

6. Germany in the Political Calculus of the United States, 1933–1945

The essential content of American-German relations from 1890 to 1945 was the strategic and economic antagonism between the twofold attempt of the post-Bismarck German Reich to break out of its semi-hegemonic position in the center of Europe and become a world power among world powers, and the twofold response of the United States to prevent this and to keep Germany in the position of a democratic middle power in Europe. The intellectual, moral, and political antagonism between democracy and National Socialism was an integral part of this conflict. The rise of America as the world hegemonic power of 1945 and the establishment of a Pax Americana in the immediate postwar period were a consequence of these dual German challenges.

Change and discontinuity are the special external features of relations between the German Reich and the United States. This is true for the period 1890–1945 in general, and for the 12 years of National Socialist rule in particular. The high point and turning point of this struggle were the years 1939–1941, when National Socialist Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan threatened to establish “New Orders” on the Eurasian continent that would destroy U.S. global interests and the *one American model for the whole world*, the “*novus ordo seclorum*,” as can be read on every dollar bill. By the fall of 1940 at the latest, Hitler saw in the American President Franklin D. Roosevelt the real enemy and world political opponent to his attempt to force Europe under National Socialist racial rule. That was exactly how Roosevelt saw himself, and that is also how the Western world saw Roosevelt at the time. In 1940/41, when the future of Western, i.e., Christian-Jewish, liberal, and capitalist civilization was at stake, Roosevelt was the last hope of the democracies and the real alternative to Hitler; not the Soviet dictator Stalin, nor the conservative Tory and politician of empire Churchill.

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The following summary and problem-centered reflections will focus on the “factor” of Germany in U.S. foreign policy calculations from 1933 to 1945. They will attempt to answer two questions. First, why, even *before* the attack on Pearl Harbor and before Germany’s declaration of war on the United States on December 11, 1941, had U.S. President Roosevelt and the so-called interventionists led a divided nation, stuck in an atmosphere of isolationism with regard to political alliances, to a point where it was no longer a question of *whether*, but only *when* and *how*, the United States would enter World War II? Or to put it another way: What were the causes of American entry into the war against Germany? Second, from the U.S. perspective, what was to happen to the German Reich and the German people in the center of Europe after the foreseeable defeat of National Socialism? Or to put it another way: What was America planning for Germany during the war?

I.

When Adolf Hitler was appointed Reich Chancellor on January 30, 1933, American-German relations lacked almost any substance. Germany and America were “oceans apart.” Germany played only a marginal role in the actual foreign policy of the United States in 1933. This loss of substance had occurred in two stages. In terms of strategic alliance policy, the U.S. withdrawal from Europe had begun with the two refusals of the U.S. Senate in 1920 to ratify, on the one hand, the League of Nations Statute and thus the Treaty of Versailles in the form negotiated by President Wilson in Paris in 1919, and, on the other hand, to give its consent to an American-French alliance treaty, which the French politicians had wrested from Wilson in exchange for relinquishing the left bank of the Rhine. In keeping with President Harding’s campaign slogan, “Back to Normalcy,” the Senate returned to traditional American foreign policy. Since the end of the first and only alliance with France in 1798, this meant not allowing alliances to limit the U.S.’ free hand and entangle it in the affairs of old Europe, which, from the American point of view, was corrupt anyway. This anathema of American foreign policy held true for 150 years, from 1798 until the founding of NATO in 1949.

Therefore, only the extraordinary economic influence of the U.S. in Europe and Germany gave support and substance to American-German relations in the 1920s (Dawes Plan, Young Plan, U.S. investments in

Germany, etc.). There were no alliance relations, and the temporary common ground in disarmament rhetoric remained verbal because it concealed profound clashes of national interest and different geographic starting points. The Great Depression of 1929–1933, the most severe economic crisis since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, also eroded the remaining economic basis of the American-German relationship. Along with the open world market, the crisis also destroyed the factual basis for cooperation. The withdrawal of American capital, the collapse of the world monetary system in the summer of 1931, the shrinking of world trade, the crisis-exacerbating protectionism imposed by the governments of all states for domestic political reasons, and, finally, the actual end of the problem of German reparations and the Allies' war debts to the United States destroyed the parallel economic interests of both countries.

Objectively, and in Hitler's eyes, the world economic crisis led to the loss of influence of the USA. Hitler therefore considered America's goodwill useful but comparatively trivial. In the short and medium term, he could expect to pursue his foreign policy goals in Europe without regard to the United States. Therefore, in his actual foreign policy, he ignored the United States altogether until the Munich Agreement of 1938 and largely until the invasion of Poland. Roosevelt, for his part, when he took office on March 4, 1933, no longer possessed even the economic means to influence Nazi foreign policy—if he had wanted to, and given the dominant isolationist zeitgeist in the United States, he could have. Both politicians set priorities in 1933 without regard for the other country, with the consequence that behind the official façade of diplomatic normality, the web of relations continued to unravel in 1933. For Roosevelt, the domestic reform strategy to overcome the severe economic crisis in the United States, the “New Deal,” had absolute priority. On July 3, 1933, Roosevelt's “bomb-shell message” blew the lid off the London World Economic Conference. The president thus made it clear that the U.S. was not initially prepared to cooperate economically with other countries to overcome the Great Depression.

Hitler also set priorities in 1933. Germany walked out of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament on October 14, 1933, and, at the same time, announced Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations. While Europe and the United States were shocked, Roosevelt tried to limit the domestic damage tactically. He did so by reaffirming the creed of the isolationist majority (which he did not share) that the

“New World” had nothing in common politically with the “Old World.” The European states would have to know for themselves whether they wanted to continue disarmament talks after Hitler’s decision.

The American people’s initial reaction to the establishment of the National Socialist dictatorship was on the level of domestic politics. Already in the first six months of Nazi rule, German prestige in the U.S. began to decline dramatically; as early as 1933, part of public opinion in the U.S. came to the conclusion that the new dictatorship represented a danger to world peace and that the effects of the National Socialist revolution were not limited to Germany. In 1933, a movement was formed for a boycott of German goods in America, and on March 7, 1934, a “show trial” took place in Madison Square Garden in New York, when 20 witnesses testified against Hitler and National Socialism, and 20,000 people subsequently condemned the German government for crimes against civilization. At the same time, the American public turned its attention with growing disquiet to the supposed “Trojan Horse” of the NSDAP in the U.S., the “League of Friends of the New Germany,” formed in July 1933 with financial help from the NSDAP and support from German consulates.

The fear that National Socialist Germany would endanger world peace and possibly U.S. domestic security did not, however, lead to a preventive U.S. interventionist policy in Europe, but, on the contrary, to a strengthening of the prevailing isolationist mood of the American people to separate themselves even more decisively from Europe in the face of these danger signals. This prevailing mood is the most important determinant of American foreign policy until the outbreak of the European war in 1939. What Hitler, Mussolini, and Japan later tried in vain to do with the Three-Power Pact in 1940, namely, to keep America out of Europe and Asia and to scare it back into the Western Hemisphere, the American Congress initially did itself by passing neutrality laws.

The world political situation was paradoxical. 1935 saw the beginning of one of those accelerated processes in Europe and the Far East that would have provided Jacob Burckhardt with a global illustration of the kind of historical crises that he contemplated. In that year, congress, under the pressure of public opinion, brought the process of political isolation from Europe, which had begun after Versailles, to its logical and radical end. Through the Neutrality Acts of 1935 to 1937, Congress completed the index of foreign policy measures forbidden to the Roosevelt administration in times of war and crisis. The rigorous Third Neutrality Act of May 1, 1937, included a *nonpartisan ban on the export of arms*,

munitions, and implements of war; a ban on loans to belligerent nations; a ban on American citizens traveling on ships of belligerent nations; a ban on American merchant vessels transporting goods to belligerent nations; and a ban on arming American merchant vessels engaged in nonprohibited trade with belligerent nations. These prohibitions automatically went into effect when the President “found” that a state of war existed between nations. Once this finding was made, the President’s discretion was limited to the “cash-and-carry clause.” Under this clause, belligerent nations were permitted to purchase all but “deadly weapons” in the United States if they had become the property of foreigners by cash payment before leaving American ports (cash) and were carried off by them on their own ships (carry). Since this clause was limited to two years, Roosevelt no longer had this means at his disposal when the European war broke out in September 1939.

Although Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull had not wanted this legislation and, as will be shown, did not share the isolationists’ basic conviction that the U.S. national interest should be limited to the Western Hemisphere, they allowed this legislation to pass so as not to jeopardize the legislative majority for the New Deal’s domestic reform measures. On the other hand, this domestic consideration meant a further decrease of Roosevelt’s influence on foreign policy in Europe and Asia.

Only when one compares the resources Roosevelt had at his disposal with America’s European policy from 1917 to 1929 or from 1941 to the present, do the extraordinary limitations placed by Congress and public opinion on the president’s room for maneuver from 1933 to 1940 become sufficiently clear. As an unarmed prophet, he could only send signals to Hitler and Mussolini, for example, during the Sudeten crisis, after the German invasion of Prague, or after the signing of the Hitler-Stalin Pact. The trade policy pinprick of expressly exempting Germany from the unconditional most-favored-nation clause when concluding foreign trade treaties with third countries apparently did not impress Hitler, nor did the mutual recall of ambassadors after the *Kristallnacht*. In light of the neutrality laws and the prevalent isolationist opinion—in early September 1939, according to a Gallup poll, 84% of those interviewed answered “no” to the question of whether the U.S. should use its army and navy against Germany¹—the Roosevelt administration could only hope to pursue an active European and

1 The Gallup Poll. Public Opinion 1935–1957, vol. I, 1935–1948, New York 1972, p. 180.

Asian policy once it had convinced the majority of Americans that the vital interests of the U.S. were threatened by the Axis powers and Japan. This was precisely the president's central message since 1937 throughout his domestic struggle with the isolationists, which was only ended by Pearl Harbor.

The core of this domestic conflict was, however, not the moral and democratic problem of whether Roosevelt acted tactically toward the American people with regard to the question of war and peace, concealing parts of the truth from them or even lying to them (all of which he did). Nor was it the problem of whether the isolationists distorted Roosevelt's motives and labeled him a warmonger with dictatorial tendencies (all of which they did). Rather, it was the irreconcilable disagreement between the two camps over the current and future position of the United States in the world. Between 1937 and 1941, the fourth major domestic political debate was conducted regarding the foreign policy question of whether the United States should be a world power in the literal sense or should be content with the role of a major regional power in the Western Hemisphere—the fourth debate after those in 1898, 1914–1917, and 1920. In this debate, the assessment of the Nazi, rather than the Japanese, threat to the United States occupied a central place. *The conflict centered on the threat potential of Hitler and National Socialist Germany to the United States.* Those who ask about the circumstances and causes of U.S. entry into the war against Germany would therefore be well advised to reconstruct the main arguments of this conflict. For the reason for U.S. entry into the war lay not in the challenge from Germany, Italy, and Japan as such, but in the way the internationalists, with Roosevelt at their head, interpreted that challenge. Therefore, in what follows, the positions of both camps will be presented with ideal-typical brevity.

The isolationists had created a very effective organization, the America First Committee, whose most prominent member became the aviator, crosser of the Atlantic, and folk hero Charles Lindbergh. In any case, Lindbergh was Roosevelt's most popular domestic opponent until 1941. The four principles of the "America First Committee," copies of which were distributed by the millions and propagated over the radio, limited the vital interest of the USA, i.e., to be defended by force of arms, if necessary, to the Western Hemisphere, the Eastern Pacific, and the Western Atlantic—in the geographical sense to just under half of the globe. These four principles were worded as follows:

1. The United States must build an impregnable defense for America.
2. No foreign power, nor group of powers, can successfully attack a prepared America.
3. American democracy can be preserved only by keeping out of the European war.
4. “Aid short of war” weakens national defense at home and threatens to involve America in war abroad.

Resulting from these principles, the isolationists strongly advocated that the U.S. not intervene in the European war. As long as the U.S. itself was not attacked, the isolationists believed that U.S. entry into the war could not be justified—whatever happened in Europe and Asia. The evils that would result for the U.S. were greater than the consequences of an Axis victory.

For many isolationists, the First World War and its aftermath were a striking example of the utter futility of trying to have a say in what happened in the old Europe, which was morally rotten and continually shaken by wars. Had not developments since 1919 convincingly demonstrated how correct the traditional “splendid isolation” of the U.S. in the 19th century had been? Had not the investigating committee chaired by Senator Gerald P. Nye in 1934/35 demonstrated before all the public that the American nation had been dragged into the First World War by the international bankers and the armaments industry, the “merchants of death”? Instead of once again playing the role of world policeman, instead of once again pulling chestnuts out of the fire for the British Empire, the U.S. should continue to remember George Washington’s wise farewell address in which he advised the nation to stay out of Europe’s wars.

U.S. security, the isolationists argued, was not threatened by Hitler; an America armed to the teeth with defensive intent, a “Fortress America” in possession of a two-ocean fleet, was impregnable to any attacker. Through the President’s speeches and through government spokesmen, a hysterical fear of Nazi invasion was being stoked. Statements such as that of the former American ambassador to France, William C. Bullitt, that Hitler would invade Independence Hall in Philadelphia after a fall of England, were nothing but warmongering. Economically, too, the isolationists argued, the United States could cope with the loss of markets in Eurasia. Even after victory in Europe, Hitler could by no means dictate terms of trade. Trade, they argued, was never a one-way street. Moreover, a five percent increase in domestic

trade would bring in more dollars than a 100 percent increase in foreign trade. All in all, there was “no clear and present danger” to the survival of the United States.

The internationalists, on the other hand, with Roosevelt at their head, did not reduce the U.S. national interest to the Western Hemisphere, but determined it on a global scale, economically, militarily, and idealistically. What they never admitted to the isolationist majority of Americans until Pearl Harbor was that U.S. entry into the war was the necessary consequence of this definition of the national interest.

Already since 1934, with the promulgation of the new U.S. Foreign Trade Act, a trade policy antagonism had developed between the U.S. and the later aggressor nations. Through the military successes of these powers, this antagonism acquired a qualitatively new function, namely that of co-deciding the entry of the U.S. into the war. For each military success brought with it the possibility of a specific economic reality, the realization of which, in the eyes of Roosevelt and the internationalists, would have meant disaster par excellence for the American economy. Its basic structure may be outlined with a few sentences: A victory of Hitler and Italy in Europe, and of Japan in the Far East, would force both regions into a system of an almost autarkic planned economy. The U.S. would lose its investments, the volume of trade would fall drastically, and foreign trade, if any, would take place on the terms of the Axis powers. South America, Europe’s natural supplier, would noticeably fall under the influence of Hitler’s Europe. With the shrinkage of U.S. import and export industries and the attendant secondary effects on the economy as a whole, the unemployment problem, unsolved by the New Deal, would come to a radical head and create social tensions that could not be resolved under the existing system. In other words, for the internationalists, the open, undivided world market was one of the basic conditions for the survival of the American system.

With regard to the military aspect, at the beginning of Roosevelt’s presidency, the American security zone included the Western Hemisphere and half the Pacific Ocean—in total about a third of the globe. Since the Munich Conference and Japan’s almost simultaneous proclamation of a “New Order” in East Asia, Roosevelt pushed the boundaries of U.S. security further and further until, by 1941, through the Lend-Lease program, they had literally taken on global dimensions. The expansion was rooted in the conviction that the ultimate goal of the Axis powers, especially Hitler, was the conquest of the world, including the United States. In April 1941, the majority of Americans

shared Roosevelt's assessment. According to a poll, as many as 52.9 percent of the population believed that after a fall of England and the elimination of the British fleet, Hitler was indeed capable of successfully carrying out an invasion of the USA.²

One of the cornerstones of this reorientation was precisely a new definition of the limits of U.S. security. In this view, a limitation to the defense of the Western Hemisphere was suicidal since, without control of the world's oceans, these would be like "highways"—an often-used comparison by Roosevelt—that the Axis powers could use at any time to attack the United States. Control of the seas, however, could not be achieved by the U.S. fleet alone; it was possible only if Europe and Asia were not dominated by the Axis powers and if they had the shipbuilding capacity of two continents at their disposal. France, England, and China, and since June 1941 also the Soviet Union, would have to be supported because they were co-defending the USA by proxy. Thus, also in a military sense, the United States had a vital interest in restoring the balance of power in Europe and Asia.

The third global component in the determination of U.S. national interest before entering World War II was the idealistic one. At risk of being tedious, Roosevelt repeatedly declared the right of peoples to free self-determination and the duty of states to submit to the principles of international law in international politics were indivisible. These principles would have to apply unreservedly to all states everywhere in the world. Force and aggression as a means of changing the status quo were illegitimate. The Roosevelt administration had fully adopted the Stimson Doctrine of 1932, according to which the United States would not recognize violent territorial changes. In Roosevelt's understanding, the emerging confrontation with the Axis powers was never merely a conflict between the "haves" and the "have-nots." He interpreted it as an epochal struggle for the future shape of the world between aggressors and peaceful nations, between liberal democracy and fascism, between Western, Christian humanist civilization and barbarism, between citizens and criminals, between good and evil.

To sum up, in Roosevelt's thinking, both the ideal and the economic globalism of freedom ("Wilson's liberal globalism") was combined with a military globalism conditioned by the development of weapons technology and Hitler's assumed plans for world domination. Therefore,

2 Cf. Hadley Cantril, Mildred Strunk (eds.), *Public Opinion 1935–1946*, Princeton 1951, pp. 977, 982 f.

the U.S. had to enter the war itself, both to destroy the “New Orders” in Europe and Asia and to secure its own position as a future world power. The peculiar dialectic of American world power politics in the 20th century, namely the global definition of one’s own national interest in conjunction with the enemy’s asserted will to world domination, was also clearly evident from 1939 to 1941.

II.

Whereas from 1933 to 1941 the momentum of American-German relations had emanated from Hitler and National Socialist Germany, from December 11, 1941, the military, and especially the political, initiative passed to the United States. With the military defeat of the Third Reich becoming apparent by 1943 at the latest, it was clear that the future fate of Germany would depend to a considerable extent on America’s plan for Germany during the war. The following remarks will focus on this central aspect of American-German relations.

There was no unified, coherent planning for Germany. Roosevelt, the American people, and the Allies agreed only on the negative war and peace objectives: unconditional surrender, i.e., no negotiated peace, with the destruction of National Socialism and German militarism. The German people had to be disarmed, denazified, and re-educated, the National Socialist organizations disbanded, the war criminals tried, and any possibility of renewed German aggression prevented for all time. But beyond these goals, American policy did not develop a unified plan for Germany until Roosevelt’s death on April 12, 1945, because it was impossible to decide what was desired in the long run; whether to impose on Germany a harsh peace of revenge and oppression, dismemberment and impoverishment, or to give the country a chance to return to the community of nations as a denazified, peaceful, and economically stable state.

For it was over this very question that there was a fierce, back-and-forth struggle within the American government. The lack of clarity on this central question, combined with Roosevelt’s determination to postpone problems of the postwar order as far as possible, combined with struggles between civilians and the military, with a juxtaposition of different planning commissions, with confused decision-making processes, and with an alternating struggle among authorities and persons to influence Roosevelt, prevented a unified concept of Germany

from being reached. A prime example of this is the power struggle within the alliance and the government over the Morgenthau Plan, the detail of which can almost only be described as a satire.

It must be borne in mind, however, that the decisive questions concerning the unity or division of Germany, its borders, reparations, and the quality of occupation policy had to be decided, or at least premeditated, in a climate of unbridled war passion, hatred, and contempt for Germany and the Germans—these feelings only intensifying as, with the advance of Allied troops on all fronts, the full extent of the Nazi policy of extermination and genocide of Jews, Poles, Russians, and other peoples became known to world public opinion.

The ambivalent planning was matched by contradictory results. Until his death, Roosevelt clung to plans for the dismemberment of Germany, which had been elevated to a decision at the Yalta Conference. While Roosevelt, as an advocate of a hard peace, at least remained consistent on this issue, conflicting conceptions of Germany led to two other central problems being decided in opposite ways: Reparations and American occupation policy after the war. While Roosevelt eventually (at least since the preparations for the Yalta Conference) gave in to the moderate and economically based arguments of the State Department on the reparations question, Directive 1067 of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on occupation policy after the war still sprang to a considerable extent from the spirit of revenge, namely the spirit of the Morgenthau Plan. This, according to its title, was intended to prevent Germany from starting a third world war. In view of this fact, which is no longer disputed in recent research, the following will not recount the well-known details of planning with regard to occupation policy, the reparations question, the Allied Control Council, or the Morgenthau Plan, but conversely attempt to answer the question of *why there was no coherent German policy during World War II*. Two main reasons can be given for this, in addition to several secondary ones: The first and most important thesis is that for Roosevelt American planning for Germany during World War II was a subordinate function, a dependent variable of American policy toward Stalin and the Soviet Union. To make this case, it is necessary to explain the President's principal motives for cooperating with the Soviet Union.

Two days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt concluded one of his famous fireside chats with the hopeful phrases, "We will win the war, and we will win the peace." For both, Roosevelt believed he would need the cooperation of the Soviet Union.

Roosevelt needed the Soviet Union in the war because he needed to fight and win an *American war*, i.e., with unprecedented use of materials and comparatively little sacrifice of American lives. The U.S. needed the Soviet soldiers to help it put down the German and Japanese land armies. It was the only way Roosevelt could hope to politically survive the massive war effort. It is useful to occasionally recall that, excluding ethnic Germans outside Nazi-Germany and Austrians, Germany lost an estimated 3.76 million soldiers, Japan 1.2 million, the Soviet Union 13.6 million, and the United States nearly 260,000 in World War II. For every American who died in the war, 15 Germans and 53 Russians died. As early as 1942, Roosevelt knew “that the Russian armies were killing more Axis men and destroying more war material than the other 25 United Nations combined.”³ Faced with the global challenge and the compulsion to win the world war the American way, Roosevelt, like his ally Churchill, was willing to make a pact with the devil, i.e., with Stalin. While Churchill’s famous saying was, “If Hitler invaded Hell I would make at least a favorable reference to the Devil in the House of Commons,” during World War II Roosevelt used to occasionally quote his version of an old saying: “My children, it is permitted you in time of grave danger to walk with the devil until you have crossed the bridge.”⁴

What did that mean? All of Roosevelt’s decisions, and even Truman’s up to the Potsdam Conference and Japan’s surrender, were not allowed to endanger the alliance with the Soviet Union. We know today that Truman’s overriding goal at Potsdam was to obtain a renewed assurance from Stalin of the Soviet Union’s entry into the war against Japan. The German question, on the other hand, was secondary. Stalin’s notorious distrust about a special peace between the West and the Nazis and his fears that the opening of the “Second Front” would be postponed in order to wipe out as many Russian soldiers as possible by using them as cannon fodder had to be mitigated to the greatest degree possible.

The announcement of “unconditional surrender” at Casablanca was also a signal to Stalin that the West would not conclude a special peace treaty with the aggressors. Roosevelt’s much-maligned policy of “postponement,” of deferring many problems until after victory, was also intended to avoid the danger that the alliance would be blown up by serious differences over postwar problems. Finally, Roosevelt’s

3 Cited in: John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941–1947*, New York, London 1972, p. 5.

4 Quoted in Gaddis’ *Strategies of Containment. A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy*, New York 1982, p. 3.

tendency to take the Soviet Union's security interest into account in his German policy deliberations had the dual function of securing wartime and postwar cooperation with the Soviet Union. In the only monograph to date on the entire period of Roosevelt's foreign policy, the American historian Robert Dallek entitled the chapter on the period from 1942 to 1945: "The Idealist as Realist."⁵ This captures the dual character of Roosevelt's postwar planning, which is also evident in his behavior toward the Soviet Union.

However imprecise American conceptions of peace were with regard to many details of the planned postwar order, and however long Roosevelt tried to postpone controversial questions in the interest of undisturbed wartime military cooperation, the general American ideas about a future peace were known to the world throughout the war. They also remained unchanged during the war. These principles, these ideals, had already been proclaimed in the Atlantic Charter in 1941. If one looks closely, these principles call for what Roosevelt feared losing if the Axis powers and Japan were victorious: indivisible security, indivisible freedom, and an indivisible world market. The Atlantic Charter was a form, cast in principles, of the global reach of the U.S. national interest. The right of self-determination for all peoples and the principle that boundary adjustments should be made only in accordance with the will of the people concerned were intended to secure indivisible freedom. Free access by all nations to world trade and the earth's raw materials, freedom of the seas, and cooperation among nations to ensure improved working conditions, economic advancement, and social security should make the indivisible world market possible. Renunciation of violence, secure borders, disarmament of aggressor nations, and a more comprehensive and permanent system of general security were to make security indivisible. These guiding principles for the future were old American ideals, no different in substance from Wilson's ideas.

What was new was the historical experience of the interwar period. Not only Roosevelt and the internationalists, but also the vast majority of the so-called isolationists now recognized in retrospect that all attempts in the 1930s to keep the U.S. out of the wars of Europe and Asia through rigorous neutrality laws had failed. In the future, the U.S. would be able to avoid wars only if America joined a system

5 Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy 1932–1945*, Part IV, New York, Oxford 1979.

of collective security that was also truly capable of avoiding future wars. America's entry into an improved and strengthened League of Nations seemed the only hope for future peace.

On the other hand, there was also the realist Roosevelt, who knew from the autumn of 1943 that victory in World War II would make the Soviet Union a Eurasian world power; with the consequence that world peace after the most murderous war in history would depend on cooperation with the Soviet Union. Roosevelt, as a realist, knew that future peace would have to be, at its core, not a peace of rights but a peace of power. Therefore, he developed his idea of the four world policemen, which remained the central concept in his thinking throughout the war. According to this concept, the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and China were to secure peace indefinitely after the war as an international police power. The confusion about the political postwar order and postwar planning of the United States, which is also widespread in the historical literature, stems not least from the fact that Roosevelt concealed his power-political concept of peacekeeping after the war from the American public, but explained it in great detail to Soviet politicians (Molotov in May 1942 and Stalin in Tehran) as well as to the British.

The United Nations Charter finally adopted in San Francisco in 1945, with its two central organs, the General Assembly and the Security Council, in which the five permanent representatives have veto power, can be seen formally as a compromise between the two conceptions of a general League of Nations (“one nation, one vote”) and the privileged position of a few favored nations.

The realist Roosevelt never had any illusions that both the concept of the four world policemen and that of the Security Council would depend on continuing political agreement among the four world policemen. Therefore, Roosevelt had to recognize to a certain extent the Soviet Union's need for security in East Central Europe in order to gain cooperation with the Soviet Union in Europe, in the Far East, in the United Nations, perhaps even in building a new world economic order.

This was possible from Roosevelt's perspective because he did not consider Stalin a communist world revolutionary, nor did he think that the Soviet Union, unlike Nazi Germany and imperialist Japan, was a fundamentally expansionist and aggressive state. It was necessary, Roosevelt said again and again, to have confidence in Stalin and to give him what could be given within the framework of the Atlantic Charter in order to reduce Stalin's distrust of the West.

Only when this overriding goal of Roosevelt's foreign policy is kept in mind does it become clear why planning on Germany became to a considerable extent a function of American policy toward the Soviet Union. The de facto acceptance of the incorporation of the Baltic states, the westward shift of Poland, the plans for the dismemberment of Germany, and Roosevelt's temporary approval of the Morgenthau Plan also served the function of letting Stalin know that one was sympathetic to the Soviet Union's security needs. Only because it included *demands for both Soviet-friendly governments and governments resulting from free elections*, could American Eastern European policy achieve its goals. For Roosevelt, these concessions to Stalin were also comparatively easy to make because they were consistent with his basic conviction of imposing a harsh piece of vengeance and punishment on Germany. And herein lies the second thesis as to why there was no coherent policy toward Germany. The uplifting, milder, more economically reasonable path had to prevail against Roosevelt's conviction. Or, to put it another way, Roosevelt's heart was behind the basic tendencies of the Morgenthau Plan.

Roosevelt had not had a particularly good opinion of Germany and the Germans throughout his life. Even as a nine-year-old, when, for the first and only time in his life, he came into contact with an elementary school for six weeks in Bad Nauheim in 1891, the first anti-German resentments began to form in him. These were later intensified during bicycle tours through southern Germany before the First World War. From a very early age, he considered the Germans to be overbearing, arrogant, militaristic, and aggressive. Even before the outbreak of World War I, he viewed Germany as a nation that could threaten the security and welfare of the United States. If crucial decisions in World War I had been decided by him, in his position as Assistant Secretary of the Navy in the Wilson administration, the U.S. would have declared war on Germany much earlier than 1917.

Wilson's interpretation of the U.S. entry into World War I as a crusade for democracy of liberal-capitalist pattern met with his full approval, all the more so because, as with the average American, his image of the Germans—the "Huns"—became increasingly negative as time went on. When he was sent on an inspection tour of Europe in the summer of 1918, this view was reinforced by tales of German atrocities told to him by King George V of England and French Prime Minister Clemenceau. The rise and success of Hitler confirmed these sentiments. For Roosevelt, Hitler was not an exceptional phenomenon;

for him, National Socialism reflected a basic trait of the aggressive, Prussian-German national character. At the same time, Roosevelt began a reassessment of the Treaty of Versailles. He now saw this treaty as bad because it had turned out too lenient for Germany. This time, the safeguards against the resurgence of a Prussian-German militarism would have to be better. He considered a fragmentation and partition of Germany the only means to prevent future aggression.

Before and during the Quebec Conference, Roosevelt could not be persuaded to abandon his support for the Morgenthau Plan. He backed away only when the plan, which had become public through an indiscretion, began to play a role in the 1944 presidential campaign. The pressure to do so grew when the argument gained currency that the plan would only strengthen German resistance on the Western Front and lead to an increase in American casualties. The latter was indeed a politically dangerous argument, and Roosevelt, as a domestic politician, had no choice but to distance himself from the plan, against his basic convictions. Inwardly, he probably held to the concept of a Carthaginian peace until his death.

The spirit of the Morgenthau Plan, however, found its way to a considerable extent into Directive 1067, as already indicated. This was the result of a protracted power struggle involving representatives of the State, Treasury, and War Departments. The penultimate version was approved by Roosevelt on March 20, 1945, and the final version by Truman on May 11, 1945. On that day, Morgenthau wrote in his diary, “This is a great day for the Treasury Department. I hope somebody doesn’t recognize it as the Morgenthau Plan.”⁶

On the other hand, and this was the profoundly contradictory aspect of this development, the State Department regained greater influence over the reparations question during the planning phase for the Yalta Conference, which was also due to Edward Stettinius Jr. replacing Cordell Hull as Secretary of State. In any case, the State Department’s preparatory papers for this conference reflected the more moderate position, which was guided in large part precisely by long-term, economic considerations. It was important, the basic tenor went, that military commanders in the planned three occupation zones pursue a unified policy. Only in this way could it be ensured that the highly industrialized western parts received the all-important foodstuffs from

6 John Morton Blum, *From the Morgenthau Diaries. Years of War 1941–1945*, Boston 1967, p. 460.

the Soviet occupation zone. The long-term goal was the assimilation of a reformed, peaceful, and economically non-aggressive Germany into a liberal world trading system. On the reparations question, planners in the State Department firmly pointed out that the mistakes made after World War I should not be repeated. To avoid the problems of transferring money as after World War I, reparations were to be made only in goods and services. The time for economically reasonable reparations should be limited to five years, if possible. Above all, under no circumstances should Americans be put back into the position of financing reparations directly or indirectly through borrowing. The whole senseless debt-reparations merry-go-round of the twenties should not be repeated. First and foremost, imports would have to be paid for with the foreign currency that a German economy limited to peacetime production could acquire. It was due to this basic American position that the controversy with Stalin and the Soviets over the reparations problem developed at Yalta and Potsdam.

Thus, until the German surrender, the Americans had not succeeded in solving occupation policy and the reparations question according to the same principles. On the question of reparations, the State Department had finally been able to assert itself, while on the question of occupation policy, Morgenthau, parts of the War Department, and the United General Staff won out. Only in the period from May to July 1945, in the time between the German surrender and the Potsdam Conference, did Truman gradually, but still recognizably, decide in favor of the State Department's conception; namely, to prevent a planned economic chaos in Germany and Europe. Truman could soon be convinced of the nonsense of the Morgenthau plan, and in early July, he forced Morgenthau's resignation. In his memoirs, Truman wrote that he had never approved of the plan; it was an act of revenge, and there had already been too many peace treaties in history that had been born of this spirit.

