >from open confrontation when France tried to enforce its treaty rights by occupying the Ruhr. Concerning the German-Polish border there was wide-spread agreement that the current frontier was not only unacceptable but might eventually be redrawn as a result of the use or threat of German military force. In spite of its military weakness, therefore, the early Weimar Republic by and large still adhered to the norms and practices of traditional great power politics which were only adapted to the special circumstances (Hildebrand 1995: 460-64). Only after the failure of "passive resistance" against the French occupation of the Ruhr (1923) did Germany enter the path to a more cooperative foreign policy.

During the mid and late 1920s the Reich's republican administration tried a new approach towards Germany's war-time enemies. This new course came to be known as "Verständigungspolitik" ("policy of understanding") whose most prominent exponent was the long-time foreign minister Gustav Stresemann. Although, just like the reactionary opposition parties, the coalition of democratic parties ruling in Berlin stuck to the overall goal of revising the Versailles system, following the obvious failure of confrontational policies, the coalition government adopted new and more constructive methods which came to be regarded as the distinctive Weimar approach to foreign policy (Krüger 1985: 297-98; Hildebrand 1995: 475). This approach was largely based on the realistic assumption that Germany could not prevail in an open confrontation with the western powers. Yet at least among major decision makers in the cabinet and foreign office, "Verständigungspolitik" also reflected an innovative conception of Germany's place in Europe and the world. To some extent this changed identity even foreshadowed the assumptions behind Germany's western orientation after World War II.

As their "Verständigungspolitik" showed early signs of success, foreign minister Gustav Stresemann and his inner team increasingly conceived of Germany as a responsible member of a new concert of (western) powers evolving as a consequence of the Locarno treaties of 1925. They were all too well aware that Germany's post-war economic recovery depended on foreign credit and access to export markets. Moreover, Stresemann and his advisors appreciated to an unprecedented extent that Germany was part of a complex system of European

security relations. Unlike their Wilhelminian and early-Weimar predecessors they showed an astute understanding of the repercussions German moves were bound to have abroad. Accordingly, they saw little promise in bluntly insisting on Germany's restoration to equal rights. Rather, they appreciated the need to play by the rules and reassure their war time opponents. Accordingly, the policy of understanding gradually came to be based on the notions that, in times of crisis, Germany should refrain from any surprise moves but consult with the other "Locarno powers" (Britain, France and Italy) to search for common solutions, that international disputes ought to be settled by peaceful arbitration rather than by the use or threat of force, that Germany should try to pursue its interest within the framework of multilateral institutions and through the use of international law, and that the country should pursue a closer relation with France and Britain instead of playing off the western powers against the Soviet Union (Krüger 1985: chap. IV; Hildebrand 1995: 463, 467, 475). Therefore, it is hardly an exaggeration to call this new phase of German diplomacy "the beginnings of an international conception of peace and security" (Michalka 1987: 322).

However, the new approach had its internal limitations which clearly distinguished it from the policy of "Westintegration" Germany was to embark on three decades later in the wake of World War II. As noted above, the change to Stresemann´s "Verständigungspolitik" primarily amounted to the application of new methods rather than to the choice of new goals. Even to its chief architects the policy of understanding was above all "revisionism by other means". These democratic decision makers were as committed to Germany's restoration of great power status as were the reactionary nationalists on the right of the political spectrum (Krüger 1985: 207-218). Also, as far as its western orientation was concerned, traditional German nationalism still acted as a constraint on political integration. Not even Stresemann and his team showed much inclination to give up German sovereignty by pooling it within European institutions (Hildebrand 1995: 483, 503). And even committed promoters of European integration saw "European idealism primarily as a means for national-democratic revisionism" (Heß 1977: 613).

What is more, the proponents of "Verständigungspolitik" had to be keenly aware that their new approach lacked a solid backing in the country. The new role conceptions, norms and values that underlay it had not yet been accepted by the nationalistic main stream (Krüger 1985: 371-73, 504; Heß 1977: 592). To give but one prominent example, while the republican government could sign the Locarno Treaty which ratified Germany's new western borders, it proved impossible for Stresemann to publicly renounce the use of force in the context of Germany's revisionist ambitions vis-à-vis Poland (Krüger 1985: 294, see also p. 394). To most Germans the new diplomatic methods had little intrinsic value. They did not appear as a logical consequence of a new role conception. Instead

they had a purely instrumental character. Voters and politicians were prepared to give these methods a try after more confrontational policies had failed to improve Germany's international position. But they hardly regarded understanding, compromise and multilateralism as ends in themselves. Thus, successful revisionism remained the ultimate criterion by which the appropriateness of the new course was to be judged (Hildebrand 1995: 475-78; Krüger 1985: 371-75).

In light of this instrumental attitude to Stresemann´s "Verständigungspolitik" it was hardly surprising that the new approach was so easily shelved once it failed to advance Germany's revisionist agenda much further. Even before Stresemann's death in 1929, growing French intransigence concerning the withdrawal of occupation forces and the restoration of Germany's right to arm had already begun to undermine the political basis of the foreign minister's policy. The onset of economic depression further aggravated German doubts in the value of open markets and multilateral cooperation. At the turn of the decade, the exponents of "Verständigungspolitik" were rapidly eclipsed by their conservative opponents. After the autocratic transformation of the Weimar Republic had led to the establishment of minority administrations governing with presidential decrees, Berlin quickly returned to the uncompromising practices of traditional great power politics. The new Brüning government once again resorted to an open assault on the Versailles system by blunt rhetoric, threats to quit reparation payments and to leave the League of Nations, secretive unilateralism and surprise initiatives like the controversial project of an Austro-German customs union. Thus, in the years 1930 to 1932, the presidential cabinets effectively paved the way for the more reckless revisionism Hitler's regime was to pursue during its early years (Krüger 1985: chap. V; Hildebrand 1995: 509-559).

To sum up, during the inter-war period Germany's foreign policy identity experienced a profound radicalization, similar to that experienced by like-minded regimes in Italy and Japan. In the German case, however, this parallel process eventually resulted in an even more extremist outlook, partly because the vanquished Reich, unlike Italy and Japan, had opposed the new international order from its very beginnings. Whereas Japan initially conceived of itself as a partner of the Western victors (albeit a somewhat reluctant, and just partially respected and integrated one), and thus confided itself to economic instead of territorial expansion, inter-war Germany always regarded itself as a discriminated power fully justified in demanding territorial and other revisions. As the brief Stresemann period demonstrated, this fundamentally revisionist orientation did not altogether rule out more enlightened versions of identity based on an appreciation of Germany's western orientation, its international responsibilities, foreign insecurities and liberal international norms. Yet, this benevolent variant of revisionism hardly took root and thus was quickly replaced by an uncom-

promising Realpolitik version once the new methods of open diplomacy had failed to live up to German expectations. In this regard, the Reich's return to utterly particularistic goals and Realpolitik practices paralleled similar changes in Japan where frustrations with peaceful economic expansion and Western discrimination against Japanese emigrants paved the way for the advance of nationalist extremists envisioning Japanese leadership of an Asiatic emancipation campaign. Eventually, both nations ended up with radical leaders following pre-modern missions to conquer huge empires for their allegedly superior races. In the German case, the atavistic Nazi identity implied a darwinist struggle for world supremacy. Indeed, it brought about a merciless war resulting in genocide for the "mortal enemies of the Nordic race" and total defeat for the Germans themselves.

Nazi Germany

Although Hitler's conception of Germany's international role clearly stepped beyond the realm of European normalcy, at first this radical departure went unnoticed by most Germans and foreigners. As far as rhetoric and diplomatic initiatives were concerned, the Nazi administration carried on where the presidential cabinets had quit. Time and again, Hitler claimed that all he desired was peace, the Reich's restoration to full equality vis-à-vis the other great powers and self-determination for all Germans, including those living beyond the country's current borders. As the "Führer" seemed to adhere to the common revisionist agenda and early on proved quite successful in undoing the "disgrace of the Versailles dictate", both the public at large and the Reich's traditional elite in the military, the aristocracy and big business largely backed his foreign policy. Apparently, Hitler's goals were fully consistent with the great power identity which predominated in the German discourse. During the first five years of Hitler's regime, the only break with continuity seemed to consist in the greater success of his bold and assertive initiatives (Recker 1992; Jarausch 1979; Gruner 1993: 195-196).

In fact, however, the initial continuity with Weimar foreign policies masked a radical break with both European normalcy and Germany's traditional great power identity. Although Hitler and his followers, just like earlier administrations, sought to enhance the Reich's position in Europe and the world beyond, they clearly departed from established patterns of German nationalism. After all, the focus of their political identity was no longer Germany but the "Nordic race". To Hitler and his party the German state had lost its intrinsic value as an object of loyalty and became a mere instrument for advancing the cause of a biological entity: "It was, at best, the geographical center and initial basis for the 'Great-Germanic Empire' to be built, an essential means for the latter's realization. The German Reich and the German "Volksgemeinschaft" (popular

community) did only contribute the personal and material resources" (Gruner 1993: 202; also Graml 1992; Jarausch 1979; Hildebrand 1995: 563-73).

Hitler conceived of history primarily as an eternal struggle between races in which only the fittest could survive and prosper. For that purpose, a race required equivalent "Lebensraum", that is geographic space for settlement. A growing and dynamic race like the Nordic people thus had to conquer additional space from other, inferior races among which Hitler specifically reckoned the Slavic peoples in Eastern Europe. According to Nazi ideology, "expand or die" was the basic alternative faced by all races. Hence, there was no intrinsic limit for the ambitions of the Germanic race to extend its rule further and further, save for the globe itself. The ultimate choice, thence, was between world domination and inevitable decline (Graml 1992; Hillgruber 1977: 252-275; Jacobsen 1983).

Obviously, this vision of a Darwinian struggle between the races left little room for compromise and cooperation, let alone restraint and the application of moral principles. To apply modern terminology, the Nazis saw the Nordic race engaged in an unforgiving zero sum game. Accommodation to foreign interests, therefore, could be justified only as a tactical expedient. In the end, the singular object of political loyalty had to be the Nordic people. The prospering of the Germanic race was the single criterion for judging the appropriateness of political behavior. In advancing the race's cause, there could be no scruples, no common human values blocking the path to territorial expansion. For Hitler and his radical followers, the Germans not only had the right but also the duty to fight their opponents to the finish. In particular, mercy and clemency were considered absolutely inappropriate for the treatment of the alleged chief enemies of the Nordic race, that is the Slavs and, even more so, the Jews. While the former had to be ruthlessly colonized and enslaved, the latter were to be physically extinguished.

This radical program clearly could no longer be reconciled with an ordinary European great power identity as it was held by traditional elites and the German population at large. To be sure, Hitler's popularity reached all-time highs after the "Anschluss" of Austria and, even more so, with the quick and easy defeats of Poland and France. For the great majority of the Germans, especially the conquest of Paris appeared to redress the "disgrace of Versailles" and to fulfill the nationalist dream of European hegemony. The campaign against the Soviet Union, however, was much less popular and a source of ever increasing concerns. Most Germans failed to see its political purpose as they did neither share Hitler's racist Darwinism nor his vision of a "Great Germanic Empire" in the East (Steinert 1992). Still subscribing to the traditional goals of German nationalism, they could not support the regime's "all or nothing gamble" for world domination. Hitler's willingness to fight a total war to the bitter end was hardly popular among ordinary Germans. Not surprisingly, they

12

lacked the "Führer's" dramatic ambition for staging a "Götterdämmerung" when the "Nordic race" met defeat (Jacobsen 1983: 437-38).

Accordingly, during the concluding years of the war more and more Germans realized that their interests and their conceptions of Germany were no longer compatible with those of the Nazi regime. Thus, popular identification with the latter waned. As a result, total defeat in 1945 was less intensively experienced as a national disgrace and negation of common German national aspirations than had been the Empire's collapse in 1918. In this way, Hitler's usurpation and radicalization of German(ic) identity facilitated the eventual transition to a much more balanced and sober assessment of Germany's legitimate place in the world than had occurred after World War I.

The Federal Republic

During the second half of the twentieth century Germany developed a new foreign policy identity in the democratic society of its western part. More than five decades since Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender few Germans and and only a minority of foreign observers doubt that the Germans have indeed profoundly changed as far as their basic self-conception and international ambitions are concerned.[3] Interestingly, however, this redefinition affected goals, values and political methods to a much larger extent than the selection of role models. With regard to the latter, there is a striking continuity since the beginning of the twentieth century. Even today Germans like to see themselves and wish to be seen as members of a normal (West) European nation, not much unlike the British, French or Dutch. What has changed over the century, then, is not so much the Germans' basic conception of their appropriate position in the world -- they still aspire for European "normalcy" -- but rather their perception of what it actually implies to be a "normal (West) European nation state".

After World War II, the Germans once again wanted to put an end to their special role among the European powers by leaving behind their "Sonderweg" ("special path"). However, the concept of "German Sonderweg" meant abso-lutely different things to different generations. To the Germans of the Wilhel-minian and Weimar eras the special character of their country's international role was commonly seen in its diminished status. They saw the peculiar aspect of Germany's immediate past in the belated unification and industrialization of their nation which, in turn, had fatefully delayed the moment when it could enter the game of the great powers. Putting an end to the German "Sonderweg" (if this very term was already used at the time) thus meant to catch up by acquiring the status of a world power. On the other hand, for later generations "Sonder-

---

[3]For a notable exception see the statements made by then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher during an informal conference on the Germans held at Chequers in 1990 (James/Stone 1992: 233-39).

weg" came to refer to Germany's belated democratization and to the militaristic and unilateralist methods the Reich had applied for enhancing its international status. Thus, in the aftermath of World War II, the task of becoming a "normal European nation" was redefined to learning new ways for determining and pursuing one's national interests. Instead of seeking the status of the established European powers by forcefully challenging the existing international order, the Germans sought a new "European normalcy" chiefly by emulating (if not bettering) the peaceful methods of Europe's status quo powers. In this way, the Federal Republic succeeded where the Weimar Republic had failed: it managed to adopt an enlightened international identity which ultimately served both its neighbors' and its own redefined national interests.

The details of this cultural transformation need hardly be rehearsed here as the changing discourse of (West) German foreign policy has been covered by a number of studies.[4] For reasons of space it may suffice in this essay to sum up the chief notions, norms and values that over the years came to distinguish the Federal Republic's identity >from those of its predecessors. Four fundamental changes stand out:

- *Western values:* Above all, West Germany's democratic post-war decision makers early on understood their country as part of the western community of values. After the moral catastrophe brought about by the Nazi regime the western allies had mostly turned to recognized democrats for rebuilding Germany's political system. Many of these reactivated politicians had actively opposed Hitler's rise or reign. Some of them had suffered in concentration camps, had been imprisoned or had at least been forced to retire >from public office or profession. Naturally, once given the chance to influence the shape of the new Germany, these democrats who often understood themselves as the "other Germany" felt the need to create a polity which would definitely break with the criminal system preceding it. They wanted to base the new state firmly on the political values predominant among the democracies of Western Europe and North America. To be sure, different parties and different politicians preferred different role models and different sets of values. Whereas the conservative leader Konrad Adenauer emphasized the moral superiority of the Christian occident, social democrats like Kurt Schumacher called for a socialist Europe. Hence, unlike the German liberals and conservatives, Schumacher could not subscribe to the liberal insistence on private property and other economic freedoms. Yet the basic consensus related to the antitotalitarian character of the new state, and here the small elite of post-war politicians could readily agree: there was no need for discussing the paramount importance of individual human rights as institu-

---

[4]Berger 1998, Duffield 1998, Schweigler 1985. For a useful and handy compilation of prominent statements on German foreign policy see Auswärtiges Amt 1995.

tionalized in the western democracies. From the very beginnings of the new state its domestic originators conceived of it as firmly entrenched in the political values of the West (Link 1987; Haftendorn 1983: 69-70; Bellers 1999: 115-117; Risse/Engelmann-Martin 1999). In contrast to the population at large, the new political elite was strongly opposed to reviving peculiar German values as they had been institutionalized in the preceding Reich, let alone in reactivating romantic curiosities such as the "ideas of 1914". They aimed at a clear break with that past through a firm and lasting decision in favor of western political culture.

- *Antimilitarism:* The new democracy was not only meant to safeguard the human rights of its citizens but also to avoid violent infringements upon the rights of foreigners. In this regard the Federal Republic's post-war elite felt a similar need to part with the habits of the Reich and in particular with those of the Nazi regime. Whereas the latter had been a source of aggression and almost unprecedented bloodshed, the new democracy from its very beginnings was conceived of as a thoroughly peaceful state and good neighbor. The new constitution, the so-called Basic Law, explicitly forbade aggressive warfare. The use of German military force was strictly restricted to repelling foreign aggression (Knapp 1991: 142-45). In fact, there were at first no plans for rebuilding German armed forces at all. Even when remilitarization was started during the Cold War, the mission of the new Bundeswehr was restricted to the very unlikely event of a cataclysmic clash between NATO and the Warsaw Pact on German soil. The Germans increasingly came to see military force as a means of the very last resort, and even within such an ultimate scenario its political benefit increasingly appeared doubtful, if not actually counterproductive. The application of organized violence thus came to be regarded as largely ineffective and immoral in all but the most extreme circumstances. In the eyes of very many Germans, deterrence and coercion as traditionally practiced by great powers gained a bad reputation as habits of a bygone era. Instead of returning to them, the public increasingly favored new political methods, such as preventive diplomacy based on economic incentives (Schwarz 1985; Berger 1998; Maull 1990-91).

- *Predictability through transparent multilateralism:* Another tenet of the new reluctance of embarking (or continuing) on a "Sonderweg" concerned the avowed preference for multilateral decision making and close consultations. Both to distance themselves form earlier diplomatic traditions and to regain trust on the international scene the new republic eagerly sought to guarantee the predictability of its policies (Schweigler 1985: 226-228). In stark contrast to its predecessors, notably the Wilhelminian Empire and Nazi Germany, the Bonn republic systematically preferred participation in common decision making to the old policy of "free hand", that is to the freedom of maneuver enjoyed by traditional great powers. Increasingly it came to accept both the

intuitive habit and the rational conviction to refrain from time-honored *Realpolitik* methods, like surprise initiatives and unilateral moves, even though such methods sometimes could have made more effective use of Germany's growing economic capabilities. Above all, the West German administrations constantly tried to reassure their western partners that their country had no intention to return to the old habits of a "Wanderer zwischen den Welten" (wanderer between the worlds) who at times opted for one side and at times for the other. In this context the preference for predictability reinforced the decision to firmly rebuild German society on the basis of western values.

- *Integration:* Finally, the West Germans gradually developed a political identity which transcended the traditional nation state. They came to see themselves as part of a larger community of West European societies. Increasingly, the interests of (West) Germany were identified with those of the other European democracies and the political integration of the latter came to be seen as an end in itself (Garton Ash 1993: chap. 1). To a significant extent, of course, the pooling of sovereignty within European institutions was a logical extension of the three identity changes discussed above: it recon-firmed Germany's option for organizing its society in accordance with western values, it underlined the break with militaristic great power policies and it reinforced transparency and predictability of Germany's diplomatic initiatives. In addition, however, European integration also reflected a deeper transformation of political loyalties. Over the years, the West Germans realized that national autonomy and genuine sovereignty were becoming unachievable goals in an interdependent world, not only for a divided country crowded with allied forces, but even for Germany's western neighbors. Under contemporary circumstances, these traditional privileges of the nation state could only be attained by larger entities, if they could be attained at all. In a way then, Germany's traditional ambition for great power status and equal say was transferred to the European level. While the first chancellor Konrad Adenauer initially had still hoped for the recovery of Germany's great power status and had sought to achieve its equal autonomy within the western defense system (Schwarz 1986: 863, 873, 887-889), his successors increasingly realized that only a united Europe speaking with one voice could make itself heard on the world stage (Haftendorn 1983:75). Longing for national grandeur derived from a great power role and international leadership withered away (Schweigler 1985: 32, 93). Accordingly, Germany's traditional fixation on international prestige was gradually replaced by insistence on a distinctive European role in world politics. No doubt, such a partial transfer of national identity to the European level held special attraction for a nation that was both politically divided and confronted with an ugly past which complicated identification with the nation's recent history (Knapp 1991: 154; Bellers 1999: 116-118; Schweigler 1985: 83-87).

Interestingly, this changed identity with its new emphasis on cooperation and a radical departure from *Realpolitik* methods always coexisted with a traditional goal which marked yet another important continuity in twentieth century foreign policy: German revisionism. Just like its predecessors the Bonn republic openly called for a change of the status quo. In fact, the sheer magnitude of territorial revision Bonn demanded was initially perhaps the largest ever desired by a German government. During its early decades, in particular, the new republic explicitly considered itself a provisionary entity and the sole legitimate successor state to the much larger German Reich. As such, the Federal Republic openly insisted on the restoration of the pre-war borders of 1937. Bonn thus asked for nothing less than a third of post war Poland's territory and the very annexation of the second German state. Moreover, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the Federal Republic kept complicating international diplomacy by claiming the exclusive right to speak for the German nation ("Alleinvertretungsanspruch"). As a result, Bonn gradually came to impede western efforts aimed at reducing East-West tensions through a recognition of the territorial status quo and multilateral arms agreements which would have required East German participation (Haftendorn 1983: 104-122, 278-96, chap. VII; Hanrieder 1989: chap. 6).

German revisionism began to fade only in the early 1970s after, for the first time, a social democrat had been elected chancellor of the Federal Republic. The coalition administration of Brandt and Scheel shelved both the "Alleinvertretungsanspruch" and the demand for a restoration of pre-war borders. Although the goal of reunification with East Germany was not altogether abandoned, over the years to follow it kept moving into the background. Less and less the West Germans defined their state as the provisionary springboard for a united Germany but began to see it as a permanent polity legitimated by its unprecedented success in providing prosperity and freedom. The West Germans, it has been said, at last "granted recognition to themselves" (Waldemar Besson) and learned to accept their community, to quote chancellor Willy Brandt, as "Ersatznation" (Schöllgen 1999: 229). Thus, when unification suddenly became possible with the end of the Cold War, the West Germans welcomed it only with somewhat guarded enthusiasm.

So far, unification has hardly affected German foreign policy identity. To be sure, by merging the two German states unification ended once and for all what had been left of (West) German revisionism. Apart from that and some minor adjustments, however, the basic principles of the West German identity have apparently been successfully transplanted to the new state. Germany's leading politicians and the majority of its citizens continue to see their country as part of the western community of nations and have remained committed to support multilateralism, diplomatic predictability, European integration and non-military

methods of conflict resolution. No doubt, there have been some changes. Public enthusiasm for transferring sovereignty to the European Union has somewhat faded and more Germans have come to accept the use of their armed forces outside the NATO area. Perhaps, even the new assertiveness which has already been predicted for so long has finally arrived with Chancellor Schröder's pushy approach to get a German national elected managing director of the IMF. Yet, even these shifts, if they are to last, do hardly amount to a return to a traditional great power identity. Rather, they tend to bring the Germans' identity even closer to those of the other West European nations of similar size. Together with the political unification these changed attitudes may thence make Germany a more normal European state than it has ever been before (Hellmann 1999; Berger 2000; Duffield 1998: chap. 9).

Explaining Changes and Continuities of Germany's Foreign Policy Identity

Explaining the changes in German foreign policy identity in depth would certainly require a detailed monograph, if not a much larger research project. In what follows, I thus confine myself largely to tracking the impact of three master variables which play a prominent role in competing theories of International Relations:

- external constraints arising from Germany's position within the international system (as stressed by structural realists, such as Elman 1996, Waltz 1979 and Mearsheimer 1994/95)
- domestic configurations of interests and influence among competing groups (as stressed by utilitarian liberals, such as Bienen et al. 1999, Moravcsik 1997 an Milner 1997) and
- national political culture including norms pertinent to domestic politics and learning processes (as stressed by most constructivists, such as Duffield 1998 and Wendt 1999).

In addition, I shall give some closer attention to the sequence of developments which preceded significant changes in Germany's post-World War II identity. In that context, I will address both changes at the elite level and within the population at large.

Two questions deserve special attention in this analysis:
1. Why did Germany's conception of what it meant to be a normal European state change so profoundly in the wake of World War II?
2. Why did this shift to a more cooperative foreign policy identity not occur earlier? In particular, why it did not come about as a result of the military defeat of the Wilhelminian Empire and the ensuing establishment of the first German democracy?

Unfortunately, at least from an analytical point of view, all three kinds of variables are positively correlated with most observed changes of German foreign policy identity. Hence, a congruence test does not yield unambiguous results concerning the comparative impact of international constraints, domestic group interests and national political culture. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this comparative analysis, it seems worthwhile to summarize the values of these variables and the way they influenced Germany's evolving self-conception. After all, rigid theory testing is not the chief task of this project.

Wilhelminian Germany

>From the point of view of a realist scholar who attributes changes in preferences primarily to changes in a country's relative position Wilhelminian Germany's insistence on its own "place in the sun" can hardly come as a surprise. During the five decades preceding World War I, German power had experienced a drastic increase due to unification and the Reich's spectacular industrial growth. By 1914, to give but one example, Germany alone produced more steel than the entire triple enténte (Kennedy 1989: 271). Hence, in terms of material capabilities Germany's relative position vis-à-vis France, Russia and Britain had significantly improved. Moreover, the Empire had become one of the world's leading trading states. According to a power centered view of world politics, it was only natural then that these developments enhanced both the geographic scope of Germany's foreign interests and its discontent with the status quo (Waltz 2000: 33-34; Gilpin 1981: 187). Changing the international allocation of territory, influence and prestige surely had to look attractive to a nation whose power had so much risen only *after* most of the colonial spoils had already been divided among the northern powers. Thus, from a systemic per-spective, the Empire's revisionist identity with its demand for undiminished world power status and Germany's own "place in the sun" seems only natural. The same applies to the Reich's reluctance to be tied by international norms which constrained the free use of its growing power.

Germany's revisionist identity is also much in line with the distribution of power and interests prevailing among the Empire's domestic groups. Political influ-ence in Wilhelminian Germany was largely concentrated on a few traditional elites, notably the military and the land-owning aristocracy. Over the years, both had been joined by the rising class of industrialists which increasingly came to share the former groups' worries about the "socialist danger". For two major reasons the parochial interests of them favored a revisionist foreign policy: For one thing, each of these groups had its own specific interest in an assertive foreign policy. Obviously, the army and the navy had little to gain from a cooperative status quo policy focused on arms control and international institutions like peaceful arbitration. Likewise, industry was interested in

expanded arms production. Of course, the agrarian Junker lacked an intrinsic preference for arms production financed by their tax money. Yet they required the other groups' support for getting enacted the tariff legislation they needed for protection against cheaper grain from abroad. Unsurprisingly, these protectionist measures strongly contributed to German-Russian alienation. For another thing, both the industrialists and the aristocracy which dominated within the military and the agrarian sector felt threatened by the rising political and social demands of the lower classes. In this context, international conflicts fueled by national aspirations for world power status and imperial aggrandizement seemed useful issues for deflecting domestic discontent. Given the elite's' preference for arms, conflict and patriotic enthusiasm it was only logical that they actively instigated the public's nationalistic and revisionist fervor by funding patriotic leagues, such as the Pan-German Association ("Alldeutscher Verband") and the navy league (Wehler 1979: 139-65, 1983: 149-92; Snyder 1991: 97-105; Nipperdey 1992: 629-54).[5]

Finally, domestic political culture also contributed to the emergence of a revisionist great power identity. As a more recently unified nation whose dynamic science and economy seemed to destine it for a bright future, the Germans developed a fervent nationalism which certainly matched the patriotic feelings of Britons and French. Under the circumstances prevailing in the colonial age, it was almost inevitable that German nationalism would emulate the imperialist notions which predominated within the societies of the more established European powers. In that regard, German political culture was hardly special (Nipperdey 1992: 883-887; Hildebrand 1987). All over Europe, imperialist sentiments stimulated assertive foreign policies. In the German case, however, peculiarities of the Reich's political culture exacerbated wide-spread support for *Realpolitik* norms. Although the Wilhelminian Empire was by no means an autocratic system with arbitrary rule, it was neither a fully developed democracy akin to, say, Norway or the French Republic. Rather, its polity exhibited a special mixture of liberal, democratic and feudal elements. Accordingly, pre-modern values, such as authority, obedience, discipline, personal sacrifice and military efficiency, continued to play an important role in German society. The military, in particular, did benefit from these sentiments. It enjoyed special prestige and political privileges which made it hard to constrain the armed forces through domestic or international norms. Absent a clear subordination to civilian leadership, the leadership of army and navy managed to discredit international understandings and arms agreements. Its independent position enabled the military to propagate both the advantages of armed force and the importance of keeping one's options open through a policy of the "free hand" (Wehler 1983: 158-70; Snyder 1991: 75-81; Nipperdey 1992: 233-50; Craig 1982: 268-70). Thereby, it crucially helped to stabilize the

---

[5]For a dissenting view see Hildebrand 1995: 197.

Realpolitik norms of Germany's great power identity.

The Inter-War Period

Like the preceding Empire's international self-conception, Weimar Germany's foreign policy identity with its focus on revisionism and the restoration of the Reich's great power status cannot be explained without reference to constraints and opportunities arising within the international system. The revisionist impetus which had already been prominent in Wilhelminian Germany was, of course, reinforced by the stipulations the victors had written into the Versailles Treaty. Given both Germany's impressive military performance during World War I and its recovering economic base, it was all too obvious that the Reich still possessed the very potential for great power status which the treaty practically denied it (Kennedy 1989: 372, 392). It was hardly surprising then that almost all Germans concurred in the demand for military equality and the speedy withdrawal of occupation forces. The conspicuous fact that Germany lacked the military power to openly challenge the Versailles order failed to dampen this revisionist agenda. Instead, it merely affected political means. Hence, for the time being, Berlin focussed on carefully balanced diplomatic maneuvres to split the victors' éntente. In particular, consecutive governments tried to bring about international constellations which should enable them to enlist Anglo-American support against the more intransigent French and Poles.[6]

Changes in the diplomatic practices applied for achieving these revisionist goals also reflected international conditions. Stresemann could temporarily embark on his "Verständigungspolitik" with its appreciation of international interdependence and foreign concerns only after it had become clear that more confrontational approaches were bound to fail. French occupation of the Ruhr and Germany's dependence on American credit made this utterly clear. Lacking an alternative option, the Reich's still predominant hardliners were prepared to give Stresemann´s enlightened approach a try. When, however, growing French intransigence and the beginnings of the Great Depression underlined the diminishing prospects for cooperative revisionism, Germany's foreign policy elite quickly reverted to the *Realpolitik* methods of surprise initiatives and blunt threats. Thereby, the frustration of cooperative policies paved the way to Hitler's more assertive revisionism.

---

[6]Given Germany's military weakness, bandwagoning with France, the dominant and most threatening continental power, might have been the policy actually to be expected by a structural realist, such as Kenneth Waltz. In reality, however, this option looked hardly attractive. German decision makers were well aware that acquiescening in French predominance would only have perpetuated Germany's impotence. Moreover, they saw little advantage in appeasing Paris, for all European diplomats knew that France could not risk outright conquest of Germany. Presumably, such a gamble would have mired France in drawn out insurgeny warfare in which the German side would have been more or less openly supported by Britain. Hence, actual German behavior is at least in line with predictions derived from less parsimonious versions of Realism. I would like to thank Hanns Maull for bringing this theoretical issue to my attention.

The political interaction of domestic groups seems somewhat less useful for explaining Germany's foreign policy identity as it evolved between the two wars. After all, in the wake of the Reich's defeat and the harsh Versailles Treaty, almost all social and political groupings concurred in their basic foreign policy outlook. Whatever cleavages pitted the groups against one another, and there were quite a lot of domestic conflicts during the Weimar years, all segments of society were united in their demands for revision and a full restoration of Germany's great power status. Indeed, common opposition against the "Versailles dictate" was perhaps the ultimate glue that kept together this conflict-ridden society (Heinemann 1987: 385). Thus, national myth making before, during and after the war had created an almost homogeneous foreign policy outlook which left room for difference only with regard to the intensity of revisionism and the methods for pursuing it. Concerning the latter, political cooperation between labor and export industry certainly helped to give Stresemann´s "Verständigungspolitik" the political backing it required (Krüger 1985: 30, 42, 422; Snyder 1991: 106). However, as mentioned above, this innovative approach failed to bring about a lasting transformation of the Reich's foreign policy identity. Hence, it proved easy for Hitler to gain wide-spread support for his assertive revisionism that masked his ultimate ambitions.

Domestic political culture does also show a significant congruence with Weimar Germany's foreign policy identity. Essentially, the latter was closely associated with the ups and downs of this first German attempt to build a modern democracy. Democratic norms and values had little opportunity to take root in the Weimar Republic. To a significant extent, the democratic revolution of 1918 had been the result of military defeat rather than deep-seated liberal convictions. Indeed, this very perception was shared by many contemporary Germans as they experienced democracy as an "un-German" system which the Reich's victorious enemies had imposed on the nation. As a result, most intellectuals still propagated conservative norms and values which already had been prevalent during the times of the Empire. Nationalism, militarism and authoritarian ideas continued to dominate the political discourse (Sontheimer 1987b). Moreover, many Germans refused to learn lessons from the Reich's military defeat and the fateful international isolation which had preceded it. Germany's contemporary predicament was not attributed to the fact that the Reich's assertive militarism had led to an overwhelming counter-alliance but rather to the alleged "stab in the back". According to this myth, the democratic revolution at the end of the war had robbed the armed forces of its close victory, thereby subjecting the country to the merciless revenge of the western victors. Seen from this vantage point, learning from past mistakes did not call for restraining the Germans' power and ambitions so that they could be reconciled with the other powers' security interests. Instead, the lesson conservatives actually drew was that, in order to win the next war, Germany needed an even stronger government and still more powerful armed forces (Heinemann 1987).

The temporary shift to the more enlightened identity of the Stresemann period does hardly contradict this overall picture. As pointed out above, this new approach had resulted from a learning process which had largely been confined to the liberal elites in the democratic parties and, most notably, in the foreign office itself. These groups had come to understand the security concerns and political constraints of the other democratic governments in Western Europe. Accordingly, they experienced complex learning which affected their view of Germany's place in the world and the definition of its interests. On the contrary, learning within the wider public and the conservative elites was limited to the instrumental level. These segments temporarily came to the conclusion that conciliatory policies might be more promising than confrontational ones. Since this shift did not alter the more fundamental aspects of their foreign policy identity, Berlin could easily return to the more assertive revisionism once the "Weimar coalition" of the democratic parties collapsed.

The ensuing domestic crisis did not only bring about the marginalizing of the adherents of "Verständigungspolitik", it also led to a more violent mode of conflict resolution. In the final years of the Weimar Republic, street fighting among paramilitary party groups proliferated. Rational discussion in parliament and peaceful compromise through fair and transparent negotiations between interest groups came into disrepute. Increasingly, the recreation of an organic national unity and the application of superior force appeared to be the most promising strategies, both with regard to domestic and international relations (Funke 1987). As it turned out, Hitler's nazi movement had the greatest potential for fulfilling this expectation. Its early successes in reducing unemployment, reestablishing "order" to a divided society and revising Germany's international discrimination seemed to confirm the notion that national unity, strong leadership and forceful behavior offered the best prospects to the nation. Thus, the post-Weimar political culture certainly favored a revisionist identity that emphasized *Realpolitik* norms and methods.

The Federal Republic

Germany's post-World War II identity was primarily shaped by external constraints and opportunities. Within but a few years, catastrophic defeat had transformed Germany from a would-be world power into two antagonistic client states. The complete occupation of its territory, the political division of the nation, Germany's permanent lack of nuclear and chemical weapons, its military dependence on the United States, its diplomatic dependence in the context of unification initiatives, and, above all, its incomplete sovereignty -- all this ruled out the restoration of great power status, let alone the acquisition of world power status – ambitions which had played such a crucial role in the pre-WWII

identities. Equal say in international affairs was an impossible dream for a country like West Germany which at first not only lacked an army but even the very competence to conduct its own foreign policy.

Under the prevailing circumstances, the only path to regain sovereignty, or even mere parts of it, became firm integration into western institutions, such as NATO and the European Economic Community. Bonn could not hope for reacquiring unconstrained national sovereignty in the traditional Westphalia sense. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the three western powers would have never consented to such a settlement. For Britain and, even more so, for France, full (West) German sovereignty was inconceivable after two sanguinary wars. For the United States, the prospect of an independent Germany acting once again as "the loose cannon" on the European deck was hardly a more attractive vision in the evolving Cold War. The Federal Republic could merely reacquire some elements of its sovereignty by immediately transferring sove-reign rights to western institutions (Hanrieder 1989: chap. 5; Schwarz 1986: 671-879; Schöllgen 1999: chap. 2). Thus, even a committed proponent of Germany's western orientation like Adenauer had to cede more sovereignty and to settle for less political equality than he originally had hoped for (Schwarz 1986: 843, 873, 888-889). Yet he had no choice but to give in. Otherwise the first chancellor of the Federal Republic would not only have delayed western consent to lifting the occupation statute, but he also would have ignored yet another external constraint which fundamentally shaped West Germany's political orientation after the war: the Soviet threat. Stalin's record of aggressive conduct, the Korean war and Soviet military superiority in Europe clearly recommended military cooperation with the western powers, even at the expense of full German sovereignty. As matters stood in the early 1950s, playing off the Western powers in order to get a better deal would have been a gamble no West German government could have afforded.

Finally, the other major shift German identity experienced during the Cold War, i.e. the political acceptance of a second German state and the indefinite deferment of unification which went with that diplomatic move, were also chiefly brought about by external developments. The Bonn government and the West German population were hardly at the forefront of the western forces who favored East-West deténte on the basis of the status quo. Far from it. During the 1960s, Bonn's insistence on its monopoly right to speak for the German nation ("Alleinvertretungsanspruch") was a constant nuisance for its alliance partners. It took a lot of western prodding before Bonn eventually initiated cautious moves to enhance cooperation with the Eastern bloc (Haftendorn 1983: 278-287, 735-39; Hanrieder 1989: chap. 6; Schöllgen 1999: chaps. 3-4).

The domestic configuration of power and interests largely supported the evolution of West Germany's more enlightened foreign policy identity, yet did

not play a crucial role in bringing it about. At least, it failed to make a significant contribution to the early decisions in favor of western integration. The latter were hardly instigated by the active lobbying of interest groups. While Adenauer served as chancellor, and most notably during his first terms in office, foreign policy making was effectively shielded from domestic pressure groups and at times even from parliament and the rest of the cabinet (Baring 1969; Foerster 1982; Haftendorn 1983: 51-52; Schwarz 1986: 925-27). Still, it is worth noticing that the distribution of domestic power was an important permissive cause of the identity's transformation. In comparison to the socio-political configuration prevailing in the first half of the century, Adenauer and the other proponents of "Westintegration" faced a much more favorable environ-ment. For one thing, the old agrarian and military elites that in former times had called for assertive *Realpolitik* approaches and economic autarchy were finally gone. They could no longer engage in nationalistic and militaristic myth making. On the other hand, industry and the business community which had played an unhappy role in the collapse of the Weimar republic were still influential in the new democracy, yet they had changed their general outlook. Given their dependence on American capital and western markets they could hardly oppose a pro-western orientation (Hanrieder 1989: chap. 12). The trade unions also supported European integration because they expected it to yield a higher standard of living and since they hoped that European economic institu-tions would provide opportunities for workers' codetermination and the political control of industry (Kleßmann 1982: 230). Moreover, both organized labor and industry shared an anti-Communist outlook. For all these reasons, proponents of a traditional foreign policy identity lacked a firm social basis for combating the redefinition of Germany's position in the international system as it was con-ceived and propagated by the government.

The evolution of West Germany's political culture demonstrates that domestic values and attitudes ultimately facilitated the stabilization of an enlightened foreign policy identity, yet they hardly initiated that transformation. Of course, the new liberal democratic culture and the evolving shame about Nazi Germa-ny's horrendous crimes ruled out the militaristic great power revisionism which had dominated throughout the preceding decades. Hence, just like in Wilhel-minian and Weimar periods, there is a basic compatibility between domestic political culture and foreign policy identity. Yet, contrary to today's conven-tional wisdom, the collapse of the Nazi regime did not instigate immediate and intense soul searching which then brought about a new identity that ultimately led to new political strategies. Instead, the causal arrows rather pointed to the opposite direction: the crucial decisions to accept the political constraints associated with western integration came first, while the imposed constraints were only later internalized as norms constituting the new foreign policy identity (Schweigler 1985: 21, 52, 54, 62, 153; also Haftendorn 1983: 735-41; Hanrieder 1989: part IV).

The eventual learning process of the West Germans profoundly changed their political outlook, yet that process took a long time to evolve, especially with regard to the wider public. After the war, a brief period of shock about the revelation of Nazi crimes quickly gave way to an apathetic mood dominated by general political disorientation and more immediate concerns for daily survival. Along with a general disillusionment with grand political designs this mood stimulated what came to be known as the "Ohne mich Bewegung" ("leave me alone movement"). Its "members" were united by the diffuse preference for retreating into a private life undisturbed by organized political movements and mandatory public activities. Not surprisingly, this unorganized movement to keep away from all movements also opposed the reintroduction of the military draft when it was pondered by the Adenauer administration. Thereby it contributed to a wide-spread skepticism against rearmament (Bellers 1999: 117; Schildt 1995: 314-15, 321-22; Rautenberg 1982: 751-53, 873-74). As the public attitude toward democracy and the Nazi past indicate, this opposition against new German forces, however, cannot be attributed to a new foreign policy identity based on repentance, democratic values, an enlightened form of nationalism and a longing for reconciliation.

Contemporary polls indicate that the West Germans were not so shocked by Nazi Germany's surrender and the growing evidence of its misdemeanors that they changed their political attitudes over night. In fact, well into the 1950s identification with the new democracy was very weak, with a huge majority preferring life under Hitler or under the Kaiser to living in the new republic. Only with the "economic miracle" did the latter gain in support. For a long time, one in two West Germans supported the notion that Hitler would have been one of the greatest German statesmen had he not fought the war (Schweigler 1985: 75; Schildt 2000, 1995: 306-307, 317-22). Even embarrassment about Germany's role in World War II was limited. In 1951, only one in three Germans acknowledged Germany's exclusive responsibility for the conflict. Not surprisingly, a poll done in the year thereafter found little public support for reparation payments to Israel: While 44% of the respondents opposed any kind of transfers, only 11% approved of the agreed sum of 3 billion DM with 24% preferring a smaller amount (Schildt 1995: 317-18; also Schwarz 1986: 897-906). At the same time, most Germans felt little need to criticize the role Germany's armed forces had played during the war. Reproaches of the soldiers' conduct in the occupied territories were considered inappropriate. Even generals and high ranking SS members who had been convicted as war criminals continued to enjoy wide-spread sympathies. Well into the 1950s, national solidarity with these officers, many of whom were guilty of massacres and other severe war crimes, was so strong that democratic politicians, including Adenauer and some social democrats, felt compelled to give in to political pressure and plead with the allied high commissions for pardons (Schildt 1995:

317-18; Volkmann 1990: 487-93; Frei 1996: part II).

In a nutshell, then, by the time crucial decisions on West Germany's foreign policy were taken, Germany's public still lacked both a thoroughly democratic culture and the enlightened foreign policy identity that has been described above. Many Germans still refused to accept that their country had been the aggressor in the last world war and that it bore a major responsibility for the crisis that had caused World War I. Only with the passage of time did the Germans come to realize that the Reich had not always been the victim of envious discrimination on the part of the western powers. And only over the years did they learn the lesson that, given Germany's large potential and central location, great power policies *Realpolitik* style were bound to destabilize the European continent. Executive decisions in accordance with external constraints, therefore, had to precede the construction of the enlightened western identity.

An analogous causal logic seems to apply with regard to the second great reorientation of West German foreign policy: Brandt's new Ostpolitik and the marginalization of West German revisionism. During the 1950s and 1960s West Germans still held on to a national identity which included the East Germans as part of their nation. Until the early 1970s unification always ranked as one of the top goals on the public's political agenda. This changed only after Bonn had publicly accepted the European status quo, including the existence of a second German state. Most Germans and a large part of the political elite found it hard to put up with this unwelcome reality. Again, the identity change occured as a result of a hotly debated political decision which had been stimulated by external pressures, rather than bringing that decision about (Schweigler 1985: 116-141).

Conclusion

Oddly enough, during the twentieth century Germany most of the time aspired to become a normal European country. Yet, whereas until World War II "European normalcy" was defined in terms of a great power status to be pursued with *Realpolitik* methods, in the wake of Nazi Germany's defeat the same concept was increasingly equated with peaceful and stabilizing methods. At the same time, the ambition for a distinctive status lost much of its earlier importance. As a result, (West) Germany has not only become a much respected partner of its European neighbors but it has also enjoyed half a century of peace and prosperity herself. Hence the question arises why such a favorable learning process could not succeed earlier, especially why it failed to come about after Germany's first bid for world power status had already resulted in a national disaster.

The sobering answer to this question is that, following World War II, West Germany simply was more fortunate with regard to its external environment. As has been pointed above, the Reich's complete surrender and occupation by the allied powers, its total disarmament and its division into two hostile states ruled out realistic great power ambitions, although in the immediate aftermath of the war most Germans still failed to realize that constraint. Therefore, blunt revisionism based on confrontational policies held little promise. This time, there was no alternative to an accommodative approach. Equally important was the onset of the Cold War because it fostered an occidental democratic identity among the West Germans and induced both the West Germans and their western occupants to initiate intense military and economic cooperation. The Soviet threat, therefore, paved the way to western integration and the partial restoration of West German sovereignty. Besides, it bound the United States to the European continent. Locked in between the two superpowers which held the key to the political unification of their nation, the Germans had to give up all hope for an independent role and an equal say in world politics. Obsessions with prestige thus had to give way to the pragmatic policies of a loyal ally whose security depended on American military guarantees. External constraints (and opportunities) left no alternative but to firmly integrate West Germany with the West, even at the expense of national unification and equal sovereignty.

Just like the Japanese on the other end of the Eurasian landmass, the Germans were also lucky during the ensuing decades in that they were given the time to learn to live with these constraints. Over the years they could both internalize the underlying norms and develop a more balanced and realistic view of their recent history. As a result, they could finally overcome self-righteous thinking and improve their understanding of other nations' perceptions and concerns. This, in turn, helped them to accept norms prohibiting *Realpolitik* behavior. Moreover, the Cold War gave the Germans the time to learn that even for Britain and France the days of genuine great power status were over. With the global rise of nationalism it became all too obvious that being a colonial power had lost much of its attraction (if it ever had had much in reality). Finally, the Cold War stability lasted long enough to prove that Germany's new and more modest role did neither impede economic growth nor subject it to undue political encroachments on the part of its western allies, for Washington, London and Paris wisely enough refrained from exploiting their special rights in Germany for short-sighted gains. The Germans, therefore, learned that they could not only live with their less prominent role but could even live with it well and prosperous. Thus, the unexpected level of success Bonn's foreign policy achieved increasingly militated against returning to the *Realpolitik* identities of former times. As Washington became aware during the second Gulf war, the Germans had become all too happy about their back-seat role in world politics. As long as the Berlin republic does not fare much worse than its predecessor,

calls for a radical transformation of Germany's self-conception will continue to find just as few attentive listeners as they did during the 1970s and 1980s.

Bibliography

Auswärtiges Amt (ed.) 1995: Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Dokumente von 1949 bis 1994, Köln.

Baring, Arnulf 1969: Außenpolitik in Adenauers Kanzlerdemokratie. Bonns Beitrag zur Europäischen Verteidigungsgemeinschaft, München.

Bellers, Jürgen 1999: Politische Kultur und Außenpolitik im Vergleich, München.

Berger, Thomas U. 1997: The Past in the Present: Historical Memory and German National Security Policy, in: German Politics 6, No. 1 (April), 39-59.

Berger, Thomas U. 1998: Cultures of Antimilitarism. National Security in Germany and Japan.

Berger, Thomas U. 2000: A Perfect Normal Abnormality: German Foreign Policy after the Kosovo Crisis, paper presented at the International Studies Association Convention, Los Angeles, March 16, 2000.

Bienen, D./Freund, C./Rittberger, V. 1999: Gesellschaftliche Interessen und Außenpolitik: Die Außenpolitiktheorie des utilitaristischen Liberalismus (Tübinger Arbeitspapier zur internationalen Politik und Friedensforschung Nr. 33).

Craig, Gordon A. 1982: Über die Deutschen, München.

Duffield, John S. 1998: World Power Forsaken: Political Culture, International Institutions, and German Security Policy After Unification, Stanford, Cal.

Elman, Colin 1996: Horses for Courses: Why Not Neo-realist Theories of Foreign Policy?, in: Security Studies 6, No. 1, 7-53.

Fischer, Fritz 1961: Griff nach der Weltmacht. Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschlands 1914/18, Düsseldorf.

Foerster, Roland G. 1982: Innenpolitische Aspekte der Sicherheit Westdeutschlands 1947-1950, in: Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (ed.): Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik 1945-1956, Vol. I: Von der Kapitulation bis zum Pleven-Plan, München, 403-575.

Frei, Norbert 1996: Vergangenheitspolitik. Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit, München.

Funke, Manfred 1987: Republik im Untergang. Die Zerstörung des Parlamentarismus als Vorbereitung auf die Diktatur, in: Karl Dietrich Bracher/Manfred Funke/Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (eds.): Die Weimarer Republik 1918-1933: Politik, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft, Bonn, 505-31.

Gilpin, Robert 1981: War and Change in World Politics, Cambridge.

Gruner, Wolf D. 1993: Die deutsche Frage in Europa 1800 bis 1990, München.

Haftendorn, Helga 1983: Sicherheit und Entspannung. Zur Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1955-1982, Baden-Baden.

Hanrieder, Wolfram F. 1989: Germany, America, Europe: Forty Years of German Foreign Policy, New Haven, Conn.

Heinemann, Ulrich 1983: Die verdrängte Niederlage. Politische Öffentlichkeit und Kriegsschuldfrage in der Weimarer Republik, Göttingen.

Heinemann, Ulrich 1987: Die Last der Vergangenheit. Zur politischen Bedeutung der Kriegsschuld- und Dolchstoßdiskussion, in: Karl Dietrich Bracher/Manfred Funke/Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (eds.): Die Weimarer Republik 1918-1933: Politik, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft, Bonn, 371-86.

Hellmann, Gunther 1999: Beyond Weltpolitik, Self-Containment and Civilian Power: United Germany's Normalising Ambitions, University of Birmingham, Institute for German Studies, Discussion Paper 99/10.

Heß, Jürgen C. 1977: Europagedanke und nationaler Revisionismus. Überlegungen zu ihrer Verknüpfung in der Weimarer Republik am Beispiel Wilhelm Heiles, in: Historische Zeitschrift 225, No. 3, 572-622.

Hildebrand, Klaus 1987: Der deutsche Eigenweg. Über das Problem der Normalität in der modernen Geschichte Deutschlands und Europas, in: Manfred Funke/Hans-Adolf Jacobsen/Hans-Helmuth Knütter/Hans-Peter Schwarz (eds.): Demokratie und Diktatur. Geist und Gestalt politischer Herrschaft in Deutschland und Europa, Düsseldorf.

Hildebrand, Klaus 1995: Das vergangene Reiche. Deutsche Außenpolitik von Bismarck bis Hitler 1871-1945, Stuttgart.

Hillgruber, Andreas 1977: Deutsche Großmacht- und Weltpolitik im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, Düsseldorf.

Jacobsen, Hans-Adolf 1983: Krieg in Weltanschauung und Praxis des Nationalsozialismus (1919-1945), in: Karl Dietrich Bracher/Manfred Funke/Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (eds.): Nationalsozialistische Diktatur 19933-1945. Eine Bilanz, Bonn, 427-39.

James, Harold/Stone, Martha (eds.) 1992: When the Wall Came Down. Reactions to German Unification, London.

Jarausch, Konrad H. 1979: From Second to Third Reich: The Problem of Continuity in German Foreign Policy, Central European History 12, No. 1 (March), 68-82.

Kennedy, Paul 1989: The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers. Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000, London.

Kleßmann, Christoph 1982: Die doppelte Staatsgründung. Deutsche Geschichte 1945-1955, Bonn.

Krüger, Peter 1985: Die Außenpolitik der Republik von Weimar, Darmstadt.

Link, Werner 1987: Die außenpolitische Staatsräson der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Überlegungen zur innerstaatlichen Struktur und Perzeption des internationalen Bedingungsfeldes, in: Manfred Funke/Hans-Adolf Jacobsen/Hans-Helmuth Knütter/Hans-Peter Schwarz (eds.): Demokratie

und Diktatur. Geist und Gestalt politischer Herrschaft in Deutschland und Europa, Düsseldorf, 400-416.

Maull, Hanns W. 1990-91: Germany and Japan: The New Civilian Powers, in: Foreign Affairs 69, No. 5 (Winter), 91-106.

Mearsheimer, John J. 1994/95: The False Promise of International Institutions, in: International Security 19: 3, 5-49.

Michalka, Wolfgang 1987: Deutsche Außenpolitik 1920-1933, in: Karl Dietrich Bracher/Manfred Funke/Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (eds.): Die Weimarer Republik 1918-1933: Politik, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft, Bonn, 303-326.

Milner, Helen V. 1997: Interests, Institutions, and Information: Domestic Politics and International Relations, Princeton, N.J.

Moravcsik, Andrew 1997: Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics, in: International Organization 51, No. 4, 513-53.

Nipperdey, Thomas 1992: Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918, Vol. II: Machtstaat vor der Demokratie, München.

Nish, Ian H. 1972: Alliance in Decline. A Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations 1908-23, London.

Rautenberg, Hans-Jürgen 1982: Zur Standortbestimmung für künftige deutsche Streitkräfte, in: Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (ed.): Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik 1945-1956, Vol. I: Von der Kapitulation bis zum Pleven-Plan, München, 737-879.

Recker, Marie-Luise 1992: Vom Revisionismus zur Großmachtstellung: Deutsche Außenpolitik 1933 bis 1939, in: : Karl Dietrich Bracher/Manfred Funke/Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (eds.): Deutschland 1933-1945. Neue Studien zur nationalsozialistischen Herschaft, Bonn, 315-330.

Risse, Thomas/Engelmann-Martin, Daniela 1999: Identity Politics and European Integration. The Case of Germany (unpublished manuscript), European University Institute, Florence.

Salewski, Michael 1980: Das Weimarer Revisionssyndrom, in: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte B2, 14-25.

Schildt, Axel 1995: Moderne Zeiten. Freizeit, Massenmedien und "Zeitgeist" in der Bundesrepublik der 50er Jahre, Hamburg.

Schildt, Axel 2000: Sind die Westdeutschen amerikanisiert worden? Zur zeitgeschichtlichen Erforschung kulturellen Transfers und seiner gesellschaftlichen Folgen nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg, in: Aus Politik und Beitgeschichte B 50, 3-10.

Schöllgen, Gregor 1999: Die Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, München.

Schwarz, Hans-Peter 1985: Die gezähmten Deutschen: Von der Machtbesessenheit zur Machtvergessenheit, Stuttgart.

Schwarz, Hans-Peter 1986: Adenauer: Der Aufstieg 1876-1952, Stuttgart.

Schweigler, Gebhard 1985: Grundlagen der außenpolitischen Orientierung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Rahmenbedingungen, Motive, Einstellungen, Baden-Baden.

Sontheimer, Kurt 1987a: Der "Deutsche Geist" als Ideologie. Ein Beitrag zur Theorie vom deutschen Sonderbewußtsein, in: Manfred Funke/Hans-Adolf Jacobsen/Hans-Helmuth Knütter/Hans-Peter Schwarz (eds.): Demokratie und Diktatur. Geist und Gestalt politischer Herrschaft in Deutschland und Europa, Düsseldorf, 35-45.

Sontheimer, Kurt 1987b: Die politische Kultur der Weimarer Republik, in: Karl Dietrich Bracher/Manfred Funke/Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (eds.): Die Weimarer Republik 1918-1933: Politik, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft, Bonn, 454-64.

Snyder, Jack 1991: Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition, Ithaca, N.Y.

Steinert, Marlis G. 1992: Deutsche im Krieg: Kollektivmeinungen, Verhaltensmuster und Mentalitäten, in: : Karl Dietrich Bracher/Manfred Funke/Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (eds.): Deutschland 1933-1945. Neue Studien zur nationalsozialistischen Herschaft, Bonn, 474-487.

Volkmann, Hans-Erich 1990: Die innenpolitische Dimension Adenauerscher Sicherheitspolitik in der EVG-Phase, in: Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (ed.): Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik 1945-1956, Band 2: Die EVG-Phase, München, 235-604.

Waltz, Kenneth. N. 1979, Theory of International Politics, Reading, Mass.

Waltz, Kenneth N. 2000: Structural Realism after the Cold War, in: International Security 25, No. 1 (Summer), 5-41.

Wehler, Hans-Ulrich 1979: Krisenherde des Kaiserreichs 1871-1918, Göttingen.

Wehler, Hand-Ulrich 1983: Das Deutsche Kaiserreich 1871-1918, Göttingen.

Wendt, Alexander 1999: Social Theory of International Politics, Cambridge.