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Rhetoric for Rearmament:

How the Eisenhower Administration sold West German Rearmament to the World

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Rhetoric is one of the most important propaganda tools of the state. Carefully chosen and crafted words enable political leaders to put ideologies into words and present their preferred narrative to the world. Rhetoric becomes especially important when a state or political leader needs to justify something controversial. During the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, the United States used rhetoric to justify rearming their former enemies West Germany and Japan. In particular, President Dwight Eisenhower used very specific and consistent rhetoric to justify West German rearmament. This rhetoric mirrored that which the United States had used several years earlier to justify Japanese rearmament. In order to understand this rhetoric, it is important to understand the circumstances that led to German and Japanese rearmament.

The end of the Second World War left the United States with a new set of challenges. Even as it emerged as the world's leading military and economic power, American leaders did not feel secure. President Harry S. Truman's Administration felt uneasy about the emerging superpower that was the Soviet Union, but they were unsure what approach to take. Eventually, the Truman Administration settled on a policy often referred to as the policy of containment. The policy of containment was, as its name suggests, a strategy for winning the Cold War which acknowledged that Soviet communism posed a threat to the United States that could not be allowed to spread. The focus in this policy was less on actually facing the Soviets on the battlefield than it was on preventing non-aligned countries, especially in Europe and Asia, from

becoming communist and making sure that these countries resisted communism and aligned themselves with the United States.¹

One aspect of containment involved rebuilding countries that had been devastated by the Second World War. It was hoped that this assistance would make these countries less susceptible to a communist takeover. One of the most important of these rebuilding programs was the Marshall Plan, which emerged in 1947 as the brainchild of Secretary of State George C. Marshall. This plan, titled the European Recovery Program gave billions of dollars in aid to a number of western European countries, including West Germany in an effort to rebuild their shattered economies.² The United States also took a more proactive role in places like Korea to directly prevent communist takeovers and took the initiative in creating defensive organizations like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to help deter the spread of communism.³ Although it was created by the Truman Administration, the basic tenets of this policy generally animated United States policy for the early stages of the Cold War, even into the Eisenhower years.

One of the first major issues confronted by the United States during the Cold War were the logistics of occupying the defeated Axis Powers. The end of the war left much of Germany and Japan in ruins. Administration of Japan was placed in the hands of American General Douglas MacArthur, and the Japanese military machine was thoroughly dismantled. As Sayuri Guthrie Shimizu describes in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, the United States imposed a pacifist constitution that specifically prohibited Japan from possessing any sort of

¹ Melvyn P. Leffler, "The Emergence of an American Grand Strategy, 1945-1952," In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War Volume 1*, edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 73-76

² William I. Hitchcock, "The Marshall Plan and the Creation of the West," In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War Volume 1*, edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 157-159.

³ Leffler, 77-88.

military.⁴ This situation would only last for a few years before a radical shift in US policy occurred, eventually leading to Japanese rearmament.

By the late 1940's, the United States' position on rearming Japan had considerably changed. The San Francisco Peace Treaty and the Security Treaty between the United States and Japan granted Japan independence and officially ended the United States occupation. At the same time, however, Japan would have to rearm. By 1952, the Japanese government had created a National Safety Agency which had over one hundred thousand troops.⁵ The reasons for this reversal of American policy are often debated. Shimizu argues that the United States changed its position due to the changing Cold War situation. Basically, the Korean War created new United States security needs that could be best filled by Japanese rearmament. Thus, Japanese rearmament was the result of a deteriorating global situation which forced the United States to spread its forces too thinly to effectively carry out the policy of containment in Asia without Japanese aid.

In contrast, however, Futoshi Shibayama argues that the United States' change of attitude concerning Japanese rearmament had less to do with a changing situation and more to do with a shift in the United States' assessment of its own security capabilities. According to Shibayama, the United States government felt like it could rely on its nuclear strength to defend its interests in East-Asia. In the event of war with the Soviet Union in that region, General MacArthur advocated for the liberal use of nuclear weapons to slow them down. This would eliminate the need for any need of Japanese troops. In fact, there was even some discussion of not defending

⁴ Sayuri Guthrie Shimizu, "Japan, the United States, and the Cold War, 1945-1960." In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War Volume 1*, edited by Melvin P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁵ Guthrie Shimizu, 254-255.

Japan at all. However, as American opinions on the use of atomic weapons changed, Japanese rearmament became a viable and desirable option.⁶ John Foster Dulles had been dispatched to Japan to begin preliminary work on the treaty before the outbreak of the Korean War, which seems to support Shibayama's assertion that U.S. policy changed largely independently of the war.⁷ This is not to say that the war had no effect on the exact nature of the content of the treaty. The war may very well have been the reason that Japanese rearmament took the form that it did. It simply means that the idea of a treaty and of Japanese rearmament had taken hold before the Korean War.

In any case, the Truman administration came around to the idea that Japanese rearmament was a good idea, despite the fact that the Japanese Constitution expressly forbade it. During the negotiations that would become the San Francisco Peace treaty and the Security Treaty, John Foster Dulles, a Republican who would later serve as President Dwight Eisenhower's Secretary of State, was the main American negotiator. It seems likely that Dulles was sent to help appease Republicans in congress who were critical of President Truman's policies in Asia. After several rounds of negotiations which began in the summer of 1950, and lasted until September of 1951, a peace treaty emerged.⁸

The San Francisco Peace Treaty which came into force in April of 1952 was fairly lenient. It did not make any demands for reparations from Japan, and it did not have any sort of war guilt clause officially blaming Japan for the war.⁹ However, in return for this leniency the United States expected Japan to sign a security treaty at the same time as the peace treaty. In this

⁶ Futoshi Shibayama, "U.S. Strategic Debates Over the Defense of Japan: Lessons for the Twenty First Century," *The Journal of American- East Asian Relations* 9, no. 1/2 (spring-summer 2000): 29-54.

⁷ Louis L. Gerson, *John Foster Dulles*, (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1968), 62.

⁸ Gerson, 62-67.

⁹ Guthrie Shimizu, 252.

treaty Japan agreed to several things. First, Japan would give the United States, and only the United States, the rights to naval and air bases in Japan to be used as the United States government saw fit. Second these forces could be used to quell any sort of domestic disturbance in Japan. This presumably meant that the United States could intervene in the event of anything that looked like it might blossom into a communist takeover. Finally, Japan would, “Itself increasingly assume responsibility for its own defense.”¹⁰ This of course implied rearmament.

While Japan was occupied and administered largely by American forces, Germany was divided into four occupation zones, each occupied by one of the major Allied powers, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Berlin was also split into four parts. Each of the occupying power appointed its own military government to manage the day to day operations of its zone. In theory these leaders would cooperate in something called the Allied Control Council to effectively rule the entire country. Hopefully, the Control Council would begin to form the basis of a new Germany of some sort which might eventually achieve some degree of independence. This system, which required unanimous decisions, began to fail almost immediately because the Allies could agree on virtually nothing. In effect, each country ran its own zone according to its own values and ideas while hoping that, in the future, a united Germany would be created in its own image. For example, the United States created a state based federal system in its zone while the Soviet Union created a more centralized political system in its zone.¹¹

¹⁰ “Security Treaty Between the United States and Japan,” (Treaty, 8 September 1951), Avalon Project, accessed 18 October, 2017, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/japan001.asp

¹¹ Hans Peter Schwarz, “The Division of Germany, 1945-1949,” In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War Volume I*, edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 133-134, 142.

Economics was one of the most contentious areas among the Allied powers. The United States and the United Kingdom favored policies like the Marshall Plan, which would rebuild German industry and finance. Britain, the United States, and, to a lesser extent, France saw this as a necessary step in the economic recovery of Europe as a whole because the economies of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, were inextricably linked to that of western Germany. The Soviet Union viewed Germany as a source of potential reparations and even as a possible source of materials to rebuild their own industries, which had been largely destroyed by the war.¹²

These tensions over reparations and economic development combined with ideological differences between the Western democracies and the Soviet communists caused their respective zones of occupation to become increasingly divided. Things began to come to a head in the spring of 1947 when the British and American zones combined to form “Bizonia,” which would become the basis of the new Federal Republic of Germany.¹³ In 1948 France joined this conglomeration to form “Trizonia.” Trizonia continued to coalesce economically and politically until June 1948. In that month the Soviet Union launched its infamous blockade of the western zones of Berlin. They took this drastic action in response to the formation of Trizonia as well as the announcement of a constitutional assembly in the western zones and a currency reform that would give Trizonia a different currency than the Soviet zone. Much has been written about this failed blockade, but in short, the blockade was the step that finally made the division of Germany an irrevocable reality for the foreseeable future. In the fall of 1949, Trizonia became the capitalist West German Federal Republic while the Soviet zone became the communist East

¹² Schwarz, 135-137.

¹³ Schwarz, 140.

German Democratic Republic.¹⁴ This division, which would remain until 1989, was, and would remain, one of the key focal points of the Cold War.

Formalizing the existence of two distinct, independent German states created a whole new set of problems, not least of these was rearmament. Given the premises of the policy of containment, it should hardly be surprising that West Germany came to be seen as country in need of propping up against the “specter” of communist expansion, as well as a potentially useful military ally to bolster the forces of capitalism. Indeed, the first serious attempt at West German rearmament came only a few years after the formation of the Federal Republic.

These initial plans for West Germany’s rearmament and entry into NATO were enshrined in an idea known as the European Defense Community, or EDC. In order to allay understandable French fears concerning a rearmed Germany, this plan entailed the formation of a sort of joint European army. This army would include West German troops, but these troops would not be under the overall command of German generals.¹⁵ Progress toward the creation of the EDC began during the Truman administration in the late 1940’s and continued into the early years of the Eisenhower administration in the early 1950’s. Things seemed to be going fairly well at first. Several countries ratified the European Defense Community. However, the program was eventually derailed by the French refusal to ratify and adopt the plan in late August of 1954.

Then Secretary of State John Foster Dulles’s early biographer, Louis Gerson, attributed this failure to tensions between the United States and France over the war in Indochina.¹⁶ In contrast, however, in a 1974 interview, long time state department diplomat Clifford C. Matlock

¹⁴ Schwarz, 144-148.

¹⁵ Leffler, 86.

¹⁶ Gerson, 185-187.

blamed the European Defense Community's demise on the Eisenhower administration's failure to convince the French that West German rearmament would occur even if the European Defense Community were not ratified.¹⁷ It seems unlikely that this was some sort of French conspiracy to undermine West German rearmament forever. During this early stage of the Cold War, France's position was complicated enough to be worthy of several papers in and of itself. However, Germany was certainly central to French thinking. The country began the occupation of Germany by advocating for complete dismemberment so that Germany could never pose a threat to France again. However, as the potential threat from the Soviet Union became more apparent, France gradually migrated into the Anglo-American camp, as evidenced by the formation of Trizonia. In 1954, France was trying to form an alliance strong enough to defend against Soviet aggression while simultaneously avoiding a renewed threat from Germany.¹⁸ It is easy to see how the EDC caused those two ideals to compete with each other in a way that might cause it to fail on the first try. Its failure may have had something to do with Indo-China, but it likely had much more to do with the fact that the French were far from unanimous about what direction their country's policy regarding West German rearmament would take.

In any case, the proponents of West German rearmament now scrambled to find an alternate route, and it was not long before they found one. Within a month, nine NATO countries, West Germany and Italy sent representatives to London. Eventually, after a long series of diplomatic wranglings, all parties involved, including France, agreed to modify the 1945 Brussels Treaty, which created NATO, to include West Germany and Italy. This treaty, and several other related ones, would become known as the London and Paris Accords. By the spring

¹⁷ Clifford C. Matlock, interview by Richard D. Mckinzie, Waynesville, North Carolina, June 6, 1974. Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, <https://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/matlock.htm> .

¹⁸ Frédéric Bozo, "France, Gaullism, and the Cold War," In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War Volume 2*, edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 159-162.

of 1955, the requisite countries had ratified the treaty, and it officially came into force.¹⁹ West German rearmament was now a reality.

Rearming the countries that had been the primary aggressors in the last world war, or, in Germany's case, the last two world wars, was bound to be a controversial topic. The United States was the sole occupying power in Japan, so, in that case, it had only to contend with the contradictions between rearmament and the Japanese constitution. In the instance of West Germany, the United States had to convince its allies that rearmament was the proper way to go, but in both instances rearmament was certainly something that would have required some form of rhetorical justification. In West Germany's case, the fact that the other side began rearming its part of Germany at almost the same time offered President Eisenhower's administration the opportunity to divert any blame to America's Cold War enemies. It was relatively easy to accuse those enemies of obstructing potential German reunification. It was also even possible to vaguely, or not so vaguely in some cases,²⁰ accuse said enemies of reviving Nazi era German militarism.

President Eisenhower certainly felt like the Soviet Union was attempting to use this approach in March of 1959, when he fielded a question from Robert C. Pierpoint at a press conference about intimations that the Soviet Union was making regarding a possible summit meeting. The President responded forcefully to what he what he interpreted as Soviet propaganda alleging that, "the United States, or the West has rushed right in after the war to rearm West Germany."²¹ Eisenhower responded to this suggestion by turning the accusation back around. He

¹⁹ Gerson, 216-219.

²⁰ Berlin Weekly Reports 218 and 219, Bernard Gufler, February 8-21, 1956, box3571, folder6-001, United States National Archives.

²¹ Dwight Eisenhower, "The President's News Conference of March 4, 1959," in *Public Papers of the Presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower 1959*, 48 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1960).

did this first by denying that the United States had taken any steps to rearm West Germany before 1954, and then by quoting surprisingly specific figures alleging that East German rearmament occurred as early as 1950 and 1953, long before either the European Defense Community or the Paris Accords. The fact that he was able to quote exact numbers off of the top of his head indicates that this was likely a premeditated response to an issue that President Eisenhower anticipated ahead of time. Specifically, Eisenhower said that in 1950, East Germany had about 50,000 soldiers, but by 1953 this number had had nearly quintupled to around 240,000.²² In this case, both sides appeared to be trying to blame the other for turning Germany into two fully armed states set in opposition to each other.

The type of blame placing displayed by the Soviet Union and President Eisenhower in this press conference was certainly nothing new. In May of 1955, just as West Germany was joining NATO, Henry Parkman, an American diplomat in Berlin, sent a telegram to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles describing how the East German press and government were responding to the news, According to Parkman, the East Germans believed that West German rearmament was a revival of the militarism that contributed to two world wars. This militarism, according to East German politicians, justified any rearmament that East Germany may undertake, as well as the formation of the Warsaw Pact Alliance as necessary defensive steps.²³ In sum, the Soviet Union and its East German allies were definitely willing to play the blame game by accusing the west of reviving militarism in their haste to rearm Germany, and President Eisenhower was willing to turn the accusation around on them in his defense. However, this raises an important question. Did the United States, and, specifically, Eisenhower, use this type of accusation

²² Ibid.

²³ Telegram from Henry Parkman to John Foster Dulles, May 18, 1955, box3571, folder2-004, United States National Archives.

proactively as a justification for West German rearmament in the moment, or did Eisenhower merely use it as a convenient defense in this one instant.

These questions create further lines of inquiry. The first line of inquiry concerns whether or not the United States could have used this argument if they wanted to. Did the United States know about any East German rearmament early enough to be able to coopt it as a justification? Secondly, if they did have enough evidence to be able to convincingly make this argument, would they have chosen to use that approach or, alternatively, to use some other justification for West German rearmament. In short, President Eisenhower probably did know enough about East German rearmament in the key period 1950-1955 to be able to use the argument that West German rearmament was necessary to counter East German rearmament if he had wanted to. However, it really appears that Eisenhower did not want to make that argument at all. Ultimately, his justifications tended to go in a very different direction.

The United States was definitely aware that East German rearmament of some sort was occurring as early as 1953, and the United States government was definitely informed about East German rearmament during the period from 1954-1956. In May of 1953, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) produced a report describing military vehicle production in East Germany for that year. The report, which was circulated to the State Department, the various branches of the military and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, described in detail what type of vehicles the state planned on producing, and even which particular police or paramilitary units these vehicles were earmarked for. It should be noted that these vehicles were fairly innocuous.²⁴ They were trucks, locomotives, and cars instead of tanks or armored vehicles, and there is certainly room to

²⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "Planned Vehicle Production for the East German Military Forces in 1953," 7 May 1953, accessed 15 October 2017. <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP80-00810A001000240012-1.pdf>

debate just how much of a military the various East German armed services constituted. In fact, any forces equipped with vehicles such as these would probably be better suited to an internal security role than they would be to any aggressive military actions. However, this document does demonstrate an awareness on the part of the United States about the existence of East German armed services of some sort. It was certainly something that Eisenhower could have construed as an East German threat that would justify West German rearmament.

There were also a number of reports from State Department agencies in Berlin describing East German military activities in the period. For example, the weekly State Department report from Berlin for the week of May 11-17 of 1955 described the way that East German propaganda was attempting to root out “pacifist tendencies” among young men and noted that recruiting for paramilitary forces had increased substantially.²⁵ The authors of this particular report were careful to note that they were not entirely certain what this meant exactly for East German rearmament, but it is certainly easy to see how the Eisenhower administration could have used the occurrences to further accusations of militarism. The concept of, “rooting out pacifistic tendencies” can mean a variety of things, but most of the immediate connotations seem overtly militaristic. If Eisenhower had been so inclined, he certainly could have used this to bolster any accusations of militarism.

By the first months of 1956, State Department officials were reporting military activities with soldiers in uniforms that, the authors of these reports were quick to point out, nearly identical to those that the Wehrmacht had worn in World War II. The authors also pointed out that the East Germans had created a military despite the fact that their national anthem talked

²⁵ Berlin Weekly Report 179, David Henry and Henry Parkman, May 11-17, 1955, box3571, folder2-005, United States National Archives.

about the fact that communism eliminated the need for any more young men to die for their country.²⁶ It does not take a great deal of imagination to understand how these developments in East Germany could have been turned into accusations of militarism and possibly even accusations of a return to some of the ideas and practices that had led the Germans to become the villains in two world wars.

To summarize, the Eisenhower administration was aware of East German rearmament during this period. In fact, The President had enough evidence to enable him to plausibly argue that West German rearmament was a necessary counterbalance to East German rearmament. However, that was not at all what he did. Instead Eisenhower took a very different approach. One that was based more on reasoning having more to do with West Germany's status as an independent state than with a specific threat from East Germany. In fact, prior to the 1959 press conference, President Eisenhower did not publicly refer to any specific threat from East Germany as a rationalization for rearmament. Examination of *The Public Papers of the Presidents*, can help shed some light on what Eisenhower did, publicly, at least, use as his justification for West German rearmament.

The President spoke a number of times on this subject, and the narrative that he promoted was remarkably consistent. He tended to repeat the same justifications for rearmament over and over again, and this consistency can even aid our understanding of why Eisenhower used the rhetoric that he did by allowing us to compare it to the rhetoric that the United States had used several years previously regarding Japanese rearmament. Eisenhower's rhetoric on West German rearmament had three basic components. First, Eisenhower consistently argued

²⁶ Berlin Weekly Reports 218 and 219, Bernard Gufler, February 8-21, 1956, box3571, folder6-001, United States National Archives.

that West German rearmament was an inevitable byproduct of that country's independence and was consistent with the rights of sovereign states as they were understood at that time. Second, the President vigorously asserted that, contrary to what one might expect, West German rearmament would not hinder any potential efforts at future German reunification and might actually help to reduce Cold War tensions. Finally, the President argued that West German rearmament would promote peace, not threaten it.

In the summer of 1953, there were a number of unsuccessful uprisings in East Berlin and East Germany as a whole. After the uprisings, President Eisenhower wrote a letter to West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer discussing the significance of the uprisings. Eisenhower asserted that these uprisings were only the beginning, that they were not the work of American agitators, and that they revealed fatal flaws in the communist system of government. However, the President also made several interesting statements about West German rearmament, which at that time was enshrined in the European Defense Community, that were fairly consistent with the points that he would raise on other occasions.²⁷

First, Eisenhower argued that rearmament would not seriously hinder efforts at reunifying Germany. He defended this conclusion in a particularly roundabout manner. He did not say that he believed that rearmament would increase the possibilities for reunification, but he did state that it would not harm them in any significant way. His basic premise was that the increase in cooperation and integration between West Germany and the rest of Western Europe would heighten the already noticeable economic inequity between the two Germanys. As he put it, "this increasing contrast between eastern and western Germany, the latter with its bankrupt regime and

²⁷ Dwight Eisenhower, "Letter to Chancellor Adenauer of Germany Concerning the Uprisings in East Berlin and East Germany," in *Public Papers of the Presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953*, 146 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1960).

impoverished economy, will, in the long run produce conditions which should make possible the liquidation of the present communist dictatorship.”²⁸ The steady stream of East Germans fleeing west would become a raging torrent, East Germans would begin to rebel in large numbers, and the communist government would become increasingly ineffective. Any tension caused by rearmament would not be enough to upset this inevitable progression in any serious way.²⁹

In addition, Eisenhower also argued that West German rearmament was inevitable. Even if Germany were unified at that very moment, the new one German government would still rearm much the same way that West Germany was. The President’s reasoning here was fairly simple. He could, “hardly imagine that it (Germany) would seek the path of complete and premature disarmament in the presence of other nations still heavily armed.” He continued, urging those who believed that an independent Germany could remain disarmed to, “carefully ponder the true wisdom and safety of such a course.”³⁰ Put another way, West Germany, or a hypothetical unified German government would seek rearmament because that was what wise, well run states did. Eisenhower was speaking against those who believed they could suggest an, “easy safe solution through defenseless neutralization.”³¹ Germany could take whatever measures they wanted to, but in Eisenhower’s view, they would seek rearmament if they had their best interests in mind.

Finally, the President stated his belief that West German rearmament would not be detrimental to peace, but would actually help to insure peace. Here Eisenhower employed the classic peace through strength argument. He did acknowledge the fact that two world wars had

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

recently occurred because of military aggression, but he assured his audience that the death and destruction caused by those wars meant that there was no chance that any Western power would pursue their goals through military aggression. However, he argued that, “The peace we all dearly seek cannot be maintained through weakness.”³² Therefore, all free countries had to maintain at least some military forces to serve as a means of deterring and defending against non-democratic (communist) powers that might attack them.

President Eisenhower’s letter to Chancellor Adenauer contained references to all of the main arguments that he used to justify West Germany rearmament, and it contained no references to any kind of threat from East German rearmament. In fact, it said that a unified Germany, including East Germany, would want to rearm if its leaders were wise. It did contain a reference to outside forces that might threaten free countries, but one never got the sense that West German rearmament had anything to do with countering some specific threat from a rearmed East Germany.

Although in his letter to Chancellor Adenauer, Eisenhower was speaking to a specific foreign dignitary, in general he used the same arguments in other contexts as well. In November of 1954, after the European Defense Community plan had fallen, Eisenhower pointed out the merits of the Paris Accords to the United States Senate. Even though his audience was different, Eisenhower reiterated basically the same principles that he had used over a year previously. He did not discuss the idea of German reunification in this message, however, possibly because his intended senatorial audience would be less concerned about that issue than the West German

³² Ibid.

Chancellor. However, he still argued that West German rearmament was really the inevitable result of natural processes, and that it would actually help make the world more peaceful.

Eisenhower again spent a great deal of time in this message discussing how West German rearmament was inexorable. Once again, Eisenhower made an explicit connection between sovereignty and rearmament. He simply did not even entertain the idea that a sovereign Germany would not be disarmed. For example, he said that, “The Federal Republic is placed on a basis of full equality with other states.” In the next sentence, he then immediately talked about how West German military forces would be integrated into NATO.³³ He also expended a great deal of effort to explain how West German rearmament was consistent with the founding values of NATO, as expressed in the Brussels Treaty of 1948, and principle of West German independence, as enshrined in the 1952 Bonn Conventions, which had fallen by the wayside with the failure of the EDC. Eisenhower also reminded the senators that the senate had overwhelmingly approved both of those treaties.³⁴ Once again, the President’s message seemed to be that West German rearmament would not be harmful and that it was inseparably related to the issue of West German independence.

Eisenhower did not specifically mention German reunification in his message to the senate. However, he did talk at length on the idea that West German rearmament would actually promote the cause of peace. Once again, he argued that, consistent with the policy of containment, a fully armed West Germany would act as a much needed addition to the forces of capitalism. This increased strength would then place the now militarily stronger NATO alliance

³³ Dwight Eisenhower, “Special Message to the Senate Transmitting Protocols to Treaties Relating to the Federal Republic of Germany, November 15, 1954,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents: 1954*, 332, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1960).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

into a better position to deter or defeat any sort of communist aggression. However, in this instance he went further, claiming that the agreements that he was presenting to the senate for ratification might even result in something “far beyond the combining of strength to deter aggression.” He went on to elaborate that that something was, “a new understanding among the free peoples of Europe and a new spirit of friendship which will inspire greater cooperation in many fields of human activity.”³⁵ Eisenhower used some highly idealistic rhetoric in this particular message, but the point is that the President once again argued that West German rearmament was no threat to peace. Instead, it was to be seen a positive force helping to ensure lasting peace.

A picture of Eisenhower’s rhetoric on the topic of West German rearmament is beginning to emerge. Eisenhower consistently argued that rearmament was an inevitable part of granting Germany its independence. When it seemed appropriate he, assured the audience that rearmament would not have any appreciable effect on potential German reunification because the forces that would affect the chances for reunification were inherent fundamental parts of the dichotomy between communism and capitalism and were too powerful to be derailed by any tension over rearmament. Finally, Eisenhower insisted that West German rearmament would not make war more likely or signal a return to militarism. Instead, it would help the cause of peace by strengthening the forces that deterred aggressive Soviet-aligned countries from attacking.

In March of 1955, upon the ratification of the Paris Agreements which finally began the process of West German rearmament, Eisenhower sent an identical message to the prime ministers of Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the

³⁵ Ibid.

United Kingdom. This message expressed his pleasure at their adoption of the course of action laid out in the Paris Accords and the benefits and advantages that these countries had received by ratifying the agreement. The President also took the opportunity to lay out what he saw as the United States' policy positions under the Paris Accords. Once again, Eisenhower advanced some of the same ideas about West German rearmament.

First, the President again connected rearmament to West German sovereignty. He talked about the way that the citizens of the Federal Republic had proven that they were, "capable of worthily discharging their responsibilities as self-governing members of the free and peaceful world community." Lest anyone doubt whether those responsibilities entailed rearmament, the President clarified by specifying that one of the other purposes of the Accords was to enable the Federal Republic to make its, "appropriately measured contribution to international peace and security."³⁶ According to Eisenhower, West German rearmament was inevitable because West Germany was independent and independent states, especially those that were members of the Western bloc and NATO, were expected to do their part militarily to help guard against communist aggression.

Once again the issue of German reunification was not specifically mentioned, but Eisenhower did argue that the Paris Accords and West German rearmament would actually help the cause of peace. Eisenhower reiterated his concept that peace could be achieved only through strength. Therefore, rearmament would help to achieve the aims of the policy of containment by deterring the Soviet Union from any military aggression. This would prevent the spread of communism long enough for the forces that the President had described in his letter to

³⁶ Dwight Eisenhower, "Message to the Prime Ministers of the Seven Nations Signatory to the Protocols Establishing the Western European Union, March 10, 1955," in *Public Papers of the Presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1955*, 54, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1959).

Chancellor Adenauer to take effect which would lead to a capitalist victory in the Cold War and the reunification of Germany, or as Eisenhower pointed out, West German rearmament would help prevent the outbreak of another war like the ones which had ravaged Europe in 1914 and 1939.³⁷

Eisenhower probably could have used the fear of a remilitarized East Germany as justification for rearming the Federal Republic if he had wanted. Instead, he took an approach that emphasized the positives of rearmament while minimizing any potential negatives. He argued that rearmament would not seriously hinder German reunification, and would not threaten the fragile Cold War peace. In his letter to Chancellor Adenauer, he described a process by which German reunification would happen naturally even with rearmament, and in his messages to the United States Senate and to the NATO Prime Ministers, he stated his belief that rearmament decreased the chances of war by providing a more effective deterrent against the spread of communism by military means. Finally, Eisenhower believed that independence was innately connected to rearmament. An Independent West Germany would definitely have a military if its leaders were wise, and if they took their responsibilities for maintaining international peace as seriously as Eisenhower believed they should. To put it colloquially, to Eisenhower, rearmament was no big deal. It was just something that was going to happen that would not really make the situation worse. In fact, it might even help to reduce tensions and make war less likely.

Why Eisenhower took this position instead of using some sort of public blaming of the East Germans or Soviets to justify rearmament is a complicated question. After all, as Hans Peter

³⁷ Ibid.

Schwarz argues, both sides, and even some more modern observers, loudly blamed the other for the division of Germany into communist and capitalist states.³⁸ There are several possible reasons why Eisenhower chose not to denounce East German rearmament. Eisenhower might have felt that he did not have the moral high ground on that issue, because official East German rearmament and the formation of the Warsaw Pact came after the Federal Republic's entry into NATO.³⁹ This would enable the communists to legitimately argue that they were only reacting to West German rearmament. Condemning East German rearmament would also run counter to the narrative that the President was creating by emphasizing the idea that rearmament was inevitable and harmless. When trying to discover the sources of these arguments, it is helpful to note that the United States advanced some of the same justifications for West German rearmament that it had several years previously for Japanese rearmament, even though Japanese rearmament had occurred during the Truman administration.

The United States used a connection between sovereignty and rearmament to justify Japanese rearmament. This connection is particularly obvious when one thinks about the fact that the same peace treaty that gave Japan its sovereignty after over 5 years of American occupation was contingent upon the signing of a security treaty which provided for Japanese rearmament. According to the text of the treaty, the security agreement between Japan and the United States was necessary because Japan, which had just become independent, was incapable of exercising its right to defend itself, but Japan would soon take steps to rectify this situation.⁴⁰ The ability to defend itself was simply assumed as one of the characteristics of a truly independent state.

³⁸ Schwarz, 150-152

³⁹ Schwarz, 148-149

⁴⁰ Ibid.

The security treaty also demonstrated the assumption that rearmament would be help advance the cause of peace. It did this in several ways. First, it argued that Japanese rearmament was consistent with international norms. In this case, it referenced the Charter of the United Nations which said in Article 1 that one of the primary purposes of the United Nations was to maintain international peace through collective and individual security.⁴¹ The security treaty argued that Japanese rearmament was entirely consistent with this goal. It did this by claiming that Japan would avoid, “Any armament which could be an offensive threat or serve other than to promote peace and security.”⁴² Basically, the United States justified Japanese rearmament by arguing that rearmament was just what independent countries were supposed to do. It also alleged that this rearmament was consistent with a preexisting international agreement that the audience would have likely considered to be authoritative.

These justifications were extremely similar to those that Eisenhower used for West German rearmament. The assertion that Japan should rearm because that was just what sovereign states did was echoed in several of Eisenhower’s statements. In particular, Eisenhower expressed that idea in his letter to Chancellor Adenauer, saying that Germany would want to rearm even if Germany was somehow instantly united and the Cold War was not a factor.⁴³ He also expressed this same sort of idea in his message to the prime ministers who signed the Paris Accords. He argued that West Germany had a responsibility as an independent state to contribute to maintaining peace through collective security which of course entailed rearmament.⁴⁴ These

⁴¹ United Nations, “Charter of the United Nations,” (Treaty, 26 June, 1945), Avalon Project, accessed 13 November, 2017, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/unchart.asp

⁴² Security Treaty Between the United States and Japan.

⁴³ Dwight Eisenhower, “Letter to Chancellor Adenauer.”

⁴⁴ Dwight Eisenhower, “Message to Prime Ministers.”

arguments were incredibly similar to those which the Truman administration used to justify Japanese rearmament.

The similarities between the American rhetoric on Japanese rearmament and West German rearmament did not end there, however. In the security treaty, the United States argued that Japanese rearmament would actually help make the world a more peaceful place. The military forces created would be used for helping to maintain the peace in accordance with protocols that the audience already recognized as legitimate. This was, of course the same argument that Eisenhower made over and over again to justify West German rearmament. For example, in his message to the United States Senate, the President argued that the Paris Accords which enabled West German rearmament were consistent with the resolutions that the senate had already adopted regarding West German independence. Likewise, when he addressed the prime ministers of NATO countries, he was careful to point out that West German rearmament was consistent with the principles that NATO was founded on. Eisenhower also consistently stated that any West German military would be used for purely defensive purposes to defend the Federal Republic from any aggression. The idea that rearmament was a defense against militarism instead of a revival of militarism was present in virtually everything that Eisenhower said on the subject, and it was virtually identical to statements contained in the security treaty that made Japanese rearmament official.

The similarity between American rhetoric on Japanese rearmament and Eisenhower's justifications for West German rearmament can be explained in a number of different ways. It is certainly possible that this was simply how the United States justified things like that at this time. Further research into the type of rhetoric that was used in other administrations would be needed to say whether or not this was a factor in President Eisenhower's rhetoric. It is possible, however

to make a connection between the Eisenhower administration and the Japanese treaties based on the fact that the American diplomat charged with negotiating with Japan was none other than John Foster Dulles.

The Eisenhower administration, then, basically continued to use the same rhetoric about West German rearmament that the Truman administration had used to justify Japanese rearmament in the security treaty that the United States imposed on Japan. In both instances, the United States argued that there was an inherent connection between independence and rearmament. Basically, any sovereign state that was smart and took its responsibilities seriously would want to rearm. The United States also argued, both in the case of Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany, that rearmament did not make war more likely. In fact, it generally argued that rearmament was essential for maintaining the peace.

The origins of these opinions are difficult to ascertain with accuracy. However, John Foster Dulles's involvement in both Japanese and West German rearmament offers a clue. He was certainly an influential official in the Eisenhower administration, and it seems likely that he could have influenced the President's strategy when making public statements. Whether Dulles was directly involved or not, Eisenhower certainly echoed Dulles's sentiments almost exactly on a number of occasions, and the President only condemned East German rearmament when he felt that he had to after he was directly challenged on the subject.

The finding that the United States and President Eisenhower did not use East German rearmament to justify rearming West Germany and instead used the same arguments about sovereignty is significant because it builds on work by Schwarz, Odd Arne Westad, and others to increase our understanding of the Eisenhower administration's policy goals, and it helps to demonstrate that rearmament for the Eisenhower administration was not a reaction to East

German rearmament or some other specific threat. It was merely one more weapon to help carry out the Policy of Containment. It could also provide a baseline for later studies. One possibly fruitful avenue of inquiry might be a study of how American rhetoric surrounding the West and East German militaries changed as the Cold War continued. Eisenhower's rhetoric might also be useful for those investigating Odd Arne Westad's assertion that some form of social Darwinism played a role in the policies of the Cold War superpowers because, while he was justifying West German rearmament, Eisenhower frequently mentioned his belief that capitalism would defeat communism because it was inherently superior.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Odd Arne Westad, "The Cold War and the International History of the Twentieth Century," In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War Volume 1*, edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 14-15.

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