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AICGS POLICY REPORT

THE DYNAMICS OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY SINCE UNIFICATION

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FOREWORD

Since the end of World War II, Germany's past has played a major role in shaping its foreign policy. During the Cold War years and existence of two German states, West Germany was focused on being a democratic state, from its institutions to its public debate to its role in the world. The idea of a German state pursuing its national interest in foreign policy was largely discredited. Following unification, however, Germany began a long process of "normalization" in its foreign policy, no longer feeling compelled to stay out of the international arena but to use its growing influence to promote democratic values and human rights abroad.

In this Policy Report, Ruth Wittlinger, Senior Lecturer in the School of Government and International Affairs at Durham University, UK and former DAAD/AICGS fellow, discusses the extent to which Germany's Nazi past determined the democratic features of the Bonn Republic and its foreign policy. She then examines how German foreign policy evolved after 1990 and how the shadow of the Third Reich evolved in three cases: Germany in Europe, German-Israeli relations, and the use of military force.

This publication is part of AICGS' focus on the policies and actors that enabled Germany to reconcile with its neighbors and Israel and return to a leadership position among the global players. AICGS is grateful to Dr. Wittlinger for sharing her insights on the important role that collective memory plays in a country's ability to acknowledge and overcome its past. AICGS is also grateful to the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), with funds from the Federal Foreign Office, for its support of this publication, and to Jessica Riester Hart for her editorial efforts.

Further analysis on the intersection of collective memory, reconciliation, and foreign policy is available on our website, where we invite you to join the discussion on these important issues.

Jack Janes
President, AICGS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ruth Wittlinger is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Government and International Affairs at Durham University, UK. She has published widely on post-unification German foreign policy, collective memory of Germany's Nazi past, and European integration. Her most recent publications include a monograph on *German National Identity in the Twenty-First Century: A Different Republic After All?* (2010), a number of articles in *West European Politics*, *German Politics and Society*, *German Politics*, and *German Studies Review,* and a co-edited collection—together with Eric Langenbacher and Bill Niven—on the *Dynamics of Memory and Identity in Contemporary Europe* (2013). She was a DAAD/AICGS fellow in August and September 2013.

SUMMARY

The first part of this report sets out to what extent the Nazi past—in general terms—was present in West Germany between 1949 and 1990. It will show that the legacy of the Nazi past was the single most important factor to determine the shape as well as the nature of the Bonn Republic. The second part will look at the way collective memory of the Nazi past impacted on West Germany's foreign policy. It will set out the key pillars of the foreign policy consensus that emerged during the lifetime of the Bonn Republic. The third, and main, part of the report will trace developments in German foreign policy and the influence of the Nazi past since unification in 1990 by looking at three aspects in particular: Germany and Europe, German-Israeli relations under Angela Merkel, and German collective memory and the use of military force. The final section of the report will summarize to what extent German foreign policy since unification has been characterized by continuity or change.

01

THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST IN WEST GERMANY (1949-1990)

The single most important factor that determined the shape as well as the nature of the Bonn Republic was the legacy of Germany's Nazi past. This legacy was not only apparent in Germany's division and the semi-sovereign nature of the Federal Republic, its impact was also very apparent in its political institutions, in key discourses, as well as in West Germany's international role. The West German constitution—called the Basic Law in order to underline its provisional character—prescribed an extensive system of checks and balances which were to avoid the mistakes of the past. On the one hand this meant that—in contrast to the liberal and democratic constitution of the Weimar Republic, which gave way to the Nazi dictatorship—it had to ensure the protection of the democratic state and its key principles. On the other hand, however, it had to make certain that a concentration and subsequent abuse of power—as had happened with disastrous consequences in the Third Reich—could not repeat itself under any circumstances.

In many ways the Federal Republic thus turned into—as Konrad Adenauer put it—the antithesis of the Third Reich. West Germany's liberal-democratic order (*freiheitlich-demokratische Grundordnung*) as enshrined in the Basic Law placed key emphasis on human rights, the rule of law, values such as liberty and equality, the separation of powers, and the accountability of government, as well as an independent judiciary. In the spirit of pluralism, it was aimed at ensuring party competition at the same time as making coalition government very likely. Its federalism and its electoral system made strong central government by single party rule highly unlikely if not impossible. With the requirement of a two-third majority in both chambers, the threshold for constitutional change was also set quite high. The new democratic system introduced in 1949 required cooperation and consensus to achieve policy change which was then usually characterized by incrementalism rather than radicalism.[1]

The Basic Law also sought to ensure that the new West German democracy—very much in contrast to the Weimar Republic, as history had shown—was in a position to defend itself. The Federal Republic subscribed to the concept of a "militant" or "combative" democracy (*wehrhafte or streitbare Demokratie*), that is, a democracy able to defend itself and the normative principles on which it is based against anti-democratic, illiberal forces even if at times this amounted to curtailing basic democratic rights such as free speech. Dealing with what Loewenstein—who developed the concept of "militant democracy" in view of National Socialism establishing itself in Germany in the inter-war period—called the "thorniest" problems of democratic states of "curbing the freedom of public opinion, speech, and press in order to check the unlawful use thereof by revolutionary and subversive propaganda,"[2] the fathers and mothers of the Basic Law provided the Federal Republic with a number of safeguards for the defense of the new democracy. The new constitution contained provisions, such as the possibility to ban extremist parties, for example, to ensure that the enemies of democracy would not be able to abolish the constitutional order and its key principles by democratic means.

In more general terms, the Nazi past also provided the key to the discursive construction of its collective identity domestically. It provided the "basic narrative" of the Federal Republic[3] and made any identification with the nation highly contentious and difficult. The collective memory of the Nazi past played a key role in the self-understanding of the Bonn Republic and it

was the debates about the past, or at times the lack of them, which provided the best clues regarding Germany's self-understanding. The history of the Bonn Republic was characterized by a struggle to find a place for the Holocaust and the Second World War in the national consciousness. Whereas national conservative critics frequently wanted to consign Hitler to history in order to allow for positive expressions of German national identity to emerge, left-liberal intellectuals insisted that only an identity that had Auschwitz at its core and was committed to the constitution and its key values was justifiable. As an alternative to patriotism based on the concept of the nation, German collective identity was to be based on a commitment to the democratic principles, values, and institutions that had developed after and—to some extent—because of Auschwitz.

It is debatable whether such "constitutional patriotism" ever became deeply embedded in the Bonn Republic but the continued presence of the Nazi past and the collective memory of its destructive nationalism ensured that the notion of the nation remained tainted. The idea of a post-national identity which subscribed to cosmopolitanism rather than what was considered to be narrow-minded and backward-looking nationalism provided an attractive way out of the dilemma Germany faced in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the Second World War.

Identification with and pride in the nation was not only replaced by a commitment to universal values, but from the "economic miracle" (*Wirtschaftswunder*) of the 1950s onward also by pride in the economic achievements of the Bonn Republic. The Bonn Republic was a success story made up of a democratic state that was based on the rule of law but also a successful social market economy that provided political and economic stability and widespread affluence. It was a state that appeared to have moved beyond primitive notions of nationalism and that was happy to be integrated into a number of supranational as well as international institutions and organizations. It continued to be reluctant to express its national interest explicitly even though this did not necessarily mean that its actions were not in the national interest. All this amounted to a state that was not only very different from its predecessors but also from its neighbors in western Europe.

The question of whether West Germany was a "normal state" was—right from its foundation in 1949—one of the core issues in debates about its self-understanding. The suspicion of "abnormality" was partly based on Germany's National Socialist past and expressed in discussions about *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* ("coming to terms with the past"), by and large revolving around the question of whether a return to "normality" was possible or even desirable after Auschwitz, and partly on the consequence of that past in terms of statehood, i.e., the reality of the divided Germany between 1949 and 1990. As German President Gustav Heinemann put it, Germany was a "difficult fatherland."[4]

02

COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF THE NAZI PAST AND WEST GERMANY'S FOREIGN POLICY

Apart from having a strong influence on the nature of the new republic in terms of its political system and its identity, the Nazi period also provided the key to (West) Germany's place within the international community. Germany's unconditional surrender in 1945 and the subsequent years of occupation resulted, in formal-legal terms, in West Germany being a semi-sovereign state.[5] Its powers over external matters were significantly restricted by the continued input of the Western Allies. This came to an end with the Germany Treaty, which came into force in 1955, when the Federal Republic formally regained sovereignty as an independent state. Until the Treaty on the Final Settlement With Respect To Germany (Two-plus-Four Treaty), which paved the way for unification in 1990, however, the theme of semi-sovereignty continued. Even after West Germany had gained full sovereignty in 1955, it was heavily dependent on the United States for security and its foreign policy continued to operate under restrictions.

The military and moral defeat of 1945 impacted hugely on West Germany's standing in the international community, but it was also the single most important factor to influence West Germany's own perception of its international role in the postwar period. The obsession with power (*Machtversessenheit*) of the first half of the twentieth century is said to have changed into an oblivion of power (*Machtvergessenheit*) in West Germany's foreign policy conduct during the second half of the twentieth century.[6] The Federal Republic seemed quite happy to keep a low profile internationally and to follow a multilateral path in Europe as well as in transatlantic relations at the same time as fostering its key bilateral relationships with France and the U.S. Its principal goals were to regain the trust of the international community and ensure security vis-à-vis the Soviet threat. Throughout the lifetime of the Bonn Republic, its conduct in foreign affairs was characterized by modesty and a "culture of restraint."

The overall goals of West Germany's foreign policy after 1945 were rehabilitation and—with the onset of the Cold War—protection from the Soviet Union. The Federal Republic's foreign policy was constrained by the external pressures of the bipolar world and its geopolitical position within it as well as the restrictions imposed by the Western Allies. As the previous section of this report illustrated, domestically, its scope was restricted by the norms and values that emerged after 1945 in opposition to the Nazi period. These norms and values dominated the environment in which decisions were made and shaped the public and political discourse regarding West Germany's international role in general as well as its foreign policy in particular.

The foreign policy consensus that emerged during the lifetime of the Bonn Republic was carried across party lines by the political elites as well as the rank and file party members and society at large. Although the opposition at times disagreed strongly with the government of the day in terms of its foreign policy, changes in government were usually preceded by the opposition adopting the government's foreign policy stance before taking up office themselves.[7]

This foreign policy consensus rested on two key pillars: first, and probably most important, especially in the early days, a clear and unambiguous western orientation (*Westbindung*), which was later complemented by a constructive policy toward the east (*Ostpolitik*); second, a strong commitment to multilateralism, which was evidenced in particular through

membership of the EEC/EC/EU and NATO. Whereas other countries like Britain and France tended to prioritize one over the other at times, West Germany by and large succeeded in balancing its European and Atlanticist commitments. One of the golden rules of the Bonn Republic's foreign policy was never to get into a situation where it would have to choose between Paris and Washington.[8]

It also meant a rejection of any kind of nationalism in the international arena. This was accompanied by a widespread antimilitarist consensus that existed among political elites of all the main parties as well as in society at large. Thus West Germany's status as a "civilian power" was never really challenged during the lifetime of the Bonn Republic. Whereas "total war" had dominated the period before 1945, it was "total peace" that was to dominate the postwar period.[9] West German governments renounced the use of military force and could rely on an underlying antimilitarist culture in society to support them. In view of Germany's contribution to history in the first half of the twentieth century, West Germany's allies, too, were quite happy to accept its antimilitarism. In general terms, West Germany's foreign policy approach was thus characterized by a renunciation of power politics and even though the Federal Republic eventually gained "soft power" through economic and social advancement, it was—as Henry Kissinger described it—"economically a giant but politically a dwarf."

In terms of style, West Germany's foreign policy was characterized by modesty, moderation, self-limitation, and a "culture of restraint" and what Paterson et al. diagnosed as a "leadership avoidance reflex."[10] The Bonn Republic by and large accepted a position of subordination with regard to its key bilateral relationships. In later years, this was not always accepted without resentment even though it was not necessarily articulated by German chancellors while still in office. In an interview in November 1980, Willy Brandt, for example, called it a dated idea to think that security policy merely consisted of fulfilling the demands of American presidents.[11] Two years later, he became even more outspoken when he suggested that it was inappropriate for a German chancellor "to hop around like a scared rabbit" and asserted the need for Germany to shed its "minority complex" and stop worrying whether somebody in an office in Washington was "frowning."[12] Referring explicitly to the legacy of Germany's Nazi past, Helmut Schmidt—in the context of the negotiations of the sale of Leopard 2 tanks to Saudi Arabia and the negative reactions it had caused in Israel and elsewhere—reportedly said that West German foreign policy should no longer be "held hostage" to Auschwitz.[13] In spite of these expressions of resentment, however, West Germany's foreign policy consensus was never fundamentally challenged between 1949 and 1990. West German governments continued to work within the parameters set by the bipolar world and the normative environment that emerged in opposition to the Third Reich's destructive nationalism and relentless militarism. By becoming a reliable and predictable partner that was tightly integrated into the western alliance system, West Germany thus managed to regain acceptance in the circle of civilized nations and ensured its security in the Cold War world.[14]

03

GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY SINCE UNIFICATION: NO FUTURE FOR THE NAZI PAST?

This section will concentrate on the following three case studies in order to illustrate the complex picture that has emerged in terms of the relationship between German foreign policy and the Nazi past since unification in 1990: Germany and Europe; German-Israeli relations under Merkel; and Germany and the use of military force.

Germany and Europe

As mentioned in the previous section, the key aims of West German foreign policy in the immediate postwar period were rehabilitation and—with the early emergence of the Cold War—protection from the Soviet Union. The European stage provided a suitable framework for West Germany on both accounts. In contrast to other countries that feared the loss of sovereignty through the supranationalism that the European project increasingly offered, West Germany could only benefit from this cooperation. Its rejection of unilateralism, which was kept alive by the memory of the Nazi past as well as the constraints imposed on it by the Cold War, made Europe a natural stage for furthering Germany's interests, even though these were hardly ever explicitly expressed. As Charlie Jeffery has noted, the emerging European institutions provided for "a displacement of responsibility (we are happy to have others govern us) and partly an insurance policy (we are not so sure we trust ourselves to govern)."[15] Furthermore, early Western integration into Europe, together with a strong commitment to its bilateral relationship with the U.S., allowed Germany to become an important ally against the threat of communism, thus enhancing its own position. In addition, European integration gave momentum (and expanding markets) to West Germany's economic recovery and increasing prosperity.

It is hardly surprising therefore that West German political elites, as well as society at large, developed increasingly positive attitudes toward European integration. The idea of Europe also provided West Germany with a kind of ersatz identity. From the 1950s onward, West Germans increasingly preferred European integration over the concept of the nation-state,[16] with a European identity suggesting a forward-looking approach that made identification with the discredited German nation seemingly redundant.

West Germany's successful economic development enabled it to be a model European, even if this meant financial sacrifices. As long as it contributed to a furthering of the European project at large, neither political elites nor public opinion seemed to mind that West Germany became the "paymaster" of Europe. At the same time as its political elites avoided pursuing West Germany's national interest openly, they steered clear of showing leadership, unless it was in tandem with France.[17] The "lessons learned from the past" thus resulted in what has been termed West Germany's "European imperative"[18] or "reflexive Europeanism"[19] and together with its "leadership avoidance reflex"[20] became the trademarks of the European policy of the Bonn Republic. Europe became a central part of West German identity and the raison d'état of the Federal Republic.[21] In contrast to other European nations like Britain and France, Germany also managed to maintain a balance between its commitment to Europe and transatlantic relations. European integration provided advantages for Germany's allies, since it offered what has been described as "double containment."[22] A strong, anti-communist Western Europe was seen not only to provide a strong defense against Soviet influence but was also able to "tame the Germans."[23]

As it turned out, the European project also provided a solution, when the prospect of German unification arose in autumn 1989. Even though there was not much enthusiasm for German unification among its European neighbors and, in the case of Britain, there was considerable vocal opposition from Margaret Thatcher, France, in particular, saw the key to solving "the German problem" in furthering the European project. Provided that a united Germany would be closely tied into a European framework, France agreed not to object to unification.

Helmut Kohl's rhetoric reminded Germans, their European neighbors, and the international community at large that even a united Germany would not renege on its commitment to Europe. Drawing on collective memory of World War II, Kohl described German and European unity not only as "two sides of the same coin" but also more dramatically, as a "question of war and peace." In line with this, he also accorded Europe a central place in his Ten Point Program for Policy on Germany of 28 November 1989, which provided a kind of blueprint for German unification.

The Maastricht Treaty—aimed at creating an ever closer union that would tie united Germany irrevocably into Europe—probably provided the turning point in Germany's European policy, since it marked the end of Germany's Europeanism by default.[24] Even staunch Europeanists, like Kohl, had to respond to an emerging, more critical stance in public opinion toward the European project with the result that already toward the end of Kohl's chancellorship, Germany's European policy became less committed and proactive[25] or, as then Foreign Office State Secretary Hans Friedrich von Ploetz described it, "more British."[26]

A new emphasis on costs and benefits thus emerged in the 1990s which further intensified during the period of the red-green coalition under Gerhard Schröder.[27] By and large, the coalition consisted of a new generation of political leaders who had no living memory of the period between 1933 and 1945, and, even though collective memory of the Holocaust and World War II continued to be employed, these references had lost their predictability and did not necessarily result in a pro-European consensus as it had under previous governments. As Timothy Garton Ash pointed out in 1994, it could not be taken for granted that the Euro-idealism of subsequent generations in Germany would be as widespread or intensive as that of the immediate postwar generation.[28] Schröder was clearly much less reluctant to express Germany's national interest more explicitly, which was largely based on the different approach toward Germany's Nazi past that he adopted.

There is no question that at least in terms of rhetoric—even though the sincerity of this was questioned on a number of occasions[29]—the red-green coalition placed the collective memory of World War II and the Holocaust at the very heart of German national identity. In contrast to previous attempts that were aimed at "drawing a final line under the past," Schröder made it clear on numerous occasions that in his view the period between 1933 and 1945 was a key part of Germany's self-understanding. He stated, for example, that: "the past can neither be undone nor can it be overcome. But one can learn from history and that is what we Germans have done […] Memory of the National Socialist period, of war, genocide, and crime has become part of our national identity."[30] Rather than this unambiguous acknowledgment of German culpability resulting in an inability to identify with the German nation or a kind of "negative nationalism," Schröder's approach seemed to achieve the opposite and resulted in a new national confidence.

Rather than acting as a constraint on the German chancellor and his perception of Germany, it seemed to empower him. During a talk show in November 1998, he described the Germany that he was planning to represent as "less inhibited" and—even more remarkably—"in a positive sense maybe even more German."[31] With this, Schröder created a novel approach to Germany's Nazi past. Until then, and as the *Historikerstreit* (Historians' Dispute) in the 1980s had made very clear, positive expressions of German national identity had either been promoted by the political right and were based on attempts "to draw a line" under the past or had been impossible, as the political left traditionally had argued, because of the centrality of Auschwitz. Schröder, however, spoke of the "self-confidence of a grown-up nation" that did not need to feel inferior or superior toward others but rather a nation that "faces history and its responsibilities, but that—in spite of all its readiness to engage

with it—looks ahead to the future."[32]

Schröder's assertive rhetoric also became apparent regarding Europe. At a party conference only a few months before becoming chancellor, Schröder set out his view of the differences between his approach toward Europe and that of the previous generation. Asserting that for his and particularly for the younger generation, Europe was a normal part of life, he argued that the euro was not a price that had to be paid for German history or a question of war and peace, as his predecessor had made out. In his view, Germany did not want the euro to overcome the past but as an option for the future.[33] According to Schröder, in contrast to previous generations of political leaders, European integration became a matter of choice rather than duty. In his first government declaration in November 1998, Schröder claimed that today Germans were democrats and Europeans not because they had to be, but because they really wanted to be.[34]

Rather than using German history to legitimize a modest and integration-friendly approach, Schröder used references to the past to argue in favor of more assertiveness for Germany on the international stage. In his view, it was always the "dangerous imbalances in the national confidence" that caused extremism and problems.[35] In contrast to Kohl, whose European rhetoric had made extensive use of Germany's historical memory to legitimize his European policy,[36] Schröder was not afraid to be more critical of the European project. Already during his time in opposition, he had described the euro as a "premature birth" (*Frühgeburt*), and at the beginning of his chancellorship, he repeatedly complained about the way Brussels was wasting German taxpayers' money, announcing an end to the use of the German checkbook to facilitate further European integration. During the run-up to the German EU Presidency in a speech to the Bundestag on 10 December 1998, Schröder announced that the country was unable, as well as unwilling, to continue "to buy the goodwill" of its neighbors with payments that turned into "an intolerable burden on the budget at home."[37] While Kohl, at least rhetorically, often had made no distinction between German and European interests, Schröder "did away with this fiction of the European interest being the same as the German interest. You can talk of the German national interest in a much more relaxed way today. The time was ripe for this and he acknowledged it."[38]

According to Charlie Jeffery and William Paterson, this new approach was not restricted to Schröder but part of a "value shift, a changed normative sense of how it is that Germany should engage with Europe."[39] This also appears to be reflected in attitudes toward Europe in society at large, with the "permissive consensus" or "tacit approval" of the European project of the 1970s and 1980s declining from the mid-1990s onward. Although in May/June 2005, 50 percent of respondents were still in favor of European integration, 43 percent felt that it created more disadvantages than advantages.[40]

However, this is not to say that German collective memory was not used anymore. Foreign Minister and Green leader Joschka Fischer ensured that the German past would continue to be present in the discourse on Europe, for example, when he described the German government's support for eastern enlargement as not only necessary for stability in Europe, but also a historical moral duty.[41] Indeed, Germany's policy on the EU's eastern enlargement illustrates the new approach very well. Even though Germany supported the widening efforts, the chancellor fought hard to ensure that a transitional period would protect the labor market from sudden and intensive inward migration as a result of the accession of eastern and central European states.

When Merkel came to office in 2005, the EU—in particular in its attempt to constitutionalize itself—had reached a deadlock in the wake of the failed referenda in France and the Netherlands. Most striking was the fact that unlike what happened in Germany's previous European presidencies, Europe was looking toward German leadership to find a way out of the crisis,[42] and Merkel dutifully provided it.

In some ways, Merkel seemed to return to Kohl's rhetoric by claiming that European unity continued to be a question of "war and peace," since peace and democracy "should never be taken for granted," even though the EU had made peace in Europe a "familiar normality."[43] In her government declaration on 14 December 2006, Merkel asserted that Europe was

the key concept for peace in the twentieth century and would remain the key concept for the twenty-first century.[44] She also made it clear, however, that securing peace was no longer sufficient as a *raison d'être* for current generations and added that it was common values, such as freedom, justice, democracy, the rule of law, and a respect for human rights, that held Europe together internally.[45]

However, in contrast to Helmut Kohl, whose rhetoric largely referred to World War II and who had emphasized reconciliation with former enemies, Merkel—in view of her biography hardly surprising—has tended to link the rationale for the European project to the division of Europe and the freedom that had been achieved for all of Europe. Referring explicitly to her own experience, she pointed out that as a citizen of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), she used to live in Europe but not the European Union. She described it as good fortune for the peoples of Europe to have achieved integration, which ensured freedom and made affluence possible. Depicting the EU as a house that she had only seen from the outside until 1990, she described it as even nicer from the inside and said that she would never want to leave it again.[46]

Merkel was the key architect of the so-called Berlin Declaration, which was to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome in 2007. Trying to spell out the rationale for European integration fifty years on, the Declaration draws on collective memory of war as well as the continent's division by stating: "Thanks to the yearning for freedom of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe the unnatural division of Europe is now consigned to the past. European integration shows that we have learnt the painful lessons of a history marked by bloody conflict." However, at the same time, the Berlin Declaration makes clear that history and the notion of war are not enough to bind Europe together, but that it is the common values of the present that provide the basis: "We are striving for peace and freedom, for democracy and the rule of law, for mutual respect and shared responsibility, for prosperity and security, for tolerance and participation, for justice and solidarity."[47]

In spite of her pro-integrationist rhetoric, her attempts to provide European integration with a new rationale, and her occasional preparedness to return Germany to its role as the EU's "paymaster,"[48] Merkel has also not shied away from pursuing Germany's national interest, even if that has isolated Germany in the short term. For example, at the summit in December 2005, she protected Germany's heavy industry even though this meant a revision of her original position on the climate deal. She prioritized the protection of German jobs over environmental concerns and the EU's efforts to pass a package of emission regulations. The media reacted with surprise with one headline in the *Guardian* reporting "EU Giant isolated as Merkel puts Germany first."[49] As Garton Ash has pointed out in this context "[i]t's nothing new that France and Britain are behaving like France and Britain. […] What's new is that Germany is now behaving like France and Britain."[50]

Most importantly, however, Merkel has shown no reluctance at all to providing leadership in the European Union during the crisis over its constitutionalization, and, in spite of significant problems, she managed to lead the EU out of the impasse over the constitution and negotiated the Lisbon Treaty—signed by the member states in December 2007—during Germany's EU Presidency. Expectations toward Germany to show leadership in Europe have also become increasingly accepted domestically. At the end of 2008, Fischer—usually quite sensitive to Germany's historical legacy and its implications—accused Germany under Angela Merkel "of failing as a leading power in Europe,"[51] and in his Berlin Address in 2009, Federal President Horst Köhler asserted that "Germany as the largest economy in the European Union has a leadership role to play."[52]

Paterson, in particular, has pointed out the stark contrast between Merkel's European diplomacy over the Lisbon Treaty and her much weaker record in dealing with the euro zone crisis. In his view, Germany's role as a "reluctant hegemon" under Angela Merkel is mainly due to her consensual style, which avoids leading from the front; the fact that European policy has become more contested at the domestic level; and because Germany prefers to avoid the costs and obligations that come with such a role.[53] The strong result of the anti-euro party Alternative für Deutschland in the 2013 elections

certainly seems to confirm the view that European issues—in this case euro zone membership—are now much more contested at the domestic level in Germany.[54]

German-Israeli Relations under Angela Merkel

Angela Merkel came to power at a crucial time regarding Germany's relationship with its past. Not only was the discourse on Germany's Nazi past more diverse than at any other point in Germany's postwar history, but there was also an increasing need for a new approach to commemoration that did not rely on eye witnesses.

Hence, Merkel's advent to power gave rise to a number of important questions regarding Germany's politics of the past. Where would she position herself in view of recent developments but also in view of her East German biography? Would she continue and maybe even reinforce the institutionalization of Holocaust-centered memory and—in view of the forceful return of the topic of German victimhood at the millennium—complement it with the institutionalization of the memory of German suffering, or would she emphasize the latter at the expense of the former? Would she try to go back to the status quo ante and align herself with Helmut Kohl's revisionism by attempting again to draw the famous line under the German past?

Right at the beginning of its term in office, the grand coalition set out to complement the institutionalization of Holocaust-centered memory that had taken place under red-green—its most visible sign being the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin that opened in May 2005—with the institutionalization of the memory of German victimhood. In their coalition agreement, the two main parties committed themselves to "dealing with forced migration, flight and expulsion, both socially as well as historically" by dedicating a "visible sign" to it in Berlin. These early signs seemed to suggest that Merkel's politics of the past would be characterized by an emphasis on the memory of German suffering, possibly at the expense of memory of the Holocaust.

It soon became obvious in the way Angela Merkel strengthened Germany's relations with Israel—largely neglected by her predecessor who visited Israel only once during his chancellorship and largely left the Middle East to Foreign Minister Fischer—that the first female chancellor who was socialized in the German Democratic Republic would show much more sensitivity toward issues of Germany's historical consciousness than could first be anticipated.[55] Her approach to the bilateral relationship has been characterized by two key features: on the one hand, an unambiguous acknowledgement of German historical responsibility arising from its Nazi past without any attempts to "normalize" the German past and on the other hand, the creation of a link between past, present, and future, signifying the impact of Germany's historical responsibility on discourse and policy.

Generally speaking, Angela Merkel has continued the consolidation of Holocaust-centered memory as an integral part of German identity without any ifs or buts. She has made her acceptance of Germany's historical responsibility explicit on numerous occasions at home and abroad. For her, Germany's National Socialist past is a key component of German national identity: "only by fully accepting our past at all times can we shape our future together," as she stated in a speech at Warsaw University in 2007.[56]

As indicated above, Merkel's politics of the past and her sensitivity to responsibilities arising from German history are most obvious in the way she has fostered relations with Israel right from the beginning of her chancellorship. The general approach of the grand coalition toward Israeli-German relations was characterized by a fundamental acknowledgement that these relations are "special" and "unique." There is no indication to suggest that any kind of "normalization" of these relations would be desirable. In an interview, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier described Holocaust memory and the special relations with Israel that have arisen from that as being a central part of the Federal Republic's foreign policy. He made the basis for this special relationship very clear: "with no other country are we linked so inseparably through our history."[57] In March 2008, Angela Merkel visited Jerusalem—her third visit to Israel since becoming chancellor—to mark its sixtieth anniversary later in the year. Since the official anniversary celebrations only

took place in May, she was the first head of state or government to congratulate the country. Together with President Shimon Peres, she visited the grave of David Ben-Gurion and laid a wreath at Yad Vashem, where members of the German and Israeli governments for the first time jointly commemorated victims of the Shoah in the Hall of Remembrance. In a video message issued before her departure, Merkel described the stable and friendly relations between the countries in view of Germany's Nazi history and the Holocaust as "miracles of history" and asserted: "we Germans want to do justice to this responsibility."[58]

After two German heads of state—Johannes Rau in 2000 and Horst Köhler in 2005—spoke in front of the Israeli parliament, Merkel was not only the first German chancellor to be invited to deliver a speech to the Knesset, which had to change its statutes in order to be able to accommodate this, but also the first head of government.

In her speech, she emphasized the importance of the Shoah for Israeli-German relations by asserting that Germany and Israel were and always would remain linked in a special way through this memory. Merkel also explicitly endorsed the view of the singularity of the Holocaust. At the same time as emphasizing the history that linked Germany and Israel, she also pointed to the common values of the two countries: "Germany and Israel both share the values of freedom, democracy, and respect for human dignity."[59] There was some controversy over Merkel's planned delivery of the speech in German, "the language of the perpetrators," and some members of the Knesset threatened not to attend. In the end, she delivered the introduction in Hebrew, and although some members of the Knesset were absent, on the whole her speech was received very well and even honored with a standing ovation.

Avi Primor, former Israeli ambassador to Germany, suggested that Merkel's considerable sensitivity toward Israel was not only due to her awareness of Germany's National Socialist history, but also due to the shortcomings of the GDR. He pointed out that her upbringing made her very aware of the hostile stance the GDR took against Israel, according to Primor "the worst state in the communist bloc."[60] In her Knesset speech, Merkel seemed to confirm this when she referred to her own biography: "I myself spent the first thirty-five years of my life in the German Democratic Republic, a part of Germany where National Socialism was considered a West German problem. But the GDR did not recognize the State of Israel until shortly before its own demise. It took more than forty years before Germany as a whole acknowledged and embraced both its historical responsibility and the State of Israel."[61] Merkel's clear stance was received very well in Israel. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert described the negotiations as "exceptional and perhaps historical" and called Merkel and her government "honest and true friends of Israel." He thanked the German chancellor for her cooperation and for the way she had expressed Germany's commitment toward Israel's future.[62] Her positive reception at the level of government was also mirrored in society at large. A survey commissioned by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in 2007 found that 60 percent of respondents in Israel considered Merkel's election to have improved the perception of Germany in Israel.[63]

Merkel used the argument of Germany's historical responsibility toward Israel to justify new initiatives, as well as possible future policies. Her approach to Israel differs not so much in terms of its basic premise—there is a cross-party consensus in Germany that almost ritually confirms Israel's "right to exist" and its security as part of the Federal Republic's *raison d'être*—but in the intensity with which she has fostered Israeli-German relations. Bilateral relations have never been as good as under Merkel's leadership, or, as *The Economist* put it: "it is almost official: Germany is Israel's second-best friend."[64] Her approach also differs in terms of the implications of these relations for German foreign policy, in particular toward Iran. Merkel's approach toward Israel has made it very clear that Germany's responsibility for the past extends not only to the present but also to the future. In a video podcast on the eve of her visit to Israel in 2008, she said that Germany needed to consider the responsibility for the past in its relations to Israel but at the same time it had to direct the bilateral relationship toward the future.[65]

In her speech to the Knesset on 18 March 2008, Merkel suggested that the view often voiced in

speeches and at ceremonial events that Germany and Israel are linked by a special and unique relationship meant in concrete terms that any attempts to play down or trivialize Nazi atrocities must be nipped in the bud. In this speech she also commented on surveys that showed that a clear majority of Europeans considered Israel a bigger threat to the world than Iran. In her view, politicians in Europe could not afford to “fearfully bow to public opinion and flinch from imposing further stricter sanctions on Iran to persuade it to halt its nuclear program.” Linking memory and policy, Merkel called for ways of remembering not just through places of remembrance but by constantly recalling these memories, thus ensuring the presence of memory when determining (policy) behavior: “thoughts must become words, and words deeds.”[66] Accordingly, Merkel has attempted to build bridges from the past to the future by introducing new joint initiatives. During her visit to Israel, bilateral annual government consultations were agreed, for example, which were to put the relationship on a broader basis and also to impact both societies. Until then, such consultations had been restricted to a very small group of countries including France, Italy, Spain, Poland, and Russia. The introduction of government consultations—largely hailed as opening a “new chapter” in Israeli-German relations and for Germany the first ones outside of Europe—was to consolidate the “special relationship” by strengthening political, cultural, economic, and societal relations, as well as adding a new quality that looks to the future.

Merkel, however, went beyond a closer bilateral relationship based on more cooperation in a number of policy areas. She also transcended an acknowledgment of Israel’s “right to exist.” For her, concrete responsibility arises with regard to Israel’s security. During a joint press conference with Prime Minister Olmert, she made it very explicit that she considered a threat to Israel to be a “threat to us.”[67] Even though she emphasized a diplomatic solution with Iran, her strong and unambiguous comments in this context are likely to restrict her policy options in the case of future military action by the United States and/or Israel against Iran. On a number of occasions, she also clearly went beyond traditional lip-service. Merkel repeatedly emphasized in this context that words have to be followed by deeds. Already in her speech to the forty-second Munich Conference on Security Policy in February 2006, she made the historical responsibility of Germany toward Israel in view of Iran’s provocations explicit: “We are, of course, compelled to respond to the totally unacceptable provocations of the Iranian President. I am particularly called to say this in my role as Chancellor of Germany. A president who questions Israel’s right to exist, a president who denies the Holocaust cannot expect Germany to show any tolerance at all on this issue. We have learned the lessons of our past.”[68] In her speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2007, Merkel also stressed that for her as German chancellor, Israel’s security was non-negotiable and that this constituted one of the fundamental principles of Germany’s foreign policy. Again, she pointed out that this had implications that went beyond words: “and that being the case, we have to do more than pay lip-service to it.”[69] In a similar vein, after having received the Leo Baeck Prize from the Central Council of Jews in Germany in November 2007, Merkel said that speeches at special events such as this did not suffice. It will be afterward, in daily life, that it can be seen if they have an effect, i.e., if “speeches are followed by deeds.”[70]

Merkel’s foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who used to be Schröder’s chief of staff, reiterated Merkel’s basic position but seemed more careful regarding concrete implications for policy. In his speech to the German Bundestag on 29 May 2008 on the occasion of Israel’s sixtieth anniversary, Steinmeier linked past and present by asserting that Germany’s commitment to Israel’s secure future had arisen from its responsibility for the past. He said this in the context of pointing out Germany’s special responsibility for peace in the Middle East, however.[71]

Much more explicitly than her predecessors, Merkel has linked past, present, and future, expressing—especially with regard to Israel—in concrete terms what the lessons learned from the past should be, i.e., a strong commitment to Israel’s security and the promotion of human rights.

Merkel’s GDR biography might well provide a convenient explanation for her commitment to German-Israeli relations. After all, her emphasis on Holocaust memory has become particularly evident in

the way she has fostered relations with Israel right from the beginning of her chancellorship. And as both she herself and also a former Israeli ambassador to Germany have remarked, the state in which Merkel grew up had highly problematic relations with Israel.[72] When she visited the former concentration camp in Dachau during her election campaign in 2013, she was heavily criticized by some of her political opponents who felt it was inappropriate to combine a visit to Dachau with an election campaign event in a beer tent in Munich. As one of the Holocaust survivors pointed out, in view of the fact that she was the first head of government to actually visit the concentration camp in Dachau, however: "at least she visited."[73]

Germany and the Use of Military Force

With regard to the use of military force, the "lessons learned" from Germany's past became less prescriptive in the post-unification period. References to Germany's Nazi past were used in order to justify the use of military force in the Kosovo war,[74] which started after the massacre of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo by Serbs and a failed attempt to work out a peaceful agreement at Rambouillet. NATO air strikes began on 24 March 1999 in order to force Slobodan Milosevic to sign the agreement which was to limit the influence of the Serbs in Kosovo. "Operation Allied Force" lasted for over seventy days and came to an end at the beginning of June when Milosevic agreed to a peace plan. On 6 June 1999, the German Bundestag agreed that 8,500 German soldiers should take part in the NATO-led "Kosovo Force" (KFOR) which was to establish and maintain security in Kosovo in accordance with UN resolution 1244.

The timing of the decision to go to war fell into both the old Conservative-led coalition as well as the new SPD-led coalition and was therefore made jointly. When the Kohl government lost the election on 27 September 1998 and a red-green coalition received a governing majority, the negotiations were already well under way. When the Bundestag convened on 16 October 1998 (i.e., after the general election but before the election of the chancellor) to discuss German military participation in Kosovo, 500 (out of 584) members of the Bundestag voted in favor of an involvement of the Bundeswehr. In spite of this large majority, however, emotions ran high and there was significant opposition to the war with members of the red-green government who argued in favor of a German military participation being accused of "war mongering."[75]

Kosovo provided an extremely difficult balancing act for the government between showing united Germany under red-green leadership to be a reliable partner of the western alliance and at the same time convincing critics at home that military action was necessary and that Germany needed to be part of it. There is no doubt that Germany's standing in the western alliance would have been seriously undermined if Germany had refused to participate, especially since constitutional constraints had by and large been removed by the ruling of the Federal Constitutional Court of July 1994.[76] In fact, it would have probably raised questions about the future of the western alliance itself.

Remarkably, it was a coalition consisting of Social Democrats and Greens—both containing strong pacifist forces—that found itself in a position of having to pursue this reorientation of German foreign policy toward the use of military force. It would no doubt have been difficult enough for the red-green coalition to make itself appear like a reliable partner but the crisis in the Balkans and the apparent necessity of a military response made it even more of a challenge for the Schröder government. In view of the long absence from office of the SPD and the fact that the Greens had never been in a coalition at this level, the start of the new coalition was accompanied by calls which seriously questioned their ability to govern, i.e., "are the Greens able to govern" ("*Sind die Grünen regierungsfähig?*"). Schröder and Fischer had to do their utmost to try to convince their parties of the necessity of the Kosovo war and to keep the coalition intact.

Within a few years, things had clearly changed. Although there was no UN mandate due to Russia's opposition, the German red-green coalition had given up the traditional pacifist stance of the German left and sent German soldiers into combat for the first time since 1945. Whereas the Kohl government had only reluctantly expressed its support for the military liberation of Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion in the early 1990s, which had a clear UN mandate, all parties apart from the PDS (Partei des Demokratischen

Sozialismus) supported German participation in the Kosovo war.

Nevertheless, there was considerable opposition to the war in all parties as well as society at large. Especially at the beginning it was criticized because it was claimed that not enough effort had gone into diplomacy to prevent a military solution and because it took place without a UN mandate. It was also criticized because it did not seem able to achieve its main aim: to stop atrocities committed by the Serbs. Quite to the contrary, the atrocities committed by the Serbs seemed to intensify with the onset of NATO air strikes and the number of refugees increased after the start of the allied bombing raids.

Interestingly, the new government's stance regarding German military participation was justified by a recourse to German collective memory even though the lessons that Germany had drawn from history had clearly changed. Rather than avoiding war at all cost, it was argued that Germany—because of its history—had a special responsibility to stop atrocities being committed. In contrast to Kohl who had argued that German soldiers should not go where the Wehrmacht had been, Schröder argued that it would be irresponsible if Germany would now let new crimes happen in the Balkans because the Bundeswehr should not go where the Nazis had been.[77] Quite to the contrary, Schröder argued, Germany had a special responsibility toward the region because of Germany's historical guilt in the area. He even suggested that German guilt could be eased if Germany was now involved in stopping new crimes being committed there.[78]

The question of guilt was also raised by Erhard Eppler in his contribution to the discussion at the special party conference of the SPD on 12 April 1999. Eppler, a former member of the peace movement, pointed out the dilemma the government faced since, in his view, it would be guilty whichever course of action it took. By committing German troops to military action in Kosovo, however, the government had decided on a course of action which—according to Eppler—"made us a little less guilty than if we did nothing."[79]

It was Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer who was at the forefront of the campaign that aimed at convincing the staunch pacifists in the Green Party that the use of military force against Milosevic and his troops was inevitable. For the Greens to accept this was even more agonizing than for their coalition partner. For the party that had recruited many of its members from the protest movements of the 1960s, it was very difficult to come to terms with the fact that they were part of a governing coalition that waged a war.

At the party conference at Bielefeld in May 1999 after intensive discussions and an incident where Joschka Fischer was hit by red paint by an opponent of war, the Greens accepted NATO policy. Times had changed indeed: "By 1999 the Green Party, anti-NATO pacifists in the 1980s, embraced a military role for Germany in the Kosovo conflict that even hawks would have considered off limits just ten years earlier."[80]

There is no doubt that ethical considerations played a major role in the decision to go to war. As Schröder pointed out in his speech to the Bundestag on 26 March 1999, the main reason in support of war was to stop "systematic human rights violations" and to avoid a "human catastrophe" in Kosovo. At the same time, however, and probably more than a right-of-center government would have been, the red-green coalition was very much under pressure to show itself to be capable of governing and demonstrate that it was a reliable partner.

Several weeks into the air war, Chancellor Schröder argued that because of its history, Germany could not afford a *Sonderweg* ("special path") but had to show solidarity with its allies.[81] He insisted that the red-green coalition's decision regarding Kosovo would make it or break it domestically as well as internationally. For him, the question of German military participation in Kosovo had wider implications for united Germany's new role. According to Schröder, his predecessor—so wrapped up in his role as "Chancellor of German unity"—had failed to promote a debate on the implications of German unification with regard to Germany's international role. As a result, the parties in government as well as those in opposition had settled comfortably into Helmut Kohl's "political feel-good package" without reflecting on the obligations that a united Germany would have to

meet. The decision to participate in the Kosovo war brought these issues to a head and, according to Schröder, this meant that the red-green coalition had to make up for what the Conservatives had neglected to do in the 1990s.[82] According to Schröder, the Kosovo war made Germany's new responsibility brutally clear. The end of the postwar period had come and there was no way Germany could continue to claim a special status: "We had to fulfill our obligations toward our allies. Ducking away was not possible."[83]

Rather than a clear decision in favor of a return to using military force as a foreign policy instrument, it appears that the red-green coalition felt compelled to comply in order to prove its credentials as a reliable partner. Thus—apart from the atrocities committed by the Serbs—the rationale for German military participation had to do with the survival of the first ever red-green coalition, as Schröder pointed out: "Those who entered the cabinet of my government knew that there was no alternative to our involvement in the Kosovo war, if the red-green coalition did not want to admit defeat even before taking on political responsibility."[84]

That Germany could not avoid showing solidarity by participating in military action became very obvious within only a few years. Just one day after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington on 11 September 2001, in a speech to the Bundestag, Chancellor Schröder described the attacks as a "declaration of war against the free world" informing the parliamentarians that he had promised President George W. Bush Germany's "unconditional solidarity." At the same time, Schröder demanded solidarity from everybody who believed in "peace and liberty" whether they were in "Germany, Europe, or anywhere else in the world."[85] After Schröder's government declaration on 12 September, the Federal Security Council met and agreed to support an international coalition against terror.

Also on 12 September, the UN Security Council condemned the attacks unanimously as a "threat to world peace and international security." Since the attacks originated from outside the U.S., NATO invoked the collective security guarantees of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty for the first time ever on 2 October 2001. After several ultimatums to the Taliban to hand over Osama bin Laden, the U.S. started the military campaign "Enduring Freedom" on 7 October 2001. In contrast to the Kosovo war, however, the war against Afghanistan was conducted by a U.S.-led coalition and not NATO. After the experience of "war by committee" over Kosovo, the U.S. was clearly not prepared to subject itself to the strait-jacket of a multilateral organization in this important matter. In spite of the campaign being led by the U.S., however, it was a multi-national operation.

The German chancellor and his foreign minister went on numerous visits to Russia, the Middle East, Central Asia, China, India, and Pakistan in order to drum up support for a world-wide coalition against terror. For Schröder as well as Fischer it was clear that the central question regarding Germany's role was not if it would participate militarily but how.[86]

Even more strongly than during the Kosovo war, the theme of "solidarity" turned out to be the key argument in favor of German military participation. In addition to the argument of Germany's multilateral obligations, there was also the issue of German gratitude to the U.S. Whereas this used to be part of the rhetorical armor of the German right, references to America's role in the Berlin airlift, its general security commitment to western Europe during the Cold War, and its supportive role over German unification were now also adopted by the left to argue in favor of participating in military action.

Just as over the Kosovo war, it was very difficult to keep the red-green coalition together. There was opposition to Schröder's promise of "unconditional solidarity" in his own party as well as the Greens. In the end, Schröder resorted to asking the confidence question to force his decision through the Bundestag. Within a short space of time, Germany had come a long way. According to Schröder, German military participation had achieved the following: "We had shown ourselves mature with regard to foreign policy, and made clear that Germany is a force to be reckoned with, when it's a case of taking on responsibility for the fortunes of the world."[87]

Events in 2002 and 2003 showed, however, that

Germany's rediscovered militarism had clear limits. After President Bush's "axis of evil" speech in January 2002, German political leaders started to speak out against U.S. plans to deal with the terrorist threat with the help of "pre-emptive" strikes. The U.S. National Security Strategy—its key principles also referred to as the Bush doctrine—was published in September 2002 and its emphasis on the use of pre-emptive strikes and democratic regime change was perceived as far too aggressive by German political leaders. After all, the re-militarization of German foreign policy was only a few years old and it was one thing to convince German political elites and the German public that German military participation was necessary to avoid further atrocities—as in the case of Kosovo—or to show solidarity in the aftermath of 9/11 with one of its key allies that provided security during the Cold War period—as in the case of Afghanistan. It was clearly another matter, however, to convince the German political leadership and the German public of the necessity of a military attack against Iraq. The evidence regarding the existence of weapons of mass destruction and Iraq's link to al-Qaeda was not considered to be persuasive—for good reasons, as became apparent in the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq.[88]

Discussions of a German involvement in the war against Iraq also entered the German election campaign in summer 2002. In fact, in contrast to 1998, when foreign policy hardly featured at all, it dominated the campaign in 2002. On 5 August 2002, Schröder warned of a casual approach to going to war and categorically ruled out Germany's military participation in and financial support of an invasion of Iraq. What was remarkable about Schröder's rejection was not so much the fact that he ruled out German military participation. The fact that he had to link Germany's last military involvement to the confidence question and only narrowly won suggests that it would have been political suicide to try again so soon to make a case for military participation whatever the arguments for war. It would have presented significant problems for his election campaign that was aimed at a continuation of the red-green coalition. Anti-war demonstrations in Germany illustrated quite clearly that it was not going to be a vote winner. There was also the issue that German military capabilities were over-stretched already.

Whether indeed Schröder simply used his no to Iraq for electoral gain, as has often been asserted, is difficult to establish and not really of any significance. What is more important for the question of the development of Germany's foreign policy identity is the effect that it had. Schröder's no to Iraq in effect emancipated Germany from its key bilateral relationship. Rather than delivering it in a low profile fashion that would not alienate the American leadership unnecessarily, Schröder confidently emphasized the "German way"[89]—evoking an association with the German *Sonderweg* which led to defeat and destruction—and gave it a whole new meaning. Germany was going its own way and—in contrast to its American ally—stood for peace and democracy. Schröder further stressed Germany's sovereignty vis-à-vis its U.S. ally by asserting that important questions regarding the German nation were decided in Berlin and nowhere else.[90] He later suggested that Germany's military participation in both Kosovo and Afghanistan made it easier to say no to Iraq.[91]

The Kosovo war and the war against Afghanistan turned out to be key events in determining united Germany's new international role and in deciding on the parameters of the Berlin Republic's future foreign policy. Both wars contributed considerably toward a re-orientation of German foreign policy, in particular with regard to the use of military force. Together with Schröder's no to Iraq, they were pivotal for freeing the Berlin Republic from the constraints of the Bonn Republic. Although Schröder's refusal to participate in the invasion of Iraq alienated the U.S. and clouded German-American relations in its aftermath, it forced America to accept that German cooperation could not be taken for granted and that—in the second decade after unification—Germany had emancipated itself as an equal partner.

There is no doubt that the red-green coalition's foreign policy broke with several key pillars of the postwar consensus. It was characterized by increasing participation and militarization of German foreign and security policy. German military involvement in Kosovo and the war in Afghanistan clearly broke with postwar West German antimilitarism. It also showed that the new generation of political leaders—in spite of the traditional pacifism of their respective parties—managed to show Germany as a

reliable ally that pulled its weight in line with its increased power since unification. Especially in the wake of Schröder's no to Iraq, many assessments suggested that he had done Germany no favors and actually isolated it from one of its key allies. It was only when it became increasingly clear that the U.S. decision to invade Iraq was built on misinformation and wrong premises that Schröder's decision was increasingly interpreted as another stepping stone in Germany's emancipation.

Showing much more nationalism in his rhetoric than previous German chancellors had dared, Schröder did not hesitate to promote "a German way." Although the military involvement in Kosovo and Afghanistan showed the red-green coalition's commitment to multilateralism—even though it was no doubt in part motivated by the coalition trying hard to show itself able to govern—Schröder did not hesitate to act unilaterally, at least initially, in his opposition to the Iraq war. Schröder thus not only alienated Germany's key ally, he also broke with one of the Bonn Republic's golden rules and sided with France. Some commentators even suggested that Germany under Schröder in fact led the opposition against the U.S.[92] In spite of the commitment he expressed to strengthening the United Nations in his government program[93]—the print could hardly have been dry—he rejected German involvement in Iraq under any circumstances, even if there were a UN resolution to support it.

Under Schröder's leadership there were also striking changes in terms of policy style. Self-limitation and modesty and traditional deference toward the U.S. gave way to assertiveness and more nationalistic rhetoric. Creating an axis between Paris, Berlin, Moscow, and Beijing in opposition to the stance of the U.S. might be multilateralism of sorts but it certainly does not indicate the "leadership avoidance reflex" that was identified as a key characteristic of the foreign policy of the Bonn Republic. It meant a clear and explicit rejection of Germany's traditional subordination to the U.S. Most importantly, however, the red-green coalition achieved—under the mantle of taking on responsibility—literally more "room for maneuver" through involvement in military action in exchange for more power and influence. Interestingly, this was done through a more creative use of references to different parts of German history. Toward the end of the red-green coalition, in May 2005, Germany's emancipation was illustrated symbolically when Schröder—a first for a German chancellor—attended the VE-Day celebrations in Moscow on the side of the victors.

Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the foreign minister in Angela Merkel's Grand Coalition from 2005-2009, who had been Chief of Staff of the Chancellery during the Schröder administration, recognized the changes that had taken place when—in his inaugural speech to the Bundestag on 30 November 2005—he asserted that German foreign policy had undergone a considerable reorientation (*Neuorientierung*) in the fifteen years since unification, supported by all parties in the Bundestag apart from the PDS. Steinmeier quoted Joschka Fischer's frequently expressed perception of Germany's traditional self-understanding: "We underestimate ourselves." Steinmeier explained that his first round of visits abroad had made it quite clear that Germany's friends and partners had huge expectations of Germany and the new government, expecting it to continue its engagement in Europe, the Balkans, Afghanistan, and the Middle East, in the fight against international terror and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.[94]

Steinmeier had pointed out only a week earlier that the coalition agreement between the CDU/CSU and the SPD showed a clear commitment to a continuation of red-green foreign policy, that is, the continuation of a foreign policy that respected international law and that actively supported human rights. In particular, he acknowledged ex-Chancellor Schröder's and Foreign Minister Fischer's contribution. They, according to Steinmeier, had re-appraised the scope of German foreign policy "with courage and judgment," and under their leadership Germany had gained respect worldwide. Steinmeier also pointed out that Germany had become more relaxed, more self-confident, and more open and that he wanted to continue in this tradition.[95]

Steinmeier also explained in this speech why the re-orientation of German foreign policy had become necessary: "Our value in foreign affairs is not determined any more by our role as the (last) outpost of the western world. That is why we have to see to it ourselves how we can influence developments

beyond our borders according to our wishes."[96]

In an interview with the *Bild am Sonntag* on U.S.-German relations in November 2005, Steinmeier was asked whether he thought that Germany would further enhance its role as international peace-maker in the future. He responded that he expected that to happen ("*das wird so sein*"). Asked more specifically, whether he considered the Holocaust to still confine German foreign policy to a "culture of restraint," he replied: "After the end of the Cold War and the new role which many worldwide expect from us, 'restraint' is not a suitable concept any more. I would rather phrase it as follows: In view of our own history it can be advisable for us Germans to avoid any degree of boastfulness in relation to others."[97] In an interview in March 2006, Steinmeier further explicitly questioned the usefulness of the concept of the "culture of restraint"—after all, until recently a defining characteristic of German foreign policy—and promoted what he called "confident modesty" ("s*elbstbewusste Bescheidenheit*").[98]

Debates surrounding the deployment of the German navy to Lebanon illustrate the new approach very well. Angela Merkel described the Lebanon deployment as having a "historical dimension," indicating that it would be part of a more far reaching and long-term political and diplomatic engagement of Germany in the region. Her foreign minister also made a very telling remark in this context: "This deployment fits into the tradition of German foreign policy, that is to make a contribution to solving political conflicts in the world." *Pace* Steinmeier, many people would probably think of the two world wars rather than worldwide peace-making when thinking of Germany's international role in the last hundred years. Interestingly, there was also considerable societal support for the Lebanon deployment.

During the conservative-liberal coalition (2009-2013) a return to the "culture of restraint" of the Bonn Republic became noticeable. The German government was strongly criticized over its decision to abstain from the UN Security Council vote on the establishment of a no-fly zone over Libya. Interestingly, in this context a new memory strand seemed to emerge, which was drawn from very recent history: the specter of Iraq. Especially Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle—implicitly as well as explicitly—referred to it on numerous occasions to justify this much criticized decision.[99] Westerwelle also saw himself accused of violating another important memory strand—the "never again alone" strand—and had to defend the decision against accusations that Germany had isolated itself from its traditional allies.[100] He also tried to directly tap into the "no more war" strand of German collective memory—after all, it had worked for Schröder in 2002!—when he declared in front of the Bundestag on 18 March 2011: "So called surgical attacks don't exist. Every military operation also claims civilian victims. We know that from our own painful experience."[101] Angela Merkel successfully avoided using the Iraq argument in this context, which is hardly surprising since—when in opposition—she had sided with the Bush government in favor of military intervention.[102]

Responses by the German government to the chemical attacks in Syria and the question of military engagement offered fairly little in terms of explicit references to the past, even though a link could have been made very easily between the chemical attacks in Syria and the Holocaust. This obviously would not have fit in with the German government's stance of ruling out German military involvement, however. Westerwelle pointed out on numerous occasions that the use of chemical weapons was a "*zivilisatorisches Verbrechen*" (a crime against civilization), which could be read as an implicit reference to the Holocaust, which has often been referred to as "the worst crime against humanity." Interestingly, neither Westerwelle nor Merkel have made much use of references to the past in order to justify the decision regarding Syria, but on several occasions Westerwelle referred to the German Basic Law and legal constraints as obstacles to a potential German military engagement.[103] Asked about the threat to Israel's security, however, Westerwelle declared that Israel's security in the Middle East was of crucial importance to German foreign policy.[104]

When Westerwelle was asked directly whether he thought that the experience of Iraq was creating an obstacle to military engagement for policymakers, he chose not to comment but simply acknowledged the sincerity with which the situation was assessed in Washington, London, and Paris.[105] Interestingly,

Westerwelle also used the term “culture of restraint” on several occasions, which serves as a reminder of the recipe for success of the Bonn Republic and might well constitute the emergence of a new memory strand.[106]

04

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY SINCE UNIFICATION

A key part of the Bonn Republic's foreign policy identity was its commitment to Europe. West German elites and society at large were model Europeans who were prepared to fund compromises if they were in the greater European cause. Although the early post-unification governments under Kohl's leadership were largely characterized by continuity, a more assertive and pragmatic approach became apparent with the advent of the red-green coalition in 1998. Gerhard Schröder in particular made the case that Germany's Europeanism was now a matter of choice rather than necessity. He also announced the end of Germany's role as the "paymaster" of the Union. In a similar vein, more ambivalent attitudes toward European integration have emerged in society at large. Even though Euroskepticism is by no means as institutionalized as in the UK, for example, the Bonn Republic's idealism has given way to more pragmatism and a more sober analysis of costs and benefits in the Berlin Republic. In view of the reassertion of the nation in the Berlin Republic, the European dimension is also no longer needed for identification purposes. The reluctance to show leadership has—at least to a degree—also disappeared. German political leaders are now quite happy to acknowledge their country's role as the leading power in Europe even if their personality—as in the case of Merkel—makes them very cautious when it comes to exercising it openly.

There are other important changes in Germany's foreign policy identity, which in the Bonn Republic was characterized by a deferential attitude toward its key allies, self-limitation, and a strong commitment to multilateralism. Strong antimilitarism was also deeply anchored in different levels of society. Furthermore, the Bonn Republic successfully managed to balance its European and its transatlantic commitments. Even more so than on the European stage, it was reluctant to exercise leadership that could evoke the historical memory of the Third Reich. Although these characteristics were obviously more pronounced in the early years of its existence, they remained in place throughout the lifetime of the Bonn Republic. Since unification, however, they have become increasingly less pronounced.

The question of continuity or change in post-unification Germany's foreign policy was probably the most crucial issue arising from unification for Germany's allies. Kohl did his best to reassure Germany's international allies that its foreign policy would be characterized by continuity rather than change. Ironically, however, it was Germany's international partners who from the 1990s onward put more and more pressure on Germany to play a larger international role. Considering the challenges in the Middle East as well as the Balkans in the 1990s, it soon emerged that rather than worrying about a united Germany that was punching above its weight, it turned out to be a Germany that punched below its weight that was the major concern of Germany's allies. Since the end of the 1990s, German foreign policy has been characterized by a much more participatory approach in international affairs even if this has meant reneging on its customary antimilitarism and returning to the use of military force. Even though its general disposition is still largely multilateralist, the Berlin Republic has also shown that it can mobilize support against one of its key allies, as it did in the case of Iraq. The conduct and decisions of German governments over Libya and Syria suggest a return to the "culture of restraint"; however, that was so much a defining feature of the Bonn Republic. Overall, its foreign policy identity is characterized by much more assertiveness and although its commitment to Europe as well as to transatlantic relations still stands firm, it

does not show the “reflexive approval” or sometimes maybe only “tacit approval” that Germany’s allies had grown accustomed to during the Bonn Republic. Whereas international diplomacy does not allow for comments regarding Germany’s assertiveness by the political elites of Germany’s allies, it is certainly noted in the press. For German governments to pursue Germany’s national interest more openly and for Germany to behave like “London” or “Paris” is still something new.

Internationally, united Germany has thus come out of the shadow of the Holocaust and World War II. It has emancipated itself and has turned into a major player that does not shy away anymore from asserting its right to a foreign policy based on its national interest. At the same time as having re-established itself as a major international player, however, it shies away from accepting the responsibilities some of its allies consider as accompanying this new role. Overall this means that the Berlin Republic’s foreign policy has much more room for maneuver and is much less predictable than that of the Bonn Republic, but it also has more scope to get it wrong.[107]

NOTES

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