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Master's Thesis

**The Shadow of National Socialism:
Overcoming History and Victimhood in
Post-War Germany**

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MA International Cooperation

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Overcoming History and Victimhood in
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Thesis Title: The Shadow of National Socialism: Overcoming History and Victimhood in Post – War Germany

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ABSTRACT

The conceptions of how Germany overcame its history is one that is glorified. Often perceived as a flawless example of how a nation is able to make amends and build up a new partnership regionally, the German case continues to be relevant in the 21st Century. Yet, looking at the evidence proves that such an attitude towards the German case is fundamentally flawed in its assumption that Germany in the Post World War II period was in favour of historical reconciliation. On the contrary, Germany was eager to forget and forged its own victim mentality according to the pains it went through. After the failure of the de-nazification period, for over a decade, Germany remained reluctant to address its own past, overcome and make amends for the crimes it had committed. After an emergence of a new generation of political active students that called for a revision of the conservative status quo, the perspective on historical matters in Germany slowly began to shift. As this paper will argue, the early reluctance to overcome history was not just a social phenomenon, but also a direct consequence of democratic power politics. Likewise, the eventual overcoming of history also rests upon a democratic framework, that of opposition party politics that facilitated a return to Realpolitik in foreign policy.

Key words: Germany, National Socialism, Historical Reconciliation, Ostpolitik

Student Number: 2013-22709

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BHE	Bund der Heimvertriebenen und Entrechteten – League of Expellees and Deprived of Rights
CDU	Christliche Demokratische Union – Christian Democrats
DP	Deutsche Partei – German Party
DRP	Deutsche Reichspartei – German Reich Partei
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei – Free Democratic Party
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDP	Gesamtdeutsche Partei – All-German Party
GDR	German Democratic Republic
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschland – German Communist Party
NPD	Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands – National Democratic Party of Germany
OMGUS	Office of Military Government, United States
RAF	Rote Armee Fraktion – Red Army Faction
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands – Socialist Unity Party of Germany
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands – Social Democratic Party of Germany
USA	United States of America

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Erst kommt das Fressen, dann die Moral.

Berthold Brecht

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Questions

This paper seeks to answer the question how Germany overcame its World War II history and what efforts, if any, had to be made. For this, it will look at the impact of the de-nazification period immediately after the end of hostilities and analysis its overall impact on Germany. In the second part, it will focus on change within Germanys society, contending political and ideological perspectives as well as outline how Germany finally managed to overcome history and reconcile with its neighbours.

2.2. Significance of the Research

Overlooked by many contemporary scholars are the pains Germany had to overcome to allow for the regional integration that it has achieved thus far. While Germany has managed to incorporate itself into the framework of the European Union, strenuous efforts had to be made in order to rebuild regional trust and faith for the German nation. Especially in East Asia, the example of Germany is often used to discredit Japans Post-World War II behaviour. While certainly understandable from an emotional point of view, the conceptions of many on how Germany overcame its history is one that is glorified and often perceived as a flawless example of how a nation is able to make amends and build up a new partnership regionally.

Yet, the German case is often misunderstood. With many scholars looking more at the result rather than the efforts that led to such a conclusion, Germany is regarded as a model example, one Japan has to follow if it wants to finally - from a non-nationalist Japanese perspective - overcome its own history and be able to build up a new and stable relationship with its neighbouring nations. Such a perspective has transcended from the public to the political. For example, South Korea's President Kim Dae-Jung once commented that, had Japan reflected upon its past like Germany, Koreans would have been more inclined of trusting their neighbour.¹ Looking at the evidence however, one is able to find that such an attitude towards the German case is fundamentally flawed in its assumption that Germany in the Post World War II period was in favour of historical reconciliation.

LITRATURE REVIEW

Since 1945 many scholars have investigated the German case of historical reconciliation. From these, some papers and books stood out due to the relevancy of their research and/ or due to their unearthing of new evidence. As such, they will go mentioned here.

Jennifer Lind's book *Sorry States* remains one of the most important piece of literature on Post-World War Two historical reconciliation efforts of Germany and Japan. Contrasting the different approaches to overcoming its respective history, Lind

outlines various approaches to reconciliation, using both the German and Japanese case to explain why and how one country was more successful than the other.

The Wage of Guilt by Ian Buruma also inspired this research. Buruma's piece relies a great deal on personal research done by the author and its captivating exploration of the German and Japanese attitudes towards historical reconciliation was both enjoyable and educational. Although a great deal of his research was not applicable to this paper, his thought-provoking narrative served well in questioning some of my own beliefs and knowledge on the historical reconciliation efforts done by Germany.

Another book that deserves mentioning was *Hitler's Generals on Trial* by Valerie Hebert. As the title suggests, her book dealt with the prosecution of Nazi elites at the end of the war. However, while dealing primarily with the period up to 1958 and focusing on the trials, her work not only served as an informational reference point for the judicial proceedings during the initial de-nazification period but also provided an explanation of the German psyche in the years of the occupation and after.

THE SHADOW OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM

3. Introduction

With the unconditional surrender in May 1945, Germany was beaten on all accounts. The majority of German cities were in ruins, some having endured years

of allied bombing. Reduced to nothing but rubble, cities such as Berlin, Cologne, and Hamburg (131 German cities had been destroyed 75% or over²) provided little shelter for the starving German populace. The once proud cities of Germany with all their history and structures had been reduced to nothingness. As the government was dissolved and German soldiers locked into prisoners of war camps, the German population faced occupation and an uncertain future. Beaten by an alliance of nations, Germany became split into four occupation zones: American, British, French and Soviet. The population, especially those in the cities, had not yet have suffered through the worst. With little remaining of Germany and even less that was of any value in the years straight after 1945, shelter, food and heating became sparse. Rebuilding the country would take tremendous effort all the while the occupation forces launched a ambitious de-nazification campaign to ensure all traces of the ideology that had plunged Europe into a six year long war would be eradicated.

3.1. De-nazification of Germany

The war against Germany was not a simple matter of survival for the allied powers. For Russia, it was an ideological clash with fascism and communism battling for supremacy across the fields of Europe. For Nazi-Germany too, the fight in the east was the true war, the one that mattered and the one that had to be won no matter the cost. Even until his last days, Hitler believed the west could be won over in joining forces against the Bolshevik menace. Victory over Nazi-Germany meant that the political system of the Soviet Union had won³. For the west, the war was different. Especially the United States had little to fear. While Britain had been bombed for years

and subject to a massive submarine campaign with the aim of starving out the island, people of the United States never experienced the losses and destruction that would be seen across Europe.

Instead of fighting for survival, the war became a crusade against Nazi-Ideology and all it stood for⁴. When the war was won, there was no real territorial gain for the victorious nations. Instead, under the leadership of the USA the focus shifted away from attaining territorial or economic concessions to removing Nazi-Ideology from the minds of the German people. This ushered in a period of denazification on which unprecedented judicial processes based themselves on. The American forces alone arrested and interned more than 110.000 officials by the end of 1945.⁵

One could assume that this would be a remarkably easy task. The crimes that had been committed during the years of Nazi-Germany were plentiful and well documented, even by their perpetrators. Not only was there plentiful proof that property of those deemed unwanted by the Nazi authorities had been seized, but especially the prosecution of the Jews had been obvious to all. While many would claim otherwise, the anti-Jewish campaign in the 1930s was one that made it remarkably clear to all that something horrible was about to unfold. Not only did the authorities support, plan and carry out these acts, but they also took great pride in broadcasting it to the German populace. Those that missed the constant propaganda would find it hard to miss the smashed Jewish property, the massed book burnings and the open discrimination of Jews (Jews had to identify themselves by wearing a massive

yellow Jewish star on their cloths) in shops, at work and on the street. In 1945 however, Germany society experienced a sudden and all-encompassing attack of amnesia. No one had seen or heard anything. No one had done something this cruel. Sure, maybe the neighbour had, but oneself? No.

This amnesia was not one that the Allied powers cared to indulge. On the contrary, it sought to smash and imbed the hard truth into the German mind. In earnest, Germans would be transported to concentration camps, both to clean them up themselves and to have them face the horrible sight of burned and decomposing corpses, the moulding barracks and the mass murder that happened there⁶. Those that could not be transported were forced to watch the sight in local cinemas or via posters⁷. For the allies, this was a campaign not only to show and document what had happened during twelve years of National Socialism, but it was also part of their campaign to impose a *collective guilt* upon Germans, based upon the idea that even if one had not actively supported the Nazis, one had also not actively opposed them and was guilty by complicity.

3.1.1 The Nuremburg Trials

Part of this campaign saw the western allies banning Nazi-Ideology. Additionally and most importantly for the first few years, they were coming down hard on those that had played a key role in the establishment of the Nazi-state, those that ran its ministries day to day activities and of course the high-profile leadership of the time. The Nuremburg trials attempted to provide the legal platform on which Nazi-Elites

could be tried. This proved, with no prior legal groundwork, to be more problematic than initially envisioned. Over 218 days, 240 witnesses would be heard, over 10,000 certified statements given, 2,360 documents referred to, and eventually a 16,000 page long protocol would emerge⁸. Eventually nineteen out of twenty-two accused would be punished, twelve to death and seven to long-term prison sentences; three were acquitted⁹. The trials attracted a huge crowd, abroad and in Germany. Situated, on purpose, in the German city that had played such an important role in broadcasting new German might under Adolf Hitler, now it would host the prosecution of what remained.

Initially, the trial was somewhat of a relieve to Germans. Whereas the Jews had been blamed for the misery of the nation in the 1930s, now a few select would carry the blame for the war and the crimes that had been committed during it. Cynicism aside, the trials did prove to be of interest to the majority of Germans. In surveys held by the American occupation force, an overwhelming amount of Germans would respond positively to the trial. In January 1946, 78 per cent of respondents said they had followed the proceedings (via newspaper) and at the conclusion of the trial, 78 per cent felt that the whole affair had followed a just cause. 76 per cent felt that the sentences had been fair, or – interestingly – too mild¹⁰.

The process of de-nazification in Germany had only just begun. Nevertheless, various countries that had experienced German occupation felt little inclination to wait. Identifying key German officials during the occupation, trials would be conducted based on proof and accounts of varying factual accuracy. Trials in France, where an

exuberant number of judicial verdicts were handed out *in absentia*, went on to fill 400.000 dossiers. While these trials focused on French collaboration with the Nazi-occupation force at home, they also accused German soldiers and officials of having committed crimes of various degrees¹¹. These trials proved to be a thorn in many a Germans mind. Contrary to the Nuremberg Trials, the French trials were conducted after the return of sovereignty to the German people and thus provide a more potent example of resistance to the idea of prosecuting Germans that had played an active role in both the Nazi-Government and the army. The French trials particularly, contrary to the Nuremberg trial, targeted soldiers or Germans that played some role during the occupation. Just as trials in Germany that targeted the army, these were regarded as unjust, unwanted and unjustified. On the whole, soldiers were seen as having obeyed orders and having defended Germany, especially against the dreaded Russians, committing none of the assumed crimes. For the ordinary German, that counted more than the alleged (and later proven) crimes committed by the *Wehrmacht*.

. By the end of the Nuremberg Trials, the mood in the occupied German territories slowly turned sour. People started to lose interest in both the proceedings and de-nazification as a whole. Reasons for this are multiple, ranging from genuine disinterest, over to increasing cynicism over the perceived victor's justice and finally to the conviction that the past had been adequately addressed and the time had come to look ahead. It is important to note but perhaps not surprising at all that the closer de-nazification came to impact the lives of ordinary Germans, the faster they would lose interest and the more resistance would present itself.

3.1.2 Der Fragebogen

The notorious *Fragebogen* (Questionnaire) was probably one of the most ambitious projects in the quest to purge German society of National Socialism. Unsurprisingly, it wasn't compulsory. In fact filling out a *Fragebogen* was a question of life and death for some as no ration cards or travel permits would be issued to individuals that had not completed the questionnaire¹². Germans were forced to answer the 132 questions of the *Fragebogen*, detailing wartime activities, political affiliation and so on. On a whole, the *Fragebogen* was an attempt to map out the respondents life over the years of Nazi rule in order to determine whether he had been actively supporting the National Socialist movement or not. In case that evidence would be uncovered or the respondent left some room for interpretation, he or she would have to appear before a tribunal. In the end, the verdict would be given according to five categories, ranging from 'main offender' to 'exonerated'.

The *Fragebogen*, albeit being an ambitious theoretical framework by which to root out the support structures of National Socialism within society, did not do well in practice and alienated large numbers of Germans. On the one hand, no clear definition or criteria existed to assist those that had to weed through the millions of papers (Dec. 1945: 13 Million *Fragebogen* completed) in judging a respondents character and wartime action. As Kettenacker points out, when everyone was following the same leader, how could one separate the 'sheep from the goats'¹³? This led to a large degree of randomness, imbalance between regions and made the *Fragebogen* seem more like a lottery than anything else.

Likewise, German's lamented that the trials seemed to ignore the reasons why some German's might have been more active than others or whether there were non ideological motives for joining the Nazi party. Indeed, little to no effort was made to place the motivation of party members into the context of the years 1933 – 1945. While some certainly had joined out of ideological conviction, no distinction was made for those that had joined in order to secure their jobs and livelihood. The whole affair became too much to handle for the occupying authorities, who were beginning to understand the depth and complexity of the issue. With the 'bureaucratic quagmire' taking it's toll on the resources of the allied powers and with an ever-worsening public mood, the whole affair was place into the hands of the Germans themselves¹⁴.

3.1.3 Failures of de-nazification

Placing judicial powers into the hands of Germans might have sounded like a good idea for the allied powers. Not only would this allow the Occupation forces to focus on other tasks, but also would give the Germans a shot at redeeming themselves. It would not be so. On the contrary, this transition of powers would do little more than deliver the *coup de grace* upon de-nazification. The tribunals became some of the most hated and heavily criticised institutions of the time. Up to 50,000 cases were processed by 545 tribunals each month, but the whole process was seen to be inefficient at best, and corrupt at worst¹⁵. In many cases, friends, colleagues and acquaintances would cover each other's backs, give false testimonies and even clergymen would speak on behalf of the accused, defending him and his outstanding moral character¹⁶.

At the same time, high-profile but well-connected officials went free whereas small time office workers would have a hard time finding themselves exonerated. To make matters worse, due to the fact that a not-guilty verdict was in essence a post-war blanco check and an alibi at the same time, it was not uncommon for judges and lawyers that had worked under the Nazi-regime (often handing out politically motivated verdicts) to now trial Germans once more, just under a different set of law¹⁷. German's would refer to the certificates as *Persilscheine* (*Persil* was a laundry detergent brand, *Schein* the German word for certificate). By the end of a trial my Germans ha joked that the brown shirt of a Nazi had magically transformed into sparkling white¹⁸.

Overall, the detaining and questioning of Party members (3.6 million in the western occupation zones) led to only 1,654 verdicts which identified the accused as a *Hauptschuldiger* (main offender)¹⁹, a remarkable small number considering the size of the Nazi party. The program ended in 1948 by order of the Americans with little to show for it. The next few years did not fare much better. Until 1949, twelve different trials took place aimed at industrial elites, lawyers and judges, doctors, diplomats and others. All in all, these trials prosecuted over 5000 people with a total of 486 sentenced to death²⁰. Again, this didn't sit well with a lot of Germans. Increasingly, Germans would voice resentment to what they called, or at least privately thought-off as, victor's justice.

Likewise, the trials under German supervision were regarded with little more than contempt, both by those that thought of them as unnecessary or unjust and those that had previously voiced their support. For the latter, the trials were simply not enough and did little in punishing those officials that had truly been engaged in the massed deportation of Jews, the concentration camps or forced labour and illegal acquisition of private property. This attitude is probably best described by the protagonist in Ernst von Solomon's adequately titled story *Der Fragebogen* in 1951: *'what depresses me most is not our defeat, but the fact that our victor's made it meaningless'*²¹.

3.1.4 Success of de-nazification

While the shortcomings of de-nazifications have been outlined, this period did manage to succeed in one very important aspect. Its sole success did not lie in the actual de-nazification of Germany or holding the chief culprits to account, but in establishing a total and complete taboo on National Socialism as an ideology. While it is true that National Socialism, the justification of crimes committed by the Nazi state and support for it as an ideology was purged from politics and public discourse, I would argue that this was not an a complete offspring of de-nazification. De-nazification and the watchfulness of the occupying forces certainly played a role in the implementation of such a taboo, but at the same time the vocal and publicized opposition to anything that was regarded, as 'Nazi' was a political necessity. Were de-nazification had failed; the harsh realities of politics would succeed.

As a study by the allied occupation forces shows, support for National Socialism remained at an alarming height post war. Even more concerning was the fact that it actually grew during the years following 1945 when de-nazification was at its height. During November 1945 to December 1946, an average of 47 per cent of Germans responding to the American OMGUS survey indicated they felt that National Socialism had been a good idea badly carried out. By August 1947, support for National Socialism increased to 55 per cent, remaining at such a level of support for another few years.²² While one might argue that this was a mere backlash to how the trials were carried out and not a deep-rooted sentiment, I would argue differently. True, a survey carried out by unpopular American forces could incite more aggressive responses, but at the same time one has to acknowledge that during the period of de nazification, voicing support for National Socialism could be a serious threat to ones personal 'record'. The fact that up to 55 per cent of respondents responded supportive of National Socialism as an ideology shows that little had been achieved or learned. In the ranks of ordinary German's, quite a lot of support still reigned for the ideology that had plunged Europe into a six-year conflict.

The matter of fact remains however that mainstream German politics, at least publically, did not voice support for National Socialism. Yet, while it made the necessary public address to condemn the ideology, it did not spur ahead attempting to address the past on the domestic front. Both sides were the result of politics in action, a balance between international and domestic politics.

3.2. Victim mentality

Although going to great lengths in trying to forget their own acts, Germans did not forget the past. On the contrary, mirroring Japan, they almost instantaneously reinterpreted it by perceiving themselves as the victims. Had Germans not endured the years of bombing? Had Germany not endured Dresden? Had Germany not endured the Red Army? Even by 1955, the average German would more vividly remember the Allied Bombing campaign (*Bombenhagel* – Hail of bombs) than Auschwitz, Dachau or the Holocaust itself. Even the common slogan '*Nie wieder Krieg*' (*Never again a war*) was not necessarily one that came out of an apologetic sentiment but because one never again wanted to endure the horrors of war. For most, what oneself and ones country had done or started during 1933-1945 became a triviality; what one had endured became the essence of the discussion.

This attitude was strong predominantly among those that had lived in the cities during the war or those expelled from the eastern German provinces. Between 1945 to 1947, 69 per cent of Germans east of the Oder-Neisse (Two rivers, the Oder and the Neisse, create a natural border between nowadays Germany and Poland) had been forced to emigrate by the Russian army and local authorities²³. This would have a profound effect on German society and politics.

3.3. Domestic Politics

Even by the end of 1945 and with the whole political apparatus smashed by the allied powers, politics in Germany experienced a quick resurrection. It should not be

too surprising. Both in the east and west, politicians that had served in the Weimar Government had lived a quiet life under National Socialism and now emerged older, but no less bolder. With most having been forced out of politics when Hitler had outlawed all parties save his own in 1933, few had stayed active in order to contest the Nazis. Konrad Adenauer, the first German Chancellor of the new Federal Republic was not known to be particular fond of Nazi-Ideology but his resistance to National Socialism was not particularly strong either. While he had been detained a few times and remained under observation during the years of 1933 to 1945, his actions amounted to just about two short prison sentences. While proof that Adenauer had not been regarded with much good will by the authorities, he lived an easy live compared to those that had actively sought to oppose the rise of fascism in Germany. For them, imprisonment was the slightest of punishments. Others, like the Social Democrats Kurt Schumacher, Otto Grotewohl and Willy Brandt returned from exile.

Political parties sprung up across Germany, with the Christian Democrats (CDU) and the Social Democrats (SPD) emerging as the strongest parties. Others, such as the Communist Party (KPD), the liberals (FDP) and many smaller parties joined in. Almost immediately, party politics set in. As parties merged, splintered and fell into obscurity, Germanys political scene recovered remarkably quickly and by the return of sovereignty in 1953, with the Cold War defining the national security of the victorious powers that they began to be supported by the western allies. This was to be a remarkable shift in priorities for countries that had only a few years ago focussed on ensuring the German populace was made aware of the

crimes that had been committed under National Socialism. By the beginning of 1953, the de-nazification period had run out of the little steam it had ever possessed.

Adenauer was a man who knew how to win an election. In a time in which Germany had to rebuild, it required an anchor that would provide strength to carry on. Much of his many electoral campaigns would focus upon Adenauer's personality, his character and what they represented. As small parties vied for support and the Social Democrats were hindered by infighting and their inability to attract electoral support beyond the working classes, he offered the very quality Germany needed: stability. Yet this stability came at a price, a moral one at that for the one thing that upset the balance was the question of war guilt, repentance and the Nazi period. Adenauer certainly was no sympathizer to Hitler but at the same time he realized the sensitive role Germany's actions during the war played in domestic affairs. He also knew politics and how to win elections. As such the hard question, the one's that should have been asked and answered never were.

This attitude extended to many FRG politicians. Few harboured much sympathy for National Socialism. Ousted from office or driven into exile during the fateful years of Nazi rule, few had any reason to mourn the collapse of Nazi-Germany from an ideological standpoint. On the contrary, some had been imprisoned and had suffered at the hand of the fascist authorities. But politics is a game of its own and the considerations of democratic rule ensured that few politicians attempted to dwell on the Nazi period too much. Doing so would ensure terrible electoral results.

As such, getting Germany back on track was a priority and with a people that largely perceived themselves as victims, neither Adenauer nor any other politician with influence pressed the matter. It turned out that rebuilding a country from scratch was easier than moral atonement.

3.4. The price of democracy

This was particularly true due to the large influx of German's from the eastern territories. Providing for millions of refugees was a challenge, but at the same time the influx of 10 million people that had to be cared for represented a vast pool of voters, something that did not escape the attention of any of the political parties in the new German state.

Even before the defeat of Nazi Germany in May 1945, the question of the territorial future of Germany was one that saw great discussion both at the Teheran Conference, Yalta and at Potsdam. With a definite agreement being made in the Potsdam agreement, large parts of Eastern Germany up to the Oder-Neisse Line, historically the territories of Prussia, were proposed as territorial compensation to Poland after the eventual unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany. This proved to be an easy task in theory since by the end of the war the Red Army had punched through German forces and occupied nearly all eastern territory all the way to Berlin, thus eliminating resistance east of the German capital. The exodus of the German population from the now Polish territories – although a number of Germans remained – was vast.

After 1945, Germans left their homes, either driven out by force or preemptively; abandoning the land their family had lived on for generations. 69% of the German speaking population of the territories east of the Oder and Neisse left between 1945 – 1947. In total this represented more than 11 million Germans, making up 18% of the total German population of 65 million (West + East) in 1947. While three million would eventually remain in the East, the large majority - eight million - would settle in the FRG. For politicians these eight million - bar those under 21 - essentially represented votes.²⁴

The Western administration under Adenauer refused to accept the Oder-Neisse Line as the official border between German territory and Poland. In Adenauer's opinion, as with many Germans, these territories were by their very essence German and nothing but German. In fact, evidence suggests that a very strong emotional attachment to these territories was present in the general population at that time²⁵, so much so that the CDU under Adenauer used the fear of a territorial loss in its own election campaigns. This can be attributed to two factors.

First, the territories of Prussia, Silesia and Saxony (amongst others) and the cities of Breslau, Danzig, Koenigberg, and Stettin were seen to be intrinsically German and held great historical value to the German nation. Prussia was both the birthplace of some of the greatest Kings in Germanic history and it had also been the driving force behind the German Unification of 1864 to 1871 under Otto von Bismarck. Losing these

territories not only meant a loss of land, fields and rivers but it meant that Germany had lost the cradle of its own self.

Second, the exodus of many Germans that had lived in the territories overrun by the Red Army into West German meant that the new German state harboured a great many people with no real home. Although German by name, they spoke with their own dialect, had their own regional culture and a long history of living in the East. They had been driven from their own lands either by fear or force and although some remained, an estimated fifteen million eventually fled to West Germany²⁶. Many of these hoped to return one day and reclaimed their homes and land.

Thus, Germany had both emotional and historic links with the lost territories but it was the former that truly catapulted the issue onto the political sphere. Both the East and West Germany administration were not too fond of signing off these territories after the war. Ultimately the East German administration had little choice but bend to the pressure from Moscow and formally agreed to the Oder-Niesse line in 1950. West Germany would not do so for many years to come.

3.5. 'Nazis' in the Government

As we will see, by the end of Adenauers administration in 1963, relatively little had been done to 'come clean' yet Germanys standing in the west had remarkably improved. France no longer saw Germany as an enemy, but rather as a close partner²⁷ and America increasingly focused on the Vietnam situation after having engaged in the Korean War. The battle lines had been redrawn and National Socialism

was a thing of the past. Of course, this did not mean that Germany was free to act without scrutiny. On the contrary, the international community kept a watchful eye on German domestic politics. Regardless, effective control on the internal situation had long been relinquished. Thus, both German reluctance and a lack of external pressure effectively put an end to the early attempts to bring those that had been guilty of Nazi crimes or collaboration to justice.

The de-nazification period in Germany was a short-lived one. While the obvious suspects such as Goering, Doenitz and Speer were tried under tremendous media coverage the attempts to purge the state apparatus failed miserably. As with the Japanese case, the western occupation forces in Germany quickly realised that the idealistic idea of purging away each and every one who had been actively engaged in the German state bureaucracy during the Nazi-period was one that could not be realistically achieved if West Germany was to become a strong ally, rather than a burden. Similar to Japan, the new German state and even the occupation forces - both West and East - began to rely on the knowhow and skill of lawyers, bureaucrats and industrials, all of which had been playing an active role during 1933-1945 in order to rebuild the shattered country.²⁸ In essence, both countries retained the structure on which the leadership had built its success.

In the case of Germany, it is a widely held myth that Germany saw a drastic turnaround when it came to its political elites. As Ian Buruma states: '*whereas after the war Germany lost its Nazi leaders, Japan lost only its admirals and generals*²⁹'. While

this is certainly true in the Japanese case, it is an inaccurate statement that Germany completely did away with the leadership that was present during the Nazi years. While the 'big names' were certainly purged by the Nuremberg Trial, various officials that held high positions during the National-Socialist period were able to return to office and public prominence. The return of some of Germany's World War II political elites, those with the memorable names of Albert Speer and Kurt Georg Kiesinger, paint a sombre picture. However, these were not the only people that had both been successful officials during the war period as part of the Nazi-regime and the new German state. With prominent examples right up to the 1980s, one can justifiably raise the question how 'new' this new German state actually was, as the continuity between the administration of Nazi-Germany and that of the Federal Republic was impressive.

Several high-profile names exist. Theodor Oberlaender who had supported the ethnic cleansing of the Polish population³⁰ and had worked in various governmental and army positions all over Eastern Europe would - despite strong criticism - become Minister for Refugees and Expellees in 1953. With his appointment came an influx of prior colleagues whom Oberlaender had worked with during the war all of which, including Oberlaender, went through the de-nazification process unscathed. Oberlaenders appointment, for all the criticism it provoked was a political move by Adenauer who was aware of his new Ministers past. Regardless of this knowledge, Adenauer utilized Oberlaender to secure support among the German populace, especially those that had been expelled from the eastern German territories³¹. Oberlaender would not be the only one of a large number of ex-Nazi officials to be

raised into a ministerial position post-war. Hans Globke, a co-author of the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 that revoked German citizenships from Jews and was the man behind the forced adoption of identification names for Jews (*Israel* for men, *Sarah* for women) would later become Director of the Federal Chancellery for a period of ten years (1953-1963)³². Again this appointment by Adenauer sparked criticism, but again this criticism died down relatively quickly.

Oberlaender and Globke were no exceptions. Next to Robert Wistrich's Book *Who's Who in Nazi Germany*, various studies have shown the extent in which previous Nazi-officials were able to bypass the de-nazification period with relative ease. A recent publication by the Historikerkommission (Historian Committee), *Das Amt und die Vergangenheit*, analyses the actions of the Foreign Ministry during and post-WWII shows in excruciating detail how easy some officials were able to resume their posts in the 1950s³³. Almost exclusively recruiting from old colleagues and friends, the foreign ministry covered up their own history and made sure its own ranks were exonerated. While the average German might have feared the *Fragebogen*, former colleagues in the German foreign ministry could rely on each other to overcome this brief inconvenience.

In all this, the case of Kiesinger is the most noteworthy. Kiesinger, having worked in the Propaganda Ministry under Joseph Goebbels as a head of a department, was not one with a clean record. The very fact of the matter that Kiesinger was able to win the Chancellery in 1966 (he remained in office until 1969) shows that post-war

Germany, just as Japan, still allowed officials that had played an active role in the Nazi-Government to rise high. While resistance against Kiesingers Chancellery was present and growing, the fact remains that he held office for nearly three years. What makes Kiesingers term so noteworthy however is not the simple fact that he had once worked in the Propaganda Ministry and then assumed the highest office in the new German state, but rather that his success marked a natural progression from Konrad Adenauer - who had been the mayor of Cologne and, while not actively working with the Nazi Government was also not actively working against it - over Ludwig Erhard - who had also been a governmental official during the war. It was only until returned exile Willy Brandt won the election in 1969 that Germany chose a Chancellor whose record was completely clean of the 1933 – 1945 period.

Kiesinger was no exception but it is the one that casts doubt over the progress Germany had made in overcoming their history internally up to 1969. If Germany were to elect a man like Kiesinger and largely accept his Chancellery, then how many others could have potentially returned to high office? As noteworthy as this is, Kiesinger's loss of the Chancellery in 1969 to Willy Brandt would also become the turning point and largely reflect the turning tide within German society. A new group of intellectuals (Gunter Grass, Heinrich Boell among others) had emerged, highly critical of Germanys Nazi past and prominent in public discussions on the subject. As well as that, a new generation of post-war students began to voice their opinions. A more detailed study on this will come at a later part. While Kiesinger would not be the last former Nazi official

to hold a public office, it would be him and his electoral defeat in 1969 that would mark the beginning of the end for the old guard.

All in all, Germany's leadership did not experience a drastic shakeup. While the Nuremberg Trials saw to it that the highest members of the Nazi period were eliminated from political life – either by death or life-imprisonment - the overall post-war German government showed continuity from its war time years. While this certainly allowed the new German government to reorganize more efficiently and enabled a relative smooth progression, it prevented a great many politicians and bureaucrats from being prosecuted for the role they played during the Nazi-regime. Without a doubt, many of these individuals would have been released in the event of a prosecution anyway, but the complete lack of any substantial and systematic judicial process not only mirrors the Japanese case, but it also proves that German elites had little to no interest in facing the Nazi period.

3.6. International Politics

It gives credit to the political astuteness of Adenauer that he understood that in order for Germany to once again play a larger role in international politics, it had to present itself repentant and make amends for what it had done. Prior to that however, it had to rely on the support of the allied powers and for that too, it had to distinguish itself fundamentally from Nazi-Germany and right the wrongs that had been done.

In large parts this was a PR campaign through and through. The western powers had *to believe* that something had changed. Whether it truly had or not, was

secondary. This was in accordance to Adenauers motto: *No experiments*. As much as German's needed stability domestically - and for that the past had to rest - as much did the international sphere require suitable proof that things had changed beyond the Rheine.

For this, Germany agreed to various reparation payments to countries, especially with Israel. There was both little choice in the matter as well as the dire need to 'get it over with'. Reparations would be substantial, ranging from handing over old *Wehrmacht* and *Luftwaffe* equipment – the Israeli air force would be partially equipped with variants of the German Bf 109s fighter planes³⁴ – and actual reparation payments. For example, with the 1952 Luxemburg Accords – Reparations Agreement between Israel and West Germany – it was agreed that Germany would pay a yearly sum of money – in total 3 billion Deutschmark (7 billion Euros) - to Israel over the coming fourteen years³⁵. To pass it in the German Bundestag, Adenauer had to rely on the Social Democrat opposition since his own party was largely divided on the issue.

3.6. Success of de-nazification

Within a few years after 1945, the mood in Germany had significantly shifted. Whereas in the few months following the surrender, German' were highly supportive of the trials, with time and increasing scope they began to view them less favourably and even openly objected to-, and actively worked against them. The de-nazification period had alienated German society as a whole and thus, unintended but by pure

effect, succeeded in establishing the total opposite than it was meant to. Instead of acting as a catalyst to address, repent for and overcome the past, it succeeded in establishing a strong opposition to just that.

Nevertheless, Nazi-Ideology, the justification of the Nazi period and open statements of support for the regime became a complete taboo in Germany, regardless of one's true opinions on the subject matter. This proved to play a crucial part in the decades after 1945 to facilitate an environment in which the past would not become glorified but actively prevented just that. This was no temporary knee-jerk reaction. Even by the end of the 1980s, this trend would still be running strong. Phillip Jenninger, President of the Bundestag since 1984, held a speech in the Bundestag on November 10th 1988, fifty years after the Reichskristallnacht that had marked German history forever. During this speech he attempted to explain the rationale behind those that had supported Nazi-Ideology and, in a neutral tone, explain what had happened during the years of 1933-1945. The speech effectively sealed his fate and politically he never recovered from it. He was not the only one. Any commentators who dared to address the Nationalist-Socialist period had no option but to continuously mention the grave crimes the German people engaged in during this time, to speak of atonement and call for never ending remembrance.

This 'taboo', although changing overtime, was one that stretched across German history since 1945 right into the present, so much so, that current attempts to subjectively differentiate the good – if there was any – from the bad is a strenuous and

often times controversial subject even in the 21st Century. The Nazi-period became the definition of something undesirable, something indescribable and something inexcusable. In such a one-sided setting, German politicians, the media, intellectuals and later society at large became hypersensitive to any comment relating to the Nazi-period that carried anything but distain. While open support for Nazi-Ideology became a no-go, so did one have to tread carefully when speaking of Germanys past. The case of Jenninger emphasizes just this. Germany, the media, intellectuals and international commentators would scrutinize any comment made on the Nazi period, so much so that, at times, individuals would become the target of harsh criticism not because they had openly supported or, more often, excused National-Socialism, but because one was perceived to have done so.

Yet, this taboo not only manifested itself by ensuring German's would refrain from voicing support for National Socialism. It was also a reaction to the horrors of war. Ordinary Germans simply did not want to speak of the war, so much so that efforts to hold a discussion on the subject matter would often be met with silence or scowls.

1963-1973 – TEN YEARS THAT CHANGED GERMANY

Germanys success in overcoming its own history did not lie in an overwhelming support for *Vergangenheitsbewaeltigung* (Overcoming ones past),

international pressure or the protests of the 1960s. Instead, while such factor might have assisted in overcoming history, they lacked in overall lasting impact. As detailed in the previous sections, the overwhelming majority of German did not care much for the crimes that had been committed by Nazi-Germany. Even twenty years later, with the emergence of a new anti-Nazi generation, this attitude prevailed. As well as that, international pressure on Germany had been present since 1945. During this time, German officials had become quite adept at appearing to make genuine efforts to make amends for Germanys past. This included payments to Israel, the returning of stolen property and official condemnations of those that openly stated their support for the Nazi past. Further and more profound efforts were rare and typically done by individuals. Behind the curtain, German society remained unremorseful and even Nazi-Officials often saw more support and recognition than those that had worked against the authorities during 1933-1945.

As argued in this part, Germanys success in overcoming history was the product of two important factors. First, a new era of Nazi prosecution paired with a waning of support for Nazi-officials and an increase in non-conservative politics allowed governmental change. Second, newfound interest in historical reconciliation amongst part of the electorate supported the reformation of foreign policy and a shift in national-security strategy for the ideological limitations of the early Cold War period.

4. A new generation comes of age

During the mid-1960s, Germany experienced a stark increase in the amount of politically active civil activists. Predominantly young, these people had never experienced life under Nazi rule (or had been too young to remember it) and had not played an active role in the reconstruction of the German economy, state and society. By the mid-1960s however, in response to Kurt Kiesinger's acceptance of the Chancellery, a strong counter-movement emerged in Germany. Although they would build the basis for the latter 1969 protests in Germany and also identify themselves with the anti-western imperialist movement and anti-Vietnam War protest in the United States, their primary concern had been the formation of the Grand Coalition between CDU and SPD, headed by Kiesinger, and the attempts to pass a new *Notstandsgesetz* (Emergency Law) allowing the government to restrict the media, rights and freedom of movement. The *Ausserparlamentarische Opposition* (Non-Parliamentary Opposition), while factually unsuccessful, set the basis of a new social movement that would shape German society and politics from the 1970s onwards.

Conservative politics dominated Germany until the late 1960s. Adenauer's authority remained unbroken over many years and he was not one to give up power easily. His last years in office were marked by an increasingly stubborn, self-righteous and authoritarian governing style. Having presented himself as a parenting figure of Germany since 1949, he gradually grew out of touch with his electorate. His landslide victory of 1957, at age 81, would both underline his success during the 1950s, but also mark the beginning of the end. With the help of its coalition partner the FDP (Liberals)

Adenauer's CDU won the 1961 election, but he would not govern the full four years as he had hoped. Instead, by 1963, he was forced to pass the Chancellery powers to Ludwig Erhard who managed to win the 1965 elections over a strengthening SPD only to pass power to Kiesinger in 1966³⁶. Having to resort to the SPD as a coalition partner, the CDU, governing Germany since 1949, was in crisis. Old power structures started to crumble, opposition parties began to remerge and the wind of change was blowing.

Changes on the political sphere were not the only one of the time. Society too underwent a fundamental transformation. While the 1950s predominantly saw a German populace refusing to face the war and its Nazi past, this would change drastically by the mid 1960s. Increasingly young Germans would delve into the Nazi period seeking to uncover what had happened and bring those individuals to justice who managed to escape prosecution during the 1940s and 50s. Initially, this was not a campaign that many Germans supported. In fact, mirroring the early years, parts of German society strongly opposed looking at the Nazi period in any more detail. Trouble was that those that did, had no inclination of being dissuaded from doing so. A young, vibrant, idealistic and sometimes mislead generation had emerged. Now of age and politically (or at least ideologically) active, they formed the spearhead that would rip open the carefully sewed up past. This generation has seen a lot of literature over the years as throughout Europe such movements became visible. While the culture of denouncing Nazis (or alleged Nazis) and protesting for the overcoming of history was a primarily German element in the 1969 protests, the year saw widespread student movements against the established order in the western world.

Some authors have attributed the fact that Germany was able to overcome its Nazi past to the emergence of this generation. There is some truth in that. The new generation was one highly critical of the past and of their parent's generation. For this generation, it became inexplicable how anyone could have supported the Nazi party and after that, failed to oppose Nazi rule once it began to take shape. This movement saw a wide variety of activists, from self-styled communists waving Mao's Red Book or shouting '*Ho-Ho-Ho-Chi Minh*' in the streets, over to pacifist, non-conformists and civil activists. Faced with protests that went beyond the previously encountered, German politicians and the police force failed to react appropriately. While the protests themselves were not unilaterally supported by Germans, the police force in particular caused major damage to public opinion by violently breaking up peaceful, albeit loud and persistent demonstrations. Numerous cases of police violence became documented in the media and the shooting of two students served to underline the perception of many students that the Federal Republic was nothing but a police-, if not Nazi state in disguise.

Of course factually it wasn't. But the students of the 1960s had plenty of reason to believe so. In a society showing strong ideological fragmentation between a youth demanding major political/ ideological and societal change and an older generation seeking to uphold the status quo, one was quick to judge. Both sides saw plenty of reasons to distrust each other, which would fuel the ever-deteriorating order. The supporters of the 1969 protests were mainly but not exclusively students, symbolizing the propagation of ideas and principles a new wave of civil activists had

set a few years before but in a more standardized, simplified and radical form. Some saw the Federal Republic as little more than a continuation of Nazi-Germany, something they would often and loudly lament. Others felt that the just defeat of Germany had been undone by the failure to punish those that were responsible for mass killings and the planning and logistics thereof. The fact that many prominent politicians and businessmen were able to exonerate themselves with ease and resume their careers after the war gave weight to this notion and helped to create the stigma of a Nazi-Ideology supporting political elite.

As we shall see later on, the protests had little to no impact on facilitating a renewed emphasis on overcoming Germany's past. For that they failed to influence policy making. For that the movement was too fragmented, too radical and too ambitious. Eventually, after losing public appeal, popular support and Germany had undergone major changes, nothing but a small terrorist group the *Rote Arme Fraktion* (RAF – Red Army Faction) remained of the movement that had crippled German society.

4.1. Right Wing Politics Post World War II

Right leaning conservatism remained a potent force during the 1950s to 1960s, also because of the high influx of very traditionally minded forcefully deported Germans from the Eastern Territories. Uniting under the *BHE - Bund der Heimvertriebenen und Entrechteten (League of Expellees and Deprived of Rights)* in 1950, headed by Theodor Oberlander from 1954 onwards, they sought to influence

policymaking. Although successful as a small political party in the 1950s, the BHE was also able to attain large electoral support in early state elections such as in 1950 when it won 23,4 per cent of the popular vote in Schleswig Holstein which harboured many expelled Germans. Overall, in 1953 the BHE won 5.9 per cent of the general election, accounting for 27 seats in the Bundestag³⁷. Conservative and with a traditional mind-set, its cooperation in a Coalition with the Adenauer CDU was guaranteed. As mentioned before, Adenauer moved quickly to guarantee the support of the new arrivals from the East.

While cooperating with the CDU, the BHE never let go of its two main party principles: *Lebensrecht im Westen (Right of living in the West)* and *Heimatrecht im Osten (Right to homeland in the East)*. This, shaped with anti-communist thought, anti-Semitism (Hitler had enjoyed great electoral success in the East) and a zealous interest in keeping Germany German, marked the BHE out as one of the first political parties that catered especially for those that had supported the Nazi-regime. Waldemar Kraft, the groups first Leader, recognised this by saying that the BHE would be a party also of 'ex-Nazi' although he went on to stress that these individuals no longer remained 'Nazi'³⁸. The groups' usage of language, publicity stunts and posters reflected these ideas and resembled the posters of the NS-regime.³⁹ Having failed to secure more than 5 per cent in the 1957 elections, the group was slowly falling into obscurity. Having fused with the *Deutschen Partei (DP)*, another right-leaning German party, to form the *Gesamtdeutsche Partei (GDP)*, in 1961. Having ceased to exist in name, by the mid-

1960s, its influence was weakening with the passing of the older generations. However, another more active right wing group was beginning to emerge.

Just as the left had radicalized over the 1968-1969 period, so had a worrying trend emerged between 1965-1968. Founded in 1964, the NPD (*National-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands*) became the new 'Nazi' party of Germany. Whereas most rightwing movements such as the BHE had taken great care in hiding any trace of National-Socialist support within its ranks, the NPD was upfront about its ideas. In this, it was not the first party to do so. The *Deutsche Reichspartei* – DRP (*German Reich Party*), founded in 1950 had already been engaged in high profile anti-Semitic acts. In 1959, two of its supporters drew Swastikas and slogans ('*Down with the Jews! Into the gas chambers!*') on to the Cologne Synagogue. Their act encouraged others. Within four weeks, German authorities recorded over 470 instances in which far-right leaning individuals targeted Jewish property. The DRP was quick to distance itself from the perpetrators but its fate was sealed. With its political image tarnished, it is dissolved in 1965⁴⁰.

The NDP benefited. Having an influx of both DRP and GDP members and supporters, the NDP portrayed itself as daring, radical and revisionist. While in the 1965 general election it only gained 2 per cent of the overall vote, conservative voter dissatisfaction with the economy (oil shock), the grand coalition and the young generation allowed it to successfully enter the Hessian and Swabian Diet in 1966 and 1968 respectively. When it failed in 1969 to enter the Bundestag, the NPD faltered

failing to gain even a single per cent in the next election⁴¹. Yet, while the overall impact of the NPD would ultimately be limited, it and the 1968-1968 protests served as a reminder that in times of crisis, extreme ideologies were well able to arouse support among voters.

4.2. The Impact of the Auschwitz Trials of 1963-1968

In 1958, the *Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltung zur Aufklaerung von NS Verbrechen* (Central Office for the Clearing-Up of Nazi Crimes) was inaugurated in Ludwigsburg/ Germany. Finding a suitable location had been difficult and even though one had finally found a location, the office quickly found itself exposed to violent attacks⁴². Regardless of the initial hatred towards it, with the research of the Ludwigsburger Office, Germany experienced a new wave of Nazi prosecutions. Uncovering various officials that had resumed their work post-1945, the office systematically expanded its scope. By 1967, working on 600 difference cases, it had a staff of 121 and employed 49 state prosecutors and judges⁴³. One of its major achievements and a landmark development in itself was the 1963 – 1968 Auschwitz prosecution.

During this period, three separate trials prosecuted 28 officials, SS-members, doctors and concentration camp workers. The first and largest trial lasted just under two years, from the December 1963 to a two-day verdict announcement period in August 1965. Focusing on 22 cases (accused), the trial with ended with the acquittal of three accused, two additional due to health related discharges and 17 sentences, of

which 16 were carried out. Punishment ranged from several years to lifelong prison sentences. The second session, ran from the December 1965 to September 1966 and ended in the prosecution of three out of three accused. The third and last session occurred between August 1967 to June 1968 seeing two out of three accused sentenced to lifelong prison sentences. While the number of accused pales in comparison to the overall number of staff that worked and murdered in the Nazi concentration camps, the trial was a massive undertaking with the first one alone calling upon 350 different witnesses, holding 183 sessions, amassing 124 volumes of court records and a three month period to complete the closing documents⁴⁴.

Nominally charging individuals with the murder and/ or assistance to murder of innumerable political and ethnic victims, the prosecution attracted the attention of the media and thus the wider German society. With the uncovering of evidence and the testimony of victims, the trial in itself served as an educational tool. It was the first time that Germans were confronted consistently with the extent of the Nazis political and ethnic purge. Various newspapers reported on the trials, initially with some reservation but eventually daily⁴⁵. The overwhelming amount of evidence not only shocked Germans as a whole, but it also prevented vocal support for the accused⁴⁶.

By the end of the trials, up to 20,000 spectators would have experienced the prosecution first hand by attending one of the countless sessions. Many would return multiple times and even schools and universities sent their students to sit in the courtroom and observe the trial⁴⁷. By 1965, newspapers alone had covered the trial so

extensively that the trial had become impossible to miss. *Die Welt*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, and the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, all major German newspapers, published a total of 933 articles dedicated to the trial⁴⁸. In 1964, two study groups surveyed the German population hoping to uncover the overall impact of the trial. The German Institute for Public Polling (*Deutsches Institut fuer Volksumfragen*) concluded in June 1964 that 40 per cent of its respondents did not keep up to date on the Auschwitz trials via newspapers, television or radio⁴⁹. A similar study conducted a month later by the Institute of Social science (*Institut fuer angewandte Sozialwissenschaften*) showed that 83 per cent had heard of the trial and 42 per cent were able to name the city in which it took place (Frankfurt am Main)⁵⁰.

While not necessarily evidence of an increase in public awareness (The poll of June 1964 specified whether the respondent regularly informed himself via the media, not if they knew about it at all), the survey of July shows that the public was very much aware that something was in the works, although it might not have been informed in depth.

What is striking is the fact that German opinion on trials regarding the crimes of the National Socialist regime fluctuated. While the trials certainly induced a sense of disgusted fascination among Germans that followed the trial and as such were able to more educate the German people on the crimes that had been committed, they were unable to instil a sense of guilt among all levels of society. On the contrary, the inhumane crimes and the mountain of evidence succeeded only in distancing the few

accused even more from society, thus building a wall between the German people and 'the few' that had committed mass murder. The trials succeeded in captivating the German audience, but little more. In 1963, 54 per cent of Germans were against any further prosecution and felt that it was time end the whole affair (*einen Schlusstrich ziehen*)⁵¹. This rose slightly to 57 per cent by 1965, the year the first round of trials ended. Considering the percentage of people that had officially opposed any further trials in 1958 (34 per cent). This was a marked increase. Most notably however is 1966, in which a stark decrease from the previous highpoint of 57 per cent was recorded: 44 per cent⁵².

This fluctuation can be attributed to several factors. Prior to 1960, and with exception of the Nuremberg Trials, media coverage of trials was less frequent and the whole process failed to influence public discussion. Later, Adolf Eichmann prosecution of 1961 in Israel (Eichmann, ex-SS Obersturmbandfuehrer by help of the Church had fled into Argentinian exile in 1950 and captured by Mossad in 1960 after Fritz Bauer, the driving force behind the Auschwitz Trial passed along information to Israel because he didn't trust the German authorities. He was forcefully brought to Israel, tried over his involvement in the management of Nazi concentration camps and executed in 1962) had been of huge interest to the German public of which 95 per cent indicated that they had followed the trial⁵³. Parts of his trial would also be added to the school curriculum⁵⁴.

The prosecution of Germans abroad (this had happened before in various countries such as France and Poland) was generally not met with positive reception. It is thus no surprise that by 1963, a year after Eichmann's execution, over half of Germans felt that history should rest⁵⁵. Likewise, the high point of 1965 can be associated with the end of the Auschwitz trials. To many Germans the guilty verdicts for the majority of accused must have felt as *enough* to finally close the chapter on the Nazi years. The remarkable drop to 44 per cent a year later though would indicate that the overall resistance to further trials was not set in stone. The media never paid as much attention to the second Auschwitz trial of 1965 to 1966 yet the previous years had seen a marked increase in public and political discussion on the matter. No longer did the media report of a single trial, but it reported, commented and influenced political and public debates on the matter of collective guilt, overcoming history and the special responsibility of Germany and the Germans.

Indeed, the mid-1960s saw a stark divide within Germany between those that wanted to press ahead with the idea of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and those eager to *draw a line under the past*, thus ending the whole debate. This divide was also a political one, with the Social Democrats (SPD) largely in favour of accepting responsibility for the Nazi period and the Christian Democrats (CDU) that argued guilt was restricted to a few, already punished individuals. It was an open and heated debate that ultimately ran in favour of the Social Democrats simply because the existence of the discussion itself prevented the disappearance of the historical issue from the public eye.

The *Verjaehrungsdebatte* (Debate on the extension of the limitation period of crimes committed by the Nazi-regime) of 1965 portrays this well. Speakers from the SPD and CDU would go head to head on historical issues and present varying interpretations and convictions about how to address Germany's past. For example, Adolf Arndt (SPD) commented that after the true face of the Nazi regime had appeared the lack of any active resistance – also by him - obliged (*'verpflichtet'*) all Germans to overcome rather than forget their past and that it was a heritage all Germans shared. On the other hand, Rainer Narzel of the CDU argued that CDU the German people were not collectively guilty, and that the CDU had *'been saying this for twenty years and would continue to do so'*⁵⁶. This debate, running for three days (10th March – 13th March 1965) eventually saw a postponement of the debate by four years. In 1969 the extension period increased to ten years and ultimately terminated completely.

Twenty years after the end of the war the process of coming to terms with Germany's past had only just begun, even if Ludwig Erhard had told Germans in 1965 that *'The post-war period is over'*⁵⁷. Conservative voices were overall on the decline, also because within twenty years a large portion had died and was thus eliminated from the public debate which was more and more shifting towards the young. As a witness in the Auschwitz Trials Hildegard Bischoff, widow of Karl Bischoff who had overseen the construction of the crematoriums in Auschwitz, emerged evasive and maintained that she knew little if nothing about the killing even though she had lived in close proximity to the camp. Carl Krauch of I.G. Farben that had used slave labour in its factories next to Auschwitz maintained that no distinction was made between German

workers and internees. When pressed on the question of sick prisoners, he commented that such cases would either be sent to the camp hospital or the main complex of Auschwitz. In reality, or as Krauch implied when he mentioned Auschwitz, evidence during the trial proved that sick or injured workers would be killed relatively quickly⁵⁸. Students that had followed the trials found, with notable exceptions (some students felt that twenty years after the war, it was too late to talk about it anymore), such ambivalence was outrageous⁵⁹.

The social-liberal era was beginning to take shape. Educational trips to concentration camps became part of the school curriculum, exhibitions of the Holocaust opened and memorials commemorating the Jewish victims appeared around Germany. The concentration camp of Dachau itself was renovated and designated a memorial site even though parts of the camp were demolished⁶⁰. At the same time, resistance to the 'new generation' was intensifying. The 1968 – 1969 protests had been an extreme manifestation of some of the anger that had build up among the young in Germany. While losing steam by the end of 1968 and utterly collapsing by 1969, it served as a lesson to the young that political and social change could not be achieved via sit-ins, protests and violence alone. Instead, society had to be reformed from within and political activism rose sharply. Initially, this didn't facilitate an increase in electoral turnout in 1969 over 1965 (Electoral turnout: 1965 - 86.8%, 1969 – 86.7%). Due to the Grand Coalition, both major parties had lost the trust of the young but in 1969, the CDU lost votes while the SPD managed to gain. The liberals of the FDP lost

too, especially from their conservative voters and received 40 per cent less votes in 1969⁶¹.

The 1969 election marked the end of the Grand Coalition. Kiesinger had been a controversial figure, not simply because the CDU was hard pressed to portray the stability of the Adenauer era but because of his Nazi past. For some Germans, the fact that Kiesinger had been able to become Chancellor was unacceptable. A year before the 1969 general election this frustration boiled over. Beate Klarsfeld, whose French husband's family had been murdered in the concentration camps, confronted Kiesinger on the CDU Party conference. After publically slapping him in the face, she was restrained and dragged away. Commentators at the time cynically remarked that this event was the only moment the CDU wholeheartedly supported Kiesinger⁶².

The CDU/CSU lost the 1969 election, but it was not a major victory for the SPD. On the contrary, the CDU received more votes than the Social Democrats but failed to win the absolute majority. The SPD gained three per cent over the 1965 election but remained three per cent behind the CDU. The FDP, although having suffered greatly due to its liberal shift, fell to 5.8 per cent⁶³. Yet, the FDP was no longer willing to join with the Christian Democrats, also because it had lost nearly all its conservative voices the year before⁶⁴. The SPD under Willy Brandt and the FDP under Walter Scheel joined forces. On the 21st of October 1969, parliamentarians elected Willy Brandt as Chancellor by a two-vote majority⁶⁵. A consensus looks different but the SPD had managed to end the long period of CDU governance, also with the help of

a liberal FDP. While Germany remained divided on the issue of history and guilt, the debate continued and indeed resurfaced in the 1960s. By that time, those that had been dissatisfied with the CDU thus far largely supported the SPD that had struggled to extend its influence past the working classes during the 1950s⁶⁶. On this wave of political change would come a drastic change in Germanys foreign policy that facilitated reconciliation.

4.3. Political developments

With Brandt Germany experienced a major governmental shift. While considered weak on domestic policy by his critics, he understood Germanys precarious position in the heart of Europe. During the years of the Great Coalition, he used his position as foreign minister to test the waters for his envisioned Ostpolitik but understood that the envisioned change in foreign affairs could only be feasible if the CDU lost power. At the same time, together with championed a new President Gustav Heinemann championed a new political line of remembrance. In 1970, both delivered a speech to the Bundestag in which they broke from the status quo by proclaiming that World War II and Nazi rule had been the true deliverer of horror, and not the ‘defeat’ of 1945 and that any German suffering was due to these crimes, not due to aggression from abroad.⁶⁷

Willy Brandt himself was often styled, especially by the time his success of Ostpolitik became evident as having broken from conventional wisdom due to his own convictions rather than because he caught on to electoral politics and thus merely

reflected 'the other half' of Germany that wanted to engage with its past. While his motivations alone would merit discussion and research, this paper will not do so. Ultimately the motivation of Brandt to depart from the previous governmental line, whether it had been done for electoral success, ideological differences or based upon his own beliefs, brought about a new beginning. Had it been done for power, so would it reflect poorly on Brandt but would not discredit the German effort as a whole. Had it been done out of principle, so would it reflect positively on Brandt but at the same time not make the German effort any greater than it had been.

4.3.1 Germany by 1969

By 1969, the relations between the FRG and the east were less than poor. In fact, official relations between the two German states were virtually non-existent. Still following the maxims of the Adenauer period that strongly supported the ideological divide between the west and communism, German foreign policy became out-dated. By the mid-1960s, West Germany had managed to bind itself and its western neighbours into a communal framework. This had not been achieved with ease but the efforts paid off and one had to come to mutual agreements with countries such as France, Italy and the United Kingdom, Germany was now secure in the West. During the Adenauer years and even later under Erhard and Kiesinger, West and East German cooperation or dialogue was rare. With both the governments of the FRG and the GDR claiming to represent the German nation in its entirety, room for mutual official recognition and cooperation was nigh impossible. Under the Hallstein Doctrine, FRG officials even went as far as cutting diplomatic links between West Germany and nations that entered

into diplomatic contact with the GDR. Although mainly hindering West German interests, the Hallstein Doctrine is a potent example of how serious the split between the FRG and GDR was during the 1950 and 1960s.

The Hallstein Doctrine restricted Germany more than it furthered its goals but years of conservative rule in Bonn had enforced such a one-dimensional vision. By the mid 1960s, criticism of the Hallstein Doctrine was widespread and even existed in the United States. Not only did it prevent a dialogue between West and East Germany, but it also sabotaged the already lukewarm attempts to build up relations with several eastern European countries. Even after 1962 it took Germany another few years and governmental changes to finally cut loose its excess baggage.

In this, Willy Brandt and the SPD/FDP (although it too had proponents of the existing status quo and Brandt himself had stated in the early 1960s that official recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line would be treacherous⁶⁸) were instrumental. After having succeeded Kiesinger as Chancellor, Brandt promised reform. Next to social and political reforms such as an expansion of social welfare, modernization of education, fairer wealth distribution and supporting women's rights, he also enabled young German's to more actively engage in politics. Naturally this increased his popularity among the students and young adults but also served to encourage political activism in Germany, something that the older generations clearly lacked. The voting age was lowered to 18 years from 21, and one was able to run for political office by the age of 21 instead of 25.⁶⁹

4.3.2 Historical Reconciliation as National Security Strategy

Although he lacked strength in domestic policy, the Brandt administration fundamentally changed Germany's position in Europe. In this it is often regarded as groundbreaking. There is certainly some truth in that. At the same time however, Brandt's Ostpolitik was not exactly revolutionary. Its main difference to the conservative foreign policy lay in the fact that it accepted reality instead of embracing the increasingly out-dated ideological West-East division. Proponents of Ostpolitik saw cooperation with the East as a stabilizing factor able to secure Germany's present and future. In this, they differentiated strongly from those that had and continued to perceive the East as an ideological menace that had to be obstructed at every juncture. The fact that a thawing of relations could in fact benefit Germany, even as a free-market capitalist nation, was one that did not occur to the older conservative structures of the CDU.

Interestingly, Ostpolitik mirrored parts of Bismarck's Realpolitik. Whether this was by design or coincidence and whether the ideas of Bismarck influenced Brandt is unknown. Even if it had, it would have been unlikely to be used as a primary example to arouse support for the new West-German foreign policy direction. Even after 1972 when the first accomplishments of Germany's new direction became clear the mainstream CDU politicians continued on their previous course. While the CDU also saw internal division on this, its strong conservative majority continued to criticize the SPD's foreign policy, champion conservative German values, utilize anti-communist fear propaganda and rely on the older generations that made up the bulk of its electoral

support. In this, the CDU failed to read the signs of the time but it could still rely on stark support for the time being. This was reflected in the 1972 election that, although seeing a SPD victory, placed the CDU at 45 per cent of the popular vote. The CDU's perspective on foreign policy and its opposition to the SPD's attempts at *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* thus continued to arouse support of just under half of the German population of the time.

The CDU, with its conservative mindset was unable to wrestle back control over the Bundestag. Likewise, it was unable to quench public debate on Germany's Nazi past. The blind reliance on Adenauer's formula 'no-experiments' meant that the CDU handicapped itself with limited vision and the fear of losing a large proportion of its voters. In this, one could make the argument that it was a blessing for Germany that the CDU remained opposed to Ostpolitik not simply for the sake of Democracy but because by doing so it kept conservative voters within its bounds, outside the influence of smaller and more radical parties. As we will see, a revival of National-Socialist thought via a new political party, the NPD, was not out of the question but in fact became reality. Had the CDU undergone a similar transformation as the FDP which lost nearly half of its voters after its liberal and conservative members clashed prior to the 1969 election, then a liberal change of course of the CDU might very well have prompted a stark support for more radical ideologies.

Nevertheless, the CDU's attitude towards the East relied on an out-dated concept. Its perspectives on communism might have been right in parts; especially in

saying that communism facilitated a state of fake equality and de-facto dictatorship thus calling for a needed to be resisted. The problem lay in the CDU's overzealous approach that, at times, even led to it calling the SPD communist-collaborators. This was of course far from the truth. Whereas the SPD did in fact have a small internal faction that was sympathetic to the Soviet Union, overall this was kept in check by those that saw communism as a perversion of the socialist ideal. Still, the CDU remained opposed to any fundamental change in foreign policy.

A look at a map will reveal the danger of such a dogma. Germany's geographical position between the east and west of Europe had always and continued to be, especially during the Cold War, a perilous one. Any war between the east and west was sure to play out on European soil or, more accurately, on German soil. Since 1871, unified Germany feared such a possibility and dreaded a two-front war. Much of Bismarckian foreign policy was focused on securing Germany by maintaining good relations with all neighbouring countries and via international alliances as well as the prevention of a strengthened France and a Franco-Russian alliance. While both played little role in the 1960s and 1970s, Germany was being left behind in international relations. After the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, relations between the west and east thawed. Detente began to stabilize international relations as both sides cautiously approached each other. The hard division into two camps was beginning to soften yet by 1969, Germany had failed to catch on.

Nominally, good relations with the east would be of benefit to Germany. Not only would this stabilize the German-to-German politics, at the price of accepting the existence and legitimacy of the East German government, but also allow Germany to play a wider role in European politics and, crucially, lower its reliance on other western states. Distrust of Germany was high in the east, and the relations between both Germanises did not benefit either. On the contrary, the continued suspicion and no-contact attitude facilitated a condition in which both sides would be hard pressed to work out urgent matters or prevent minor incidents at the borders to escalate into something much more horrific.

To allow for such change, two barriers had to be broken down. The first one, domestic political resistance had been overcome with the electoral defeat of the CDU. Albeit a close victory, the SPD and FDP were well able to implement their vision of foreign policy. At this point the second barrier had to be overcome: Distrust of Germany in the East (esp. Poland) and the internal reluctance to accept responsibility for crimes committed during the Nazi period. With political and social change the resistance to prevent a historical debate was weakening but not completely eliminated. Large parts of the German population continued, as the Auschwitz trials and the support of the CDU showed, to oppose this debate. Distrust of Germany abroad was also substantial. The Nazi period had ensured that Germanys reputation in the east was next to zero. Poland vividly remembered German occupation, the deportation of Jews as well as the Warsaw Ghetto (and its crushed uprising). Other nations, some of whom had joined Nazi-Germanys' in their attack against the Soviet Union also remembered

the German occupation and its racist attitude towards the Slavic population. To break the image of the murdering, raping and destructive German would be a costly affair.

4.3.3 East and West Germany

While the SPD had also been a strong critic of the East German SED and had openly protested against the legitimacy of the SED rule, Willy Brandts' cabinet was presented with a choice: continue the present non-cooperation with the East or face reality, recognise the Eastern government and begin a process of historical reconciliation. In 1970, Willy Brandt visited East Germany briefly and was welcomed, much to the embarrassment of Eastern authorities, by a euphoric crowd. The talks remained largely symbolic but thawed the ice. Various accords would follow until 1972 when East and West Germany finally accepted the sovereignty of its counterpart thus setting the basis for future relations.

4.4. Territory and Ostpolitik

As much as the rapprochement between the two Germanys marked a stern departure from the Hallstein Doctrine, it never furthered any discussion on historical matters. Yet, even before West Germany recognised the GDR it had made substantial efforts to recognise, amend and remember its past.

When Willy Brandt visited Poland in 1970 much was on the table. The trip was an historic one as much as it was the trial for Brandts Ostpolitik. A successful trip could go a long way in establishing new relations between Germany and Eastern Europe while failure would open up Brandt to attacks by conservatives and the CDU

opposition. After a small exchange concerning trade related matters in 1963, Poland insisted on an agreement over territorial matters, more accurately the German acceptance of the Oder Neisse Line, before any additional talks would be held. Holding introductory talks in February 1970, the German delegation under Brandt met their counterpart early November of the same year. Although having to formally accept the loss of what was essentially a quarter of Germanys Territory prior to the outbreak of hostilities in 1939, the short visit went along smoothly. Ultimately, this would come to as no surprise. Poland was out to gain, if not by a normalization of its relationship with Germany then by having succeeded in eliminating its claim on the now Polish territories. A ratification of the treaty was thus in Polish interest. This interests aligned with those of Germanys, who saw in the treaty an opportunity to bridge the gap between it and the East.

Brandts acceptance of the Oder-Neisse Line was a risk. It had been 25 years since Germany lost World War Two and the German public was divided on the subject. Should the territorial concession bring forth no betterment in relations to the East then Brandt would have gambled off a large part of German territory essentially bringing down the concept of his *Ostpolitik* with it. Brandts politics and chancellery thus relied on the early success of his foreign policy. Committed, Brandt accepted the Oder Neisse as the official border between Germany (West and East) and Poland and thus allowed for the normalization of relations between the two countries.

While now championing it as a required concession due to historical matters (Brandt commented that nothing would be lost that had not already been lost) even the Socialist Opposition in Germany had initially be against recognition of the Oder-Niesse Line. The recognition itself deeply divided Germany and German. Especially those that had been driven out of the old German territories felt betrayed. Germans also proved critical of Brandts other actions on the day of the signing. Having laid a wreath of flowers before the Warsaw Ghetto memorial Brandt sunk to his knees. With the now famous '*Kniefall*' (kneeling), he would ask for forgiveness from the victim of Nazi Germany. Commenting on the *Kniefall* many years later, Brandt said:

*'I felt that I had to make a gesture to ask and beg - even as one who had not been one of the staunch supporters of Hitler and his politics - for forgiveness for my people – even pray that we would be forgiven for what we had done.'*⁷⁰

As highly controversial as the Oder Neisse Line acceptance was, the *Kniefall* would stir the emotions of many Germans. Many newspapers such as *Die Zeit* pictured Brandt kneeling on their cover⁷¹. Among those that supported historical reconciliation, Brandt earned much applause.⁷² Others saw him as a traitor who had not only degraded Germany but also sold it of to his communist co-conspirators. The popular *SPIEGEL* magazine asked: '*Was Brandt allowed to kneel?*'. 48 per cent of Germans did not think. Protests against Brandt emerged across Germany, some resorting to violence and slogans that were dangerously close to what one had heard during the Nazi period⁷³,

which also resulted in the movement losing a lot of its credibility and support in Germany.

Germans remained doubtful whether the Warsaw Accords would improve relations. Overall only 44 per cent believed that German – Polish relations would improve and that one would forgive each other. 36 per cent disagreed. Once again however, time was with those that hoped for a positive change, as this was a belief widely held by the young generation up to 44 year olds. The older, more conservative generations predominately believed that the recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line would do nothing to improve relations.⁷⁴

Political opposition emerged too. Even after Brandts reception of the Peace Nobel Price in 1971, right leaning conservative voices failed to realise the substantial value of Brandts short moment of humility. The CDU/CSU remained strongly opposed to the accord.⁷⁵ In 1972, a vote of no confidence was called. Brandt remained in office, barely, by two votes. Later, it would emerge that two CDU parliamentarians had been bribed by East Germany to not vote against Brandt.⁷⁶ 1972 also proved that Germans increasingly supported Brandts politics. In the general elections of 1972, with a record electoral outcome of 91.1 per cent,⁷⁷ the SPD gained 46 per cent of the vote, the FDP recovered to 8 per cent and together thus comfortably won over the CDU/CSUs 45 per cent (Table 1). Many young SPD and FDP voters were those that had been part of the 1968-1969 protests, now more mature and willing to actively influence policymaking politically rather than attempting to enforce it by violence.⁷⁸

Polish opinion about Germany improved substantially, also because the *Kniefall* was the last thing the Poles had expected. Author Lew Kopelew stated in 1977 that Brandts act had purged his hatred for Germany and Germans.⁷⁹ Marcel Reich Ranicki, survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and later critically acclaimed German literature and media critic commented that it was Brandts act that had given him the long awaited confirmation that it had been appropriate to preserve his German nationality. Marek Edelman, likewise survivor of the Ghetto, identifies the *Kniefall* as the moment that allowed him to once again trust Germans.⁸⁰

In Germany too, people would increasingly realise the merits of Brandt actions. Brandts electoral victory in 1972 proved to the world that Germans supported his politics of reconciliation. A young, vibrant Germany had emerged. Whereas 1954 Germany shocked the world by winning the world cup in Bern/Switzerland and singing the *Horst-Wessel Lied* (Anthem of Nazi Germany) after its victory against the Ukraine,⁸¹ the world cup in Germany in 1974 broadcasted a modern Germany to the world. From 1969 to 1972 the amount of Germans supporting the Oder-Neisse Line jumped from 48 per cent to 62 per cent. By 1990, it stood at 70 per cent.⁸²

CONCLUSION

German *Vergangenheitsbewaeltigung* was not easy and commentators using Germany as an example should remember this. For more than twenty years,

conservative elements in Germany succeeded in obstructing any potential progress that could be made. These conservative elements weakened over time, as one generation passed to the other but as we have seen the debate only resurfaced during the 1960s. It is thus not very surprising that historical reconciliation only took off during the 1970s.

Politicians certainly played a key role in preventing Germany to overcome its history sooner but this reflects upon society as a whole. If the majority of Germans had demanded an immediate discussion, one would most likely have occurred. As we have seen, this did not happen. Germans had pushed away the painful discussions surrounding guilt, crimes against humanity and the Holocaust as a whole. As society began to show increased support for historical reconciliation, so to did it more strongly appear in politics even allowing the Social Democrats to topple the CDU. The initial accomplishments of Ostpolitik, along with international recognition for German reconciliation efforts emphasized the success of the '*new Germany*'. When the Social Democrats won the 1972 elections, it also served as an confirmation of the desire by an increasing number of Germans to come clean and take responsibility for Germanys past.

It is here that I argue that Germany took a unique and distinct path. While at this point one could certainly have expected, similar to the eventual case of Japan, for everything to return to business as usual, Germany would suddenly emerge as a nation that would undergo a revolution in its very core. It would be during the late years of the 1960s to the 1970s that a new discussion would emerge, pain strikingly combing

through German society. Over the years this attitude would shape and became part of the German mind-set. Although for a just cause, it would have to slowly and painfully weave itself into the German psyche, facing both active and passive resistance along the way. In doing so, it played one of the most defining roles in helping Germany overcome the Nazi period, shape the remembrance and reconciliation with neighbouring states and the Jewish people.

Of particular interest is that Germany adopted the taboo on anything remotely supportive of Nazism so readily. Set out by the Occupation force to completely eliminate Nazi Ideology, this taboo prevented a political resurfacing of National Socialism for over twenty years. As well as that, conservative voices managed to contain but never fully succeed in eliminating attempts to bring Germany's responsibility to the forefront of the public debate. This prevented German society from completely forgetting about its Nazi past and influence the perspective of the young post-war generation. Splitting Germany virtually in half on matters of historical reconciliation, the dialogue in society eventually allowed a Social liberal government to topple the conservative government and thus accelerate a reformation of foreign policy.

APPENDIX

Tables and Graphs:

Table 1⁸³: General Election 1949

Bundesergebnis

Gegenstand der Nachweisung	Stimmen		Zahl der Sitze einschl. Berliner Abgeordnete
	Anzahl	%	
Wahlberechtigte	31 207 620	x	x
Wähler ¹⁾	24 495 614	78,5	x
Ungültig	763 216	3,1	x
Gültig	23 732 398	x	x
SPD	6 934 975	29,2	136
CDU	5 978 636	25,2	117
FDP	2 829 920	11,9	53
CSU	1 380 448	5,8	24
Sonstige	6 608 419	27,8	80
davon:			
KPD	1 361 706	5,7	15
Parteilose	1 141 647	4,8	3
BP	986 478	4,2	17
DP	939 934	4,0	17
Zentrum	727 505	3,1	10
WAV	681 888	2,9	12
DKP/DRP	429 031	1,8	5
RSF	216 749	0,9	–
SSW	75 388	0,3	1
EVD	26 162	0,1	–
RWVP	21 931	0,1	–

*)1949 hatte jeder Wähler nur eine Stimme. – 1) % = Wahlbeteiligung.

Table 2⁸⁴: General Election 1953

Bundesergebnis					
Gegenstand der Nachweisung	Erststimmen		Zweitstimmen		Zahl der Sitze einschl. Berliner Abgeordnete
	Anzahl	%	Anzahl	%	
Wahlberechtigte	33 120 940	x	33 120 940	x	x
Wähler ¹⁾	28 479 550	86,0	28 479 550	86,0	x
Ungültig	959 790	3,4	928 278	3,3	x
Gültig	27 519 760	x	27 551 272	x	x
CDU	9 577 659	34,8	10 016 594	36,4	197
SPD	8 131 257	29,5	7 944 943	28,8	162
FDP	2 967 566	10,8	2 629 163	9,5	53
CSU	2 450 286	8,9	2 427 387	8,8	52
GB/BHE	1 613 215	5,9	1 616 953	5,9	27
Sonstige	2 779 777	10,1	2 916 232	10,6	18
davon:					
BP	399 070	1,5	465 641	1,7	–
DP	1 073 031	3,9	896 128	3,3	15
DRP	204 725	0,7	295 739	1,1	–
Zentrum	55 835	0,2	217 078	0,8	3
GVP	286 465	1,0	318 475	1,2	–
KPD	611 317	2,2	607 860	2,2	–
DNS	78 356	0,3	70 726	0,3	–
SSW	44 339	0,2	44 585	0,2	–
PdgD	654	0,0	–	–	–
SHLP	6 269	0,0	–	–	–
VU	2 531	0,0	–	–	–
Wählergruppen/ Einzelbewerber	17 185	0,1	–	–	–

1) % = Wahlbeteiligung.

Table 3⁸⁵: General Election 1957

Gegenstand der Nachweisung	Erststimmen		Zweitstimmen		Zahl der Sitze einschl. Berliner Abgeordnete
	Anzahl	%	Anzahl	%	
Wahlberechtigte	35 400 923	x	35 400 923	x	x
Wähler ¹⁾	31 072 894	87,8	31 072 894	87,8	x
Ungültig	916 680	3,0	1 167 466	3,8	x
Gültig	30 156 214	x	29 905 428	x	x
CDU	11 975 400	39,7	11 875 339	39,7	222
SPD	9 651 669	32,0	9 495 571	31,8	181
CSU	3 186 150	10,6	3 133 060	10,5	55
FDP	2 276 234	7,5	2 307 135	7,7	44
Sonstige	3 066 761	10,2	3 094 323	10,3	17
davon:					
BdD	37 329	0,1	58 725	0,2	–
DG	16 410	0,1	17 490	0,1	–
DP	1 062 293	3,5	1 007 282	3,4	17
DRP	290 622	1,0	308 564	1,0	–
FU	295 533	1,0	254 322	0,9	–
GB/BHE	1 324 636	4,4	1 374 066	4,6	–
SSW	33 463	0,1	32 262	0,1	–
Mittelstand	3 024	0,0	36 592	0,1	–
VU	2 250	0,0	5 020	0,0	–
PdgD	356	0,0	–	–	–
Wählergruppen/ Einzelbewerber	845	0,0	–	–	–

1) % = Wahlbeteiligung.

Table 4⁸⁶: General Election 1961

Gegenstand der Nachweisung	Erststimmen		Zweitstimmen		Zahl der Sitze einschl. Berliner Abgeordnete
	Anzahl	%	Anzahl	%	
Wahlberechtigte	37 440 715	x	37 440 715	x	x
Wähler ¹⁾	32 849 624	87,7	32 849 624	87,7	x
Ungültig	845 158	2,6	1 298 723	4,0	x
Gültig	32 004 466	x	31 550 901	x	x
SPD	11 672 057	36,5	11 427 355	36,2	203
CDU	11 622 995	36,3	11 283 901	35,8	201
FDP	3 866 269	12,1	4 028 766	12,8	67
CSU	3 104 742	9,7	3 014 471	9,6	50
Sonstige	1 738 403	5,4	1 796 408	5,7	–
davon:					
DFU	587 488	1,8	609 918	1,9	–
DG	21 083	0,1	27 308	0,1	–
DRP	242 649	0,8	262 977	0,8	–
GDP (DP-BHE)	859 290	2,7	870 756	2,8	–
SSW	24 951	0,1	25 449	0,1	–
WGnD	778	0,0	–	–	–
Wählergruppen/ Einzelbewerber	2 164	0,0	–	–	–

1) % = Wahlbeteiligung.

Table 5⁸⁷: General Election 1965

Gegenstand der Nachweisung	Erststimmen		Zweitstimmen		Zahl der Sitze einschl. Berliner Abgeordnete
	Anzahl	%	Anzahl	%	
Wahlberechtigte	38 510 395	x	38 510 395	x	x
Wähler ¹⁾	33 416 207	86,8	33 416 207	86,8	x
Ungültig	979 158	2,9	795 765	2,4	x
Gültig	32 437 049	x	32 620 442	x	x
SPD	12 998 474	40,1	12 813 186	39,3	217
CDU	12 631 319	38,9	12 387 562	38,0	202
CSU	3 204 648	9,9	3 136 506	9,6	49
FDP	2 562 294	7,9	3 096 739	9,5	50
Sonstige	1 040 314	3,2	1 186 449	3,6	–
davon:					
AUD	46 146	0,1	52 637	0,2	–
CVP	11 978	0,0	19 832	0,1	–
DFU	386 900	1,2	434 182	1,3	–
EFP	–	–	1 015		–
FSU	6 287	0,0	10 631	0,0	–
NPD	587 216	1,8	664 193	2,0	–
UAP	1 127	0,0	3 959	0,0	
Wählergruppen/ Einzelbewerber	660	0,0	–	-	–

1) % = Wahlbeteiligung.

Table 6⁸⁸: General Election 1969

Gegenstand der Nachweisung	Erststimmen		Zweitstimmen		Zahl der Sitze einschl. Berliner Abgeordnete
	Anzahl	%	Anzahl	%	
Wahlberechtigte	38 677 235	x	38 677 235	x	x
Wähler ¹⁾	33 523 064	86,7	33 523 064	86,7	x
Ungültig	809 548	2,4	557 040	1,7	x
Gültig	32 713 516	x	32 966 024	x	x
SPD	14 402 374	44,0	14 065 716	42,7	237
CDU	12 137 148	37,1	12 079 535	36,6	201
CSU	3 094 176	9,5	3 115 652	9,5	49
FDP	1 554 651	4,8	1 903 422	5,8	31
Sonstige	1 525 167	4,7	1 801 699	5,5	–
davon:					
ADF	209 180	0,6	197 331	0,6	–
BP	54 940	0,2	49 694	0,2	–
Zentrum	–	–	15 933	0,0	–
EP	20 927	0,1	49 650	0,2	–
FSU	10 192	0,0	16 371	0,0	–
GPD		–	45 401	0,1	–
NPD	1 189 375	3,6	1 422 010	4,3	
UAP	1 531	0,0	5 309	0,0	
DV	461	0,0	–	–	
Wählergruppen/ Einzelbewerber	38 561	0,1	–	–	–

1) % = Wahlbeteiligung.

Table 7⁸⁹: General Election 1972

Bundesergebnis

Gegenstand der Nachweisung	Erststimmen		Zweitstimmen		Zahl der Sitze einschl. Berliner Abgeordnete
	Anzahl	%	Anzahl	%	
Wahlberechtigte	38 677 235	x	38 677 235	x	x
Wähler 1)	33 523 064	86,7	33 523 064	86,7	x
Ungültig	809 548	2,4	557 040	1,7	x
Gültig	32 713 516	x	32 966 024	x	x
SPD	14 402 374	44,0	14 065 716	42,7	237
CDU	12 137 148	37,1	12 079 535	36,6	201
CSU	3 094 176	9,5	3 115 652	9,5	49
FDP	1 554 651	4,8	1 903 422	5,8	31
Sonstige	1 525 167	4,7	1 801 699	5,5	–
davon:					
ADF	209 180	0,6	197 331	0,6	–
BP	54 940	0,2	49 694	0,2	–
Zentrum	–	–	15 933	0,0	–
EP	20 927	0,1	49 650	0,2	–
FSU	10 192	0,0	16 371	0,0	–
GPD		–	45 401	0,1	–
NPD	1 189 375	3,6	1 422 010	4,3	
UAP	1 531	0,0	5 309	0,0	
DV	461	0,0	–	–	
Wählergruppen/ Einzelbewerber	38 561	0,1	–	–	–

1) % = Wahlbeteiligung.

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