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Ontological security in post-war West Germany (1945-1952)

An analysis of national collective memories and the Luxembourg Reparations Agreement.

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Jonathan Brüls, le 6 janvier 2023.

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To the start of something new.

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List of abbreviations

DM: Deutsche Marken

DRG: Democratic Republic of Germany

FRG: Federal Republic of Germany

IR: International Relations

JCC: Jewish Material Claims Conference Against Germany

MK: Members of Knesset

N-S: National-Socialism

OMGUS: Office for the Military Government of the United States

UNO: United Nations Organization

USA: United States of America

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Introduction

The original questioning that led to this paper dealt with the identity of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) after the traumatic events of the Second World war. However, the Third Reich's legacy and its impacts on West Germany's identity have already been thoroughly analyzed from a wide array of perspectives and fields of research. Clear theoretical and temporal boundaries need to be set for such inquiry to be feasible and innovative. The chosen theoretical framework must integrate aspects of psychology, sociology, philosophy and, of course, history. The "ontological security" perspective, a relatively novel approach to identity in the study of International Relations (IR), was adopted to analyze West Germany's identity in the immediate post-war years. As will be developed below, it seeks to demonstrate that States act with the aim of 'securing' their identity through endogenous and exogenous mechanisms. In addition, concepts such as collective memory will also be mobilized to understand how West Germany's past shaped its identity in the domestic sphere. The chosen temporal boundary spans from the end of the Second World war to 1952. This limited time span was preferred because it allows for an in-depth analysis of West Germany's identity at its very genesis, without the complications that History ineluctably brings. By studying the FRG's very first steps into limited sovereignty, we will be able to present an unadulterated account of West Germany seeking to define its identity in the international and domestic spheres.

But identity is a complex and multilayered concept. Therefore, our analysis will reflect this complexity by analyzing West Germany on several levels. On the one hand, using the autobiographical and cultural aspects of collective memory study fields, we will begin by focusing on how, at the domestic level, the West German population dealt with the identity threats represented by the horrors committed by National-Socialism (N-S) in their name. We will inquire into the historical aspects that were preserved in collective memory through commemorative means. By studying collective memory, we will be able to determine if and how the identity that West Germans held about their nation underwent ontological securitization. On the other hand, West Germany's ontological security will also be considered at the international level. Using the case study of the Luxembourg Reparations Agreement of 1952, signed between the State of Israel and the FRG, we will

try to understand what brought two States and two people, linked by their catastrophic history, into a dialogue to amend the wounds of the past. Special attention will be given to the description and analysis of the negotiations that occurred between the FGR, Israel and to a lesser extent, the United States of America (USA). Our aim is to find out whether considerations pertaining to State identity were relevant for these States in their decision to go through with official reparations payments. If such considerations did indeed weigh in the balance, were they decisive or merely influential? Assembled, all the inquiries become the single following research question:

How was West Germany's identity constructed, both domestically and internationally, in the immediate post-war years?

In determining our research question, we make two important hypotheses. Our analysis throughout this paper will provide us with the information necessary to confirm or refute them.

1) Non-official collective memories were instrumentalized to secure selected post-war West German biographical narratives about self-identity.
2) Ontological security was a decisive factor in the negotiation of the Luxembourg Agreement for West Germany, Israel, and the United States of America.

Structure

Using ontological security and collective memory as our theoretical framework, we will be diving our analysis of West Germany's identity into four chapters. Our first chapter will aim at setting the theoretical foundations for our subsequent analysis. The ontological security perspective will be laid out, in addition to some explanations of the intricacies of collective memory and biographical narratives. The second chapter deals with West Germany's ontological security and collective memory at the national level, in our case synonym for the West German identity as seen through the eyes of its population. The third chapter meticulously describes the negotiations leading to the final reparation agreement, retracing the considerations that influenced key decision-makers' decisions. The fourth and final chapter will discuss the findings stemming from the third chapter,

analyzing the negotiations through the ontological security perspective, and proposing a model for understanding each State's dilemma.

Methodology and sources

This paper contains two different methodologies. That is because West Germany's post-war ontological security will be apprehended through two levels of analysis: national and international. The research method for the chapters analyzing West Germany as a State in its IR will be a case study. Indeed, the negotiations for the Luxembourg Agreement of 1952 will be the studied case. The chapter analyzing West Germany's national ontological security requires a different approach, as collective memory and biographical narratives are more adequate tools for analysis than a single case study. Therefore, we will be studying national ontological security using clearly distinguishable indicators, such as political identification with the N-S regime or antisemitism. Of course, this approach is wholly different to the one retracing negotiations between two States. Therefore, the type of data that will be mobilized will also differ from chapter to chapter. In contrast to the third chapter, for instance, the second chapter uses overwhelmingly qualitative data collection, even if quantitative data shall also be mobilized. However, this paper deals with elusive concepts such as identity and memory, which are often difficult - if not impossible - to quantify. The sources used are entirely secondary. This means that every quantitative or qualitative data presented in this paper has been taken from the work of previous authors, governments, researchers, and historians. They have all been adequately sourced and cited.

The number of available resources concerning West Germany's identity after the Second World war is immeasurable. Here, our temporal and theoretical boundaries were instrumental in framing our research. This considerably shortened the huge corpus of work about post-war West Germany. What remained were four types of documents that consist of the bulk of the analysis of the third chapter. The most widely used documents are *specialized books and articles*, rendering precise - yet fragmented - historical accounts of the history of the reparation negotiations of 1952. These are particularly important, as the dissection of the negotiating partners' attitudes, thoughts and influences are especially relevant to understand the outcome of the talks. However, it became evident that even the best historical accounts could sometimes be tainted with the personal appreciations and

remarks of the authors, many of whom were of German, Israeli or Jewish descent and had otherwise written extensively on the subject. That, in itself, does not give ground for preclusion but required our special attentiveness and critique. Other widely used documents are the Cabinet and parliamentary *minutes*. Indeed, both the Chancellor's meetings with his own Cabinet, as well as Israeli Cabinet meeting minutes will be the subject of analysis to determine the positions and ideas within these policy circles. These were particularly interesting because their content is likely not to have been tampered with by individuals seeking to mellow the sometimes-harsh judgment of History. This possibility is given to those writing the third type of document that was relevant to the writing of this paper: *autobiographies.* Indeed, most noteworthy are Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's memoirs, in which he delves into great detail about his attitudes towards the reparations issue as well as his decision-making process. However, as will be seen in the third chapter, History, described by the people who wrote it, can sometimes voluntarily omit certain troublesome details, or highlight unremarkable ones. *Speeches* and *interviews* made at the time are also present, though they are far less recurrent and do not consist of in-depth discursive analysis. For the second chapter specialized books and articles were also used. In addition, *polling numbers*, sampled in the immediate post-war years, are also frequently employed. These were overwhelmingly made organized by the American administrations that were occupying the American zones of West Germany at the time. Therefore, their results may not reflect the whole West German population in those years. In addition, opinion surveys are only as reliable as their respondents are truthful and this fact is especially true about the subjects that might be considered sensitive. The reader should bear in mind these caveats.

Besides being endowed with a diversity of documents, this paper also claims linguistic diversity, as all previously mentioned documents and sources were written in English or German. This allows for a more multifaceted approach and field of available resources. However, it must be noted that a considerable amount of extremely relevant books, articles, opinion polls and other resources could not be utilized, as they had been written shortly after the events described and were never digitized.

State of the literature

The chosen perspective for this paper - ontological security - is a relatively new concept in IR scholarship. It has clear roots in the field of psychology, philosophy, and sociology, and was transposed into the field of political science and IR by authors such as Mitzen, Steele, Kinvall, Zarakol and others. Ontological security is the subject of a growing literature in recent years that studies a variety of cases dealing with States' identities in their IR. Hereunder is a brief review of the relevant literature. Jeff Huysmans, for instance, while not specifically referring to ontological security, begins his study by arguing that non-military phenomena, such as migration fluxes to the European Union, should "frame" what constitutes a State's insecurity (Huysmans, 2006: 145). Calls for a widening of securitization perspectives ultimately paved the way for scholars who would argue that identity itself was a source of insecurity. Bachleitner's (2020) book is the most comprehensive on the subject. Building on the concepts of collective memory and ontological security, she argues that a temporal dimension is necessary to understand the State's identity and its course of action. This temporal dimension is provided by the concept of 'temporal security', which analyzes the continuation of identity securitization through time. She argues that collective memories are crucial for the securitization of the State's identity through time in two manners. Firstly, because they are used to refer to its 'narrated self in the past', and secondly because they shape a State's political strategy, its public identity, its behaviour, and its national values (2006: 10) She applies these findings to a comparison of West Germany and Austria in relation to their collective memorizations and identity-defined behaviours in the immediate post-war period. She finds that the two States developed opposing identities concerning the past, wherein West Germany accepted its role as a perpetrator, but Austria defended itself as a victim of N-S in both its domestic identity construction but also its behaviour on the international scene. In her case study, Jelena Subotic (2016) studied how the bending of narratives about identity legitimized changes in Serbia's foreign policy towards Kosovo. She posits that narratives about the past are often rewritten to fit the needs of the political actor. According to her, Serbian national narratives about Kosovo rest on the pillars of national sacrifice, victimhood under foreign powers and the belief in Serbian resurrection, all deeply rooted in the country's historical desire for vindication (2016: 618). As such, Serbia, whose narratives covet the reintegration of Kosovo, could never accept its independence, even if that meant stalling its accession negotiations into the EU. As a

compromise, the Serbian leadership instrumentalized the three pillars of national narratives to justify to its population an arrangement with Kosovo (2016: 623). Brent Steele (2005) analyzed the case of British neutrality in the American Civil War through the perspective of ontological security. He argues that realist and economic arguments fail to explain Britain's non-intervention. Indeed, dividing a competing rising power and the economic fallouts resulting from cotton shortages should have prompted Britain to get involved militarily. Instead, Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1862 shifted the British perception of the conflict, which became a fight for the abolition of slavery in the southern Confederation. He argues that Britain's identity narratives about freedom and anti-slavery, therefore, stopped it from supporting the South (2005: 538). Ayse Zarakol (2010) uses ontological security to study the State's denial of historical crimes. She seeks to understand why certain States, most notably Turkey and Japan refuse to recognize and offer apologies for the internationally recognized atrocities they committed in their past. She argues that in the 19th and 20th centuries, both States had sought to be accepted as "civilized nations" by the European powers, who had systematically stigmatized them for being "backward" and "inferior". She argues that the feeling of insecurity and shame generated by Japan and Turkey's rejection from the European "family of nations" explains their reluctance to offer apologies today. (2010: 13). Amir Lupovici (2012) deepens the conceptualization of ontological security by proposing "ontological dissonances", which are the contradictory actions that a State needs to take when it has multiple identities that are all being simultaneously threatened. (2012: 810). Using the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he argues that the Second Intifada was a source of threat to Israel's identity and that its unilateral responses to the movement were a case of ontological dissonance. The blocking of uncomfortable information about its identity and the creation of ambiguity surrounding its actions - both mechanisms of ontological dissonance - were steps taken by Israel to reduce identity inconsistencies. (2012: 831). But ontological security has also been applied to levels of analysis other than States. Sean Kay, for instance, uses ontological security to assess the peace-building process between two ethnic-nationalist groups of the late 1990s in Northern Ireland. (Kay, 2012) Other authors have applied ontological security to other existing IR concepts, such as the "security dilemma" (Mitzen, 2006). She argues that the security dilemma, which occurs when States cannot trust each other and thus begin a spiral of rivalry sometimes leading to violence, also has an identity component. Indeed, the security dilemma could be avoided, or at least dimmed, if the State's true identity as

a security seeker instead of an aggressor, were to be communicated effectively. But their identity as a peaceful State must be recognized through its relations with other States. (2006: 358). Opperman and Hansel (2019) have used ontological security to study the concept of "special relationships" in contemporary Israeli-German relations. They widen the special relationship literature by addressing how these relations emerge, how they are maintained and how power asymmetries build up in the relations. (Opperman & Hansel, 2019: 87-97). West Germany's early relationship with Israel is mentioned briefly, and their paper, which addresses the subject on a much deeper level, was a source of inspiration for this study.

Chapter 1: Theoretical framework

1.1. Ontological security

The ontological security school of thought sees the nature of State relations differently than "traditional" security schools of thought, such as the realist IR perspective. (Bachleitner, 2020: 90; Mitzen & Larson, 2017: 17; Opperman & Hansel, 2018: 85) It argues that states are not looking for the material or physical security needed to survive in a world where anarchy presents the danger of annihilation. Instead, states interpret their security, not in terms of being able to merely survive but see their security as having the capacity of *being* (McSweeny, 1999: 157). Unlike realists, who argue that 'fear' is the driving emotion that pushes states to pursue means of securing their physical survival, theorists of ontological security think that another emotion, 'existential anxiety', drives the need for a self-identity, which in turn spurs action. At its core, ontological security in IR refers to the "security" of an actor's[1] identity. As a definition, possessing ontological security means being *secure in their identity*: actors are certain and comfortable about who they *are*. Deriving from that is that States know what to do. In opposition, 'ontologically insecure' actors are uncomfortable with their identities and are therefore unable to act. (Steele, 2008: 51). These concepts will be explained below.

But what prompts actors, such as States, to seek ontological security? Succinctly, States seek ontological security because they wish to reduce the anxiety stemming from their ontological *uncertainty,* meaning their uncertainty about who they are in an unpredictable world. A central component of the ontological security theory is that existential anxiety is fundamentally caused by the actor's inability to truly understand the "chaos that lurks outside." (Giddens, 1991: 36). Chaos refers to all the ontological threats that may arise from a world in which they cannot trust anything or anyone for lack of information about their true intentions. As Mitzen explains, in an environment full of potential risks and menaces, States become 'uncertain' about which dangers to face, and which to ignore.

[1] "Actors", assumed in this paper, can be a State (such as West Germany), or a Nation, such as the West German people.

(Mitzen, 2006: 345). Amid such uncertainty, States apply cognitive methods that give some sort of meaning to their surroundings. These mechanisms and methods filter information from the outside world and allow the State to demarcate some boundaries to *who* they are, and who they are *not*. What lies within these demarcations is their self-identity. What gets discarded by their cognitive mechanisms lies outside of their self-identity. A stable sense of identity is not only essential for actors to understand their surroundings, but it also *enables their agency*.[2] Indeed, the daunting realization that actors *can do anything* creates a deep anxiety about what to do (Mitzen, p. 345). And as a state of deep vertigo grips the uncertain actor, the construction of self-identity helps reduce this dizziness. That is because, armoured with some sense of certainty, an actor can make predictions, and therefore look ahead.

Paradoxically, ontological security is akin to a mirage. Indeed, it can never be truly achieved. That is because, as already stated, the quest for self-identity security is fuelled by existential anxiety, an emotion that accompanies all living beings, and which can only be mitigated, not dissolved. Bachleitner calls it the everlasting "self-reflexive anxiety", because (Bachleitner, 2020: 18). Existential *anxiety* cannot be overcome as an emotion, unlike the emotion of *fear* that is embodied by the material danger that threatens the State's material survival. Outside or inside stimuli shall always arise, challenging a State's conception of itself. If this stimulus is great enough to radically threaten the current self-identity of the State, anxiety builds up, which warrants a reappraisal of the State's self-identity. What States do in the face of challenges of fundamentals of self-identity are called *ontological security-seeking behaviours,* or what Kinvall calls the "securitization of subjectivity" (Kinvall, 2004: 749). They are applied to secure the actor's "ontological continuity", or coherence in identity through time (Bachleitner, 2020: 18). Such behaviours will be explained below. For the sake of simplicity in an already complex matter, we will continue to refer to ontological security as an end, even though the reader should, at the back of their mind, be reminded that true security can never be achieved.

To summarize, the fundamentals of the ontological security perspective in IR are that actors, such as States or Nations, are faced with an ever-present emotion of "self-reflective anxiety" because they do not fully understand the threats posed by the world.

[2] Agency refers to their capacity to act in the face of perceived dangers or to pursue goals and objectives.

The creation of self-identity is what enables them to overcome the anxiety that severely inhibits their capacity to act. As such, being secure about one's self-identity means being able to make predictions and therefore, knowing what to do.

1.1 <u>The creation of State identities</u>

Yet, the question of how actors craft the self-identities, which allow for action, remains to be answered. Here, the ontological security perspective proposes two schools of thought. One of these, represented by Jennifer Mitzen, argues that structural and thus 'exogenous' influences the creation of self-identity. This means that identity is formed through social relations in the IR sphere. The other school of thought is represented by Brent Steele, who believes in the lesser role of these 'outside-looking' methods of self-identity construction. Instead, Steele posits that the 'inward-looking', or endogenous interactions with the self are predominant in the definition of self-identity. Regardless of their differences, both sides agree on the centrality of both *routines* and *biographical narratives*[3]. (Bachleitner, 2020: 16). Both concepts will be explained.

The next section aims at elucidating how those two components are constructed. Let us begin with the 'outward-looking' scholars, such as Anthony Giddens and Jennifer Mitzen. These scholars believe that the State's *social interactions* play a central role in the building of self-identity. Therefore, social interactions characterize ontological security-seeking behaviour. Within this "intersubjective" [4] nature of self-identity creation, a State seeks to achieve ontological security by conjugating its behaviour with the sense of identity that it created through the *routinized* social interactions in the sphere of IR.

<u>1.1.2 Exogenous trust systems and routines</u>

Basic trust systems and protective cocoons

As stated earlier, actors create self-identity to gain agency and thereby reduce anxiety. For some scholars, self-identity is necessarily social: a State's self-identity does not come from anywhere; it must be constructed in its relationship with others. That is where the exogenous identity-building schools of thought come in. They argue that to come into

[3] To be understood as stories through which an actor understands their self-identity. (Hopperman & Hansel, 2019: 83).
[4] Intersubjective should be understood as "involving or occurring between separate conscious minds" (Merriam-Webster) https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intersubjective. Last consulted 17 November 2022.

intersubjective relations, States must engage regularly with each other based on an agreed-upon set of "cognitive and behavioural responses to stimuli" (Mitzen, 2006: 446). Only when the interactions are frequent and based on shared, predictable outcomes, can intersubjective relations occur. The sum of a State's cognitive and behavioural responses, which ultimately build self-identity through social relations, is called a 'basic trust system'. This trust system as explained by Giddens helps minimize the uncertainty of the unpredictable environment within the intersubjective relationship. Indeed, Giddens defines a trust system as a cognitive 'protective cocoon' which serves to isolate the actor from the dangers of the outside world, rendering him for a time more invulnerable to the reality of outside menaces (Giddens, 1991: 39-40). These cocoons are present in intersubjective relations and thus define them.

The cocoon, by definition, induces the State to ignore a series of possibilities and information that constitutes the "chaos" that might be induced by the breaking of a State's social relations. Letting information through that would threaten the relations, which in itself constitutes a loss of self-identity (Giddens, 1991: 36). An apt analogy is the altogether incidental piece of lumber that a castaway sailor might desperately and instinctively hold onto in the middle of a chaotic and utterly confusing hurricane. Except that the storm poses an ontological threat, not a physical one, and that this piece of lumber happens to be a stable, routinized relation with another State. Thus, this self-constructed 'protective cocoon' that protects its relations gives the actor trust. Trust in themselves, in their self-identity, and therefore what lies outside of their identity. The daunting possibility of being, as described earlier, is suddenly boiled down to a few relational certainties, which are hoped to be infallible and enduring. This trust is ultimately what allows for agency because States finally have a target in the form of relations and a series of threats that they can then attempt to neutralize (Giddens, 1991: 3). The cocoon helps the actor to sift through the most important dangers that it faces and to ignore the rest.

It has now been established that 'basic trust systems', which build a protective cocoon around fundamental self-identity beliefs, are what allow for the construction of social relations, an essential self-identity-building endeavour. Still, we must ask ourselves how the 'basic trust system' is itself created. The answer, according to Giddens and Mitzen, is *routines*. Mitzen argues that this 'basic trust system' can only be achieved through the 'routinization' of social life (Mitzen, 2006: 346). They allow actors to comprehend and

address facets of their surroundings and thus trust themselves and the predictability of their environment. An actor starts a routine, and even more importantly, *keeps* a routine because it presents a clear boundary between the 'self' and the 'non-self'. In this sense, basic trust is in the continuity of oneself through the routinization with others (Giddens, 1991: 242).

Routines

Interestingly, Mitzen notes that, by definition, routines inhibit the revaluing of the social relationship. Indeed, actors stay in that relationship without thinking, rebalancing, or seeking to renovate them. This is an important distinction because it points to the fact that the thought processes, and therefore the actions deriving from these, are not conscious, not rational, but devoid of purpose and intent, irreflective. (2006: 347). But States keep them because they have the merit of providing some sense of ontological security. Most often, since the actor in IR attaches themselves so virulently to these routinized relations, they endow them with symbolism and emotions. Their attachment can be extremely persistent in time, even if they are clearly destructive or 'bad' for their physical security (Mitzen, 2006: 347). Theorists often take the somewhat dreary illustration of the abused wife in a marriage that dares not leave it, for her identity is fundamentally constituted by the routines that she and her husband have developed over the years. She knows full well that her physical security is seriously threatened yet prefers to secure her ontology by not disrupting her 'basic trust system' created by the routines of abuse because the possibility of 'being' someone else is too daunting. (Croft & Vaughan-Williams, 2017: 17)

Another characteristic of these routines, if they are intersubjective, is that States expect some form of *predictability* in another State's response to the routine (Mitzen, 2006: 347). Giddens describes the *mutual* nature of the trust system, and therefore by extension the socialized routines. (Giddens, 1990: 95). An actor only trusts another or a routine because it rationally awaits a predictable, satisfactory response to the engagement. Disruptions of routines by a trusted other can be quite traumatically anxiety-inducing for actors because the routinization of relations produces agency, which defines self-identity. These can, in the most serious cases, trigger a severe ontological crisis. To summarize, the scholars who believe that 'self-identity' comes from intersubjective relations agree that the State's self-identity is created within their relations with other IR actors, themselves framed by the

repeated interaction (routines) based on cognitive and behavioural responses (basic trust system). (Bachleitner, 2020 :15)

1.1.3 Endogenous routines

However, there exists another branch of the literature that believes that reflection within the 'self', not outward-looking, is self-identity constructive. Introspection, not "outrospection" is thus a determinant of identity constitution. This branch is represented by Brent Steele (2005, 2008). Steele agrees with Mitzen on the presumption that the emotion of anxiety from lack of self-identity is what pushes actors to create routines. However, he asserts that Mitzen misunderstands the essentially intersubjective nature of routinization. According to the author, an actor's identity may very well be initially obtained through the social construction of routines. But what actually *keeps routines going* is the actor's introspection (Steele, 2008: 60). He argues that the anxiety of not acting in accordance with one's self-perceived identity is the reason why actors engage in inward-looking "reflexive routines". These reflexive routines serve to appraise one's own identity. Therefore, Steele's argument is that 'self-reflexive' anxiety, meaning the anxiety that leads to the introspection of one's self-identity, can lead to the changing of self-identity. (Steele, 2008: 60-61).

Actors, while undergoing such anxiety-fuelled 'reflexive routines can sometimes come to the realization that there has developed a *discrepancy* between what Steele calls the 'true' sense of self and the 'imagined' sense of self (Steele, 2008: 61). The actor suddenly becomes aware that the behaviour that they have displayed hitherto (true self) is, in fact, disconnected to what they desired to be, or thought they were (imagined self). These are great moments of ontological crisis. But actors must not stand idle. Reactions by the self-reflexive actor to the identity threat can be categorized, according to Steele, in two ways. Firstly, the actor can *recognize* the discrepancy between the two forms of self. Recognition of identity gaps can only take place if the State appraises itself from an ontological "distance", meaning that it discontinuous some of its routines. However, Steele argues that an actor must be careful not excessively distance themselves from their true self-identity when introspecting, for actors risk getting detached from that very identity and becoming "disembodied" or even paralyzed by self-reflection. (Steele, 2008: 62). Secondly, actors can consciously - or unconsciously - choose to completely *ignore*

the perceived discrepancy between the imagined 'self' and the actual 'self'. By ignoring the threat to their own-self-identity integrity, Steele argues that actors risk perpetuating and continuing the social routines they have built not for the sake of their own sense of integrity, but to maintain appearances. In this occurrence, a State loses all sense of self-identity and becomes nothing more than a subservient illusion, meant to uphold the meaningless routines that the actor has intersubjectively or subjectively built. In other words, the State only acts in that manner to keep their self-identity and their relationships with other States intact. Interestingly, both reactions to the perceived disconnect serve to "repair the ontological security" (Steele, 2008: 61). Indeed, recognizing and ignoring the discrepancy both address the same profound existential desire: to mitigate the anxiety of possibly not actually 'being' what one thinks one is. However, Steele stops short in her analysis of explaining what an actor does when they choose to recognize the disconnect. In other words, which are the *ontological security-seeking behaviours* that actors pursue in order to once again, become at one with their self-identity?

Jelena Subotic (2016) brings some answers to this query. Her research centres around the question of how States maintain the biographical narratives that constitute the essence of their self-identity. In other words: how States use narration to achieve ontological security. Subotic asserts that during times of great crises caused by ontological threats, biographical narratives are tools that can provide ontological *continuity* when behaviour changes are required to close the previously mentioned identity/action disconnect. She argues that as new events arise that might create ontological discrepancies, these are interpreted and ultimately incorporated within the body of biographical narratives of a State. Ultimately, narratives are important because they justify behaviours and "continuity with the good [5] past" (Subotic, 2016: 614). But how can biographical narratives be used to justify changes in behaviour? Subotic argues that the narratives themselves, as tools, can be moulded in different shapes to fit the political needs of the actor at a precise point in time. As such, certain parts of the original biographical narratives can be highlighted, while others are played down to assure ontological continuity. Adjustments of biographical narratives are generated through a premeditated and repetitive process of interpretation. Subotic sums it up as follows:

[5] What constitutes the "good" past is extremely vague and begs the elucidation of cases where the past of a State cannot, under any circumstances be interpreted as 'good' neither by itself nor by others. In our case, we will consider the "good past" to be the aspects of its identity that the State wishes to highlight.

> “Over time, and with infinite iteration by narrative ‘entrepreneurs’ - political leaders, elite intellectuals, education establishment, popular culture, the media - and everyday social practice, a particular state narrative template (of past events, or of the general place of the state in the international system) fixes the meaning of the past and limits the opportunity for further political contestation. A constructed narrative reaches a tipping point threshold when a critical mass of social actors accepts and buys into it as a social fact” (Subotic, 2016: 615).

Yet, there are limits to how suddenly the biographical narratives can be changed. Too drastic ‘unfixing’ of key narrative linchpins threatens the collapse of biographical narratives. Ontological security thus becomes even more seriously threatened. Subotic’s answer to how biographical narratives can change is extremely relevant to this research. Indeed, it will be of the highest importance, since, as we will see in our case study, the immediate post-world war years are formative to the biographical narratives that constitute West Germany’s self-identity at a domestic level.

1.2. Memory

Subotic’s emphasis on biographical narratives in the legitimizing or shaping of identity is important, as it taps into a large branch of memory studies that will be used in the second chapter of this paper. The concepts that will be explained below are important for ontological security analysis, especially if it is to be applied to the public opinion of a State’s population, rather than a State’s foreign relations. There are, in reality, many similarities between the study of collective memories and biographical narratives and the theory of ontological security in IR.

1.2.1 Collective memory

The existence of collective memory has, in thousands of years of history, always been acknowledged in some form, even if the term was only coined and widely adopted a century ago. (Olick, 2011: 9). The modern analysis of “collective memory” starts with the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs through the publication of his seminal book *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, in 1925. Halbach’s central tenet is that memory is intrinsically a social phenomenon, not exclusively individual. Individuals, he recognizes, are at the basis of any remembrance, because they are the only ones who can perceive the

world and create memories. However, these memories cannot be created outside of the realm of social ties, meaning that the memories of the individuals are inextricably linked to a social component, such as another person or a group. Even the individual's perception is shaped and influenced by past experiences and relations with other social groups, which he calls *social frameworks* (Halbwachs, 1992: 38). These social frameworks can be demarcated by our family, our friends, and our church and give us access to things like our language and customs, as well as our fundamental capacity to remember. (Erll, 2011, 16). When an individual recollects, they inevitably position and reintegrate the new information within the social framework of one or several specific groups. The very act of recollection necessitates the individual's repositioning as a member of a group, or "re-member", as Olick put it (1999: 342). As a consequence, each new memory is created through the viewpoint of groups' collective memories (Halbwachs, 1950: 33).

1.2.2 Cultural memory

The field of research widened since Halbwachs' collective memory theory. Another type of collective memory that seems interesting in the framework of this paper is the *cultural* aspect of memory. That is because they are, in effect, the content of the previously mentioned biographical narratives. Jan and Aleida Assmann (1995) are pioneers in this field, especially in examining how memory is transmitted and how societies maintain their cultural identity. According to the authors, societies can preserve their cultural identity through 'cultural memory'. Cultural memory's content possibly goes back thousands of years. Its temporal points, such as marking events, are fixed in time. This means that the "horizon" of memory, limited by human capacity, becomes irrelevant because cultural memory can be accessed by all members without personally being in contact with the people who lived in the past. The perpetuity of cultural memory is enshrined through either "cultural formation" (for instance texts or a monument) or through "institutional communication" (such as national holidays or commemorations) (Assman, 1995: 129). These components of cultural memory are especially relevant for the analysis of West German national identity in the second chapter.

Once created, this cultural memory inscribes a shared knowledge based on which societies derive the awareness of their particularity and uniqueness in regard to other societies. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that cultural memory's functionality is to

preserve and convey society's self-image, and thus its collective identities (Assmann, 1995: 132). Additionally, cultural memory has a defined content carefully engineered and maintained by cultural experts, such as pastors or archivists. This directly echoes Subotic's concept of cultural 'entrepreneurs. Finally, according to Assmann, cultural memory is founded on myths (what the ontological security perspective calls biographical narratives), which are "stories one tells oneself in order to orient oneself in the world" (Assman, 1992: 76). Myths, formed surrounding real events or narratives of ancient grandeurs of civilization, are at the root of the "history" of national identity, constantly being remodelled and reaffirmed (Takei, 1998: 59, cited in Bell, 2003: 70). Note here that 'myth' is not to be perceived as falsification or distortion of history. Instead, they should be understood as a "story that simplifies, dramatizes and selectively narrates the story of a nation's past and its place in the world, its historical eschatology: a story that elucidates its contemporary meaning through (re)constructing the past." (Bell, 2003, 75). As such, these myths are plastic and can be moulded.

These sorts of memories, which remind groups of their past and give symbolic guidelines to the nation's future, are a constitutive part of the institutions and practices of a nation. In turn, by being confronted and exposed to these mnemonic institutions and practices, members of the group integrate the "appropriate memories" needed to assimilate and conform to the societies (Poole, 1999: 65 cited in Bell, 2003: 70). This is relevant for this paper because West Germany's cultural memory will be the subject of the second chapter.

1.2.3 Collective shame

Once collective identity, based on collective and cultural memory is established and recognized by its members, it is necessary to understand the relationship that individuals have with their identity. For instance, when one's identity is not upheld in front of others who are in a position to judge, a feeling of shame may be developed, which is also found in Steele's "self-reflexive routines". This can also happen at the national level, writes Liu. Representations of history are used to position one group versus another. These representations are used to influence what social identity becomes prevalent for a person (identity salience), and whether that identity is considered positive or negative (valuing). These two variables are intimately connected (Liu, 2006: 133). The process by which

parts of identity is part of accepted is called “identity positioning” (Liu, 2006: 133). By positioning themselves in relation to other groups, holders of collective identity may engage in selective remembering to emphasize internally, but also to outside observers, their identity. However, a group chooses to present itself, the consequence is that a social identity thus emerges at the confluence between inner representation and outside perception. As in the ontological security perspective, discrepancies in identity may occur, in which case, a feeling of shame may arise. In the feeling of shame, there must be some degree of identification with a reference group, and a readiness to evaluate oneself from this perspective. Thus, a degree of social identity may be an important precondition to feeling shame. (Wicker, et al., 1983: 26).

Chapter 2: Ontological security in post-war West German self-identity

2.1. Introduction

The present paper has the single goal of examining West Germany's post-war identity. Using the aforementioned concepts of ontological security and collective memory, it will attempt to give an overview of the years after the concentration and extermination camps were opened, revealing one of the darkest chapters in the history of humanity. In that sense, our analysis would be incomplete without the proper investigation into West Germany's national ontological security-seeking behaviours. Therefore, we will consider the construction of the FRG's self-identity through the minds of its *population*, a key element of any State. This chapter will attempt to understand the unofficial collective memories held by some West German citizens in the immediate post-war years, how they viewed their self-identity, but also how they apprehended the atrocities that had occurred on their soil and in the name of their Nation.

2.2 West Germany population

The goal of this section is to understand *if* and *how* non-official national biographical narratives integrated West Germany's past, and in particular the persecution and annihilation of the European Jews. But how can one qualify, or even quantify if and how West Germany's self-identity absorbed the past in the post-war years? Based on Subotic's theory of adjusting biographical narratives, we made it our assumption that in order for West Germans to change their biographical narratives, some aspects of past narratives must have been highlighted while others must have been dimmed to provide ontological security. This would mean that West Germans, consciously or unconsciously, decided to forget or remember certain aspects of their history. Therefore, collective remembrance or amnesia will be put under scrutiny through the analysis of three factors. The first factor is the rejection of the political ideals of the N-S regime era. The second factor is the recognition of the uniqueness of Jewish suffering, in light of the nature of the crimes committed. The third factor is the remembrance routines or commemorations that took place after the war.

2.2.1 Rejection of political identity

Let us begin with the first indicator. A rejection of the legitimacy of the N-S regime in the eyes of the German population is an important indicator of possible discontinuation with the biographical narratives that defined German identity in the N-S years. Therefore, using public opinion polls gathered at the time, it should be possible to determine if, at least under friendly interrogation, West Germans recognized the discontinuation of their political self-identity. Thus, answering the question about the rejection of N-S, the American researchers Merrit & Merrit give contrasting results. For instance, in 1948, a majority of Germans agreed that "N-S was a good idea badly carried out" (Merrit & Merrit, 1970: 32). In other questionnaires, it was clear that some autocratic or un-democratic attitudes were still present in the minds of many West Germans. For example, almost a fifth of interviewees responded positively to the assertion that "only a government with a dictator is able to create strong nations", and almost a third agreed that books criticizing the government should not be allowed to be published. (Merrit & Merrit, 1970: 31). Political pluralism was not a ubiquitous political value either, with almost a fifth proposing to ban left-wing parties (Merrit & Merrit, 1970: 40).

Feelings of guilt or shame for the damages caused by the war can also be an indicator of political identity rejection. Yet, on the matter, opinion polls show that, in 1947, 92 per cent of West Germans did not think that Germans bore collective guilt for WW2. There was nonetheless a slight majority who agreed with partial "responsibility", because of the support the German people had given their government. Other opinion polls were also carried out about the acceptance of "collective guilt" in December 1946. The results show an ambivalent picture. On a scale of zero (full acceptance of collective guilt) to seven (full dismissal of collective guilt), the mean response to seven questions was 3.8. On the most relevant question in this questionnaire, 59 per cent of respondents believed that "Germany had tortured and murdered millions of helpless Europeans" (Merrit & Merrit, 1970: 146). In contrast, only 28 per cent believed that Germany was to blame for the outbreak of the Second World war. Unfortunately, the questionnaire omits direct questions about the suffering of Jewish people under the N-S regime, which would have been crucial information for this study. Expectations about reparations or compensations, or great defence against them can also betray feelings of collective guilt or shame. West Berliners were quite lucid about the possibility of reparations that West Germany would have to

pay for the reconstruction of Europe. For instance, no less than 82 per cent of West Germans were expecting a higher debt in the aftermath of WW2 than of WW1, and a vast majority expected that the full payment of reparation debts would take "a very long time", or 20 years (Merrit & Merrit, 1970: 159).

This collective guilt rejection is also reflected in attitudes towards the recently concluded Nuremberg Trials. Interestingly, most Germans were satisfied with the way the trials were carried out and believed overwhelmingly that the high-ranking officers on the stand carried great responsibility (Merrit & Merrit, 1970: 35). However, 71 per cent of surveyees also believed that the defendants in Nuremberg were not the only ones carrying responsibility. In fact, 43 per cent wanted to see lower-ranking leaders put to justice. (Merrit & Merrit, 1970: 120-122). This rejection of N-S leadership, but also of collective guilt can also be found in West German opinion about Allied-led de-Nazification. For instance, Kaschuba identifies the Allied de-Nazification processes as a symbol of historical continuity rather than the opposite, as it failed to filter out those who had been complicit with the N-S regime (Kaschuba, 2001, 87). Indeed, in 1947, almost one in three public servants were legally "politically incriminated" because of their role in the N-S era. In important public administrative positions, the numbers are more staggering, reaching 40 per cent of higher civil servants who were former adherents to NS. These percentages only grew with time, as amnesties became widespread (Herz, 1948: 590-592). In the wider population, about two and a half million cases of denazification were processed through questionnaires and tribunals up until the creation of the FRG in 1949. Yet, in the American zone, only about twenty-thousands West Germans were convicted of crimes that precluded their reintegration into society. (Griffith, 1950: 74) Even those found guilty of crimes were imposed negligible fines for their acts. (Herz, 1948: 581: -584).

2.2.2 Recognition of Jewish suffering and antisemitism

However, it would be incongruous to liken *only* the rejection of the Third Reich directly with the continuation of West Germany's self-identity. While the rejection of the N-S political system is an important element to understand the continuation of the collective identities, it is insufficient. General attitudes towards the Jewish people should also be taken into account in our analysis. Indeed, special consideration for the suffering of

Jewish people would indicate some sense of moral wrong that was perceived by the German population. A clear desire to downplay the racial and antisemitic characteristics of the N-S regime would present an even more accurate account of ontological continuity in West Germany. Additionally, we will thus study how antisemitism persevered in public opinion during the formative years of the FRG. So, the questions to be answered are: was there a rejection of antisemitism, as an immoral and shameful ideology? Was there a special recognition of the persecution of the Jews? Only a clear, affirmative answer to both questions could signal an unambiguous departure from the self-identity that had been constructed by twelve years of NS.

Fortunately, some public opinion polls have been conducted during the very early post-war years. In the OMGUS[6] studies, conducted by Merrit and Merrit, a third of German respondents agreed with the statement that "Jews should not have the same rights as those belonging to the Aryan race". Furthermore, 37 per cent of surveyees agreed with the statement that the "extermination of the Jews and Poles and other non-Aryans was necessary for the security of Germans". (Merrit & Merrit, 1970: 31). General antisemitic attitudes, varying from mild to strong, were determined in about 39 per cent of the German population living in the American occupation zone (Merrit & Merrit, 1970:146). Another study found that just over half of the population could be described as "not antisemitic", where women, uneducated, and rural inhabitants were most likely to be antisemitic. Interestingly, the age category that showed the most antisemitic prejudice was the Germans between 15 and 19 years of age, those who had lived almost exclusively under N-S propaganda. (Merrit & Merrit, 1970: 240). The West German *Institut für Demoskopie* also conducted national surveys that are relevant, as they concern antisemitic attitudes, a key indicator of recognition of guilt and shame, as we have presupposed. Their results are the following for studies from 1949 to 1952 (Noelle & Neumann, 1956). During those years, there seems to have developed a polarization in the West German population in their opinions of Jewish people. Indeed, in 1949, 23 per cent described themselves as holding openly antisemitic opinions, compared to 34 per cent three years later. Self-described "tolerance" towards Jews, almost halved during that same period, dwindling from 41 per cent to 23 per cent. Meanwhile, open friendliness towards Jews did not change, hovering between six and seven per cent. Those who had no opinion or

[6] Office of Military Government of the United States.

were reserved constituted 36 per cent of respondents. (Bergmann & Erb, 1997: 2) By themselves, these results already point to conspicuous antisemitism within the West German population, which the full revelations about Holocaust only reinforced, paradoxically. Indeed, as information about the industrialization of Jewish annihilation became even more accessible to most West Germans, the results show a clear tendency towards rejection of guilt through the adoption of a defensive stance by those holding antisemitic beliefs. (Bergmann & Erb, 1997: 3).

Beyond mere polling data, antisemitic acts were also reported. German Jews returning from concentration faced harsh difficulties upon their return to West Germany. Relations with the non-Jewish German population, the West German police forces and even sometimes occupying Allied soldiers could often be marked by antisemitism and hate. Jelinek (2004) highlights the issue of discrimination in the early years. As Jewish "displaced persons" gradually emigrated back from the concentration and forced labour camps to their homes, most of them found their homes and shops "Aryanized", meaning confiscated and sold to German citizens. The retrocession of their possessions awoke feelings of hate in the owners who had come to possess the properties under the Third Reich. (Jelinek, 2004: 21) In addition, the more generous provision of food for Jewish returnees than for non-Jewish citizens also led to protests, which were ultimately successful in overturning the preferential treatment (Jelinek, 2004: 22). In some more disturbing instances, there were also reports of raids being organized by the West German police in Jewish encampments, where brutal physical repression coupled with antisemitic slurs and death threats were not uncommon. (Jelinek, 2004: 27)

When researching attitudes to the uniqueness of Jewish suffering, recollection about how the Jews were treated in past can also indicate shame. Memory selection - the mechanism by which individuals consciously or unconsciously attempted to suppress their memories seemed to have occurred in post-war West Germany. According to Kardstedt, the selective memorization of post-war German society happened through intermittent spells of remembrance and amnesia, which is induced by the "alternation between victim and perpetrator voices and their domination in the process" (Karstedt, 2009: 28). There are astonishing empirical reports of general amnesia surrounding Jewish persecution. Interviews with German workers testify to widespread difficulties to recall basic information about Jewish acquaintances who had just "disappeared" under the Third

Reich (Kaplan, 1993: 103). In decisive instances, such as the programs of the *Kristallnacht* in 1938, recollections centered around the material destruction of windows and shops, instead of the blatant injustice of violent persecution against Jewish German citizens. While the purpose of this example is not to widen this amnesic phenomenon to a whole population, the suppression of uncomfortable realities of daunting aspects of the past can be likened to the decision to *ignore* the discrepancy formed between West Germans imagined and true selves.

2.2.2 Commemoration, collective memory, and biographical narratives

From the available polling data collected in the immediate post-war years, the picture of changing political adherence to the N-S era seem fairly clear. While adherence to the N-S ideals was diminishing, recognition of Jewish persecution and antisemitism demonstrate some sense of guilt denial within the West German population. But in reality, political opinions are not comprehensive enough to truly understand the concept of national self-identity. Indeed, the inward-looking branch of ontological security theory explains that self-identity is created through biographical narratives, themselves prescribed by the routinization of collective memories. One way to think about those ' routinizations of collective memories' is that they are, in effect, commemorations. It is therefore important that we analyze the possible continuations of commemorative routines, the discontinuation of certain commemorative routines, and possibly the birth of new types of routinized collective memories. The questions that need to be answered are the following. Which memories, images, spaces, and monuments were used to mobilize collective memory in those years? If we refer back to the ontological security perspective, which are the memory routines, or commemorations, that characterized West German biographical narratives in the very first years after the war? This task is far more labyrinthine than the previous ones.

Memorials

Memorials, which occupy a privileged place as formative of collective memory, will be briefly touched upon to understand post-war West German memory. According to Karl Figlio, symbols of remembering are the concretization of an ambivalence fuelled by guilt and rejection of guilt. (Figlio, 2014: 417). *Memorialization,* which is to be understood as the process that crystallizes collective memory (Niven & Paver, 2010: 6), was almost

nonexistent in the immediate post-war year, or imposed by the occupying powers and did not distinguish suffering between victims of N-S crimes. The few Holocaust-centered memorials that were built right after the war were built by victims and their relatives, as well as left-leaning activist groups. The federal government, instead, supported veteran organizations in their memorialization of the sacrifice made by the "German soldiers" protecting their *Vaterland*. (Wüstenberg, 2017: 33). Holocaust victims were largely absent in the official efforts of memorialization. In the concentration camp of Dachau for instance, several ceremonies did take place to commemorate the victims of NS. However, they made no specific mention of Jews, the principal victims. There was in effect no memorialization of the Holocaust in post-war West Germany. In addition, in the limited instances where Holocaust victims were remembered, the memorials actually had in effect a national audience rather than a local one. (Harold, 2010: 198). Other Holocaust-centered remembrance sites in former N-S detention camps in West German occupation zones were equally rare. Most memorials specifically addressing Jewish suffering were only erected in the 1960s. (Harold, 2010: 193).

Commemoration routines for meaningful events can also be indicative of West German ontological securitisation. For Olick, a study of the commemorations of 8 May 1945, the day of the Third Reich's capitulation, is an ontological paradox. Indeed, the end of the war represents an enormous relief for ordinary Germans, who had suffered at the hand of tyranny and war. But it also meant the recognition of the unconditional defeat and ruin of the biographical narrative of the *Vaterland* that they had fought hard to defend. In addition, accusations of "collective guilt" were felt by a large part of the population as rubbing salts in the wounds. (Olick, 1999: 385). As James Young writes,

> "For Germans who experienced both the economic boom during Hitler's Reich and the destruction of their cities during the war, who knew both total military victory and unconditional surrender, the memory of this time encompasses much more than the images of liberated concentration camp prisoners (...). Indeed, the piles of corpses in German camps ironically seemed to reflect to many Germans their own total devastation, the masses of the dead in German cities and on the front. At first, the German's only nexus of identification with Jewish victims lay in the destruction they now seemed to share, not in what they had wrought in Hitler's name." (Young, 1993: 56)

Collective memory

Confino argues that in the wake of the war, West Germans had two choices before themselves: either seek atonement by wholly recognizing the crimes that had been committed, or by ignoring them. A compromise, an uncertain positioning between the two extremes was impossible and would lead to a certain *malaise*. (Confino 2005: 53). But West Germans were morally indisposed to face the genocide because of a "total bankruptcy of German nationhood", which the urgency of their physical reconstruction helped justify. (Confino, 2005: 53).

German authors argue that as soon as the Third Reich was defeated, a gap began to be formed between *individual* memories and *collective* memories (Assman, 2003: 84; Jaspers, 1946: 61). The failure of official collective memory to integrate, or *override* the personal memories explains the complex interplay of rejection and recognition that characterizes West German collective conscience immediately after 1945. In fact, the discrepancy between official collective memory and autobiographical memories is what characterizes the first decade of the FRG (Assman, 2003: 88). Instead of building collective memories and biographical narratives centred around the concentration camps, West German society, in a large part, decided to perceive their self-identity through *victimhood* and *heroism*. These collective memories completely excluded the suffering of Jewish victims, instead focusing on the sacrificed German soldiers and civilians during the war. In fact, Jewish suffering was only ever mentioned to lament the hardships that the Germans had faced in the later years of the war. This, of course, facilitated the denial of guilt and subsequent reparations for the genocide (Confino; 2005: 54) And thus selective memory became the non-official[7] collective memory.

Yet this selection of collective memory was also subject to amnesia, in the public sphere but also within the comfort of the private sphere. Indeed, intrafamilial collective memories were also instrumental in shaping collective memory after the war. Of course, it is reasonable to believe that personal stories were as imprinted on biographical narratives as official memorization in the first years after the Holocaust. Harald Welzer (2005: 1-10) studied how embellished war stories implicating self-participation were

[7] 'Non-official' should be understood as separate from the 'official' collective memory that institutions such as the State and Government.

transmitted between people of the same generation, as well as to the next generation the decades after. Accounts West Germans told their families were often filled with exaggerations about supposed oppositional behaviour to the authoritarian regime, diminishing or denigrating knowledge about concentration camps, and generally leaving out details that may betray active or inactive participation. Assman writes those post-war memories happened within a "backdrop of silence that was hard to penetrate, as it was woven out of the texture of ignorance, denial and indifference" (Assmann, 2015: 23). The embellishment of wartime stories is significant for maintaining the rejection of collective guilt because the intra and intergenerational storytelling reinforced the belief that the 'Germans' and the 'Nazis' were two distinct groups that cannot be likened.

Biographical narratives

Whereas official German commemoration and memorialization generally denounced the N-S past, a parallel ecosystem of collective memory and autobiographical narratives grew in German society. The culture of remembrance that shaped the population's self-identity in the post-war years differed from the official narratives of 'perpetrator' and 'German aggression', but of German victimhood. The remembrance of the German civilian casualties, as well as the "Fallen German Soldiers" trope, became prominent in German collective memory. (Margalit, 2010: 77). The homogeneity of the trope of the valiant and proud German Soldier that died for the country did not leave enough room to make a difference between the common conscript forced to the battlefield and the enthusiast Waffen-SS officer that had an active part in the murder of the N-S victims.

In addition, war crimes committed by Allied forces sometimes reinforced the narrative of German victimhood (Frie, 2018: 108). For example, the bombing of German cities holds an important place in German post-war collective memory. Dresden and Hamburg, most heavily targeted by Allied bombings in the last months of the war, became symbols of victimhood for the German collective memory. (Clapson, 2019: 175) Commemorations for the German victims of the Allied bombings became a pillar of the population's post-war collective memory, though there may not have been physical memorials built. Anne Fuchs (2011), for instance, finds that photography was used by the German population to remember the German suffering in Dresden through massive purchases of photography

books depicting the carnage of Dresden. Interestingly, this goes to show that German collective memory, in the aftermath of the war, was in large part untouched by the political division of Germany. Indeed, the city of Dresden, being under Soviet occupation, remained in the collective memory of all Germans, even the Westerners. According to Gesternberger & Nusser, this is because Dresden had occupied an important place in N-S propaganda. It had been painted by the regime as the German city of arts and culture. Of course, the Allied bombing signified the utter destruction of the apotheosis of German art and culture. The N-S regime quickly portrayed the aggression in its propaganda as the Allies' intentions to destroy not only the Third Reich under Hitler but the very soul of German nationhood (2015: 60).

Another pillar of German post-war biographical narratives was the remembrance of the German soldiers and Expellees who had perished or remained in captivity in camps in East Europe or the Soviet Union. (Moeller, 1996: 1013). The collective memorization of the Red Army's barbary became a central tenet of guilt deflection. Indeed, this biographical narrative highlighted the ongoing German suffering, presented as equivalent to the fate of concentration camp victims. (Moeller, 1996: 1017). The victimization of the German prisoners under the Soviets sometimes reached astonishing proportions. In the post-war years, the remaining Germans living in Eastern European countries were "expelled" back to Germany. These became known as German Expellees. As waves of them arrived back in Germany, most of them had to be accommodated in former concentration camps due to housing shortages. Many of them were stripped of their personal belongings and private property. In 1948, due to rapidly deteriorating conditions, the German expellees who were accommodated in the Dachau concentration camp in Bavaria organized a hunger strike. Using the rhetoric of "sacrifice" for the German nation, they sometimes likened their living conditions to "worse than a concentration camp". (Melendy, 2005: 117). Parallels between their conditions and anti-communist narratives were also made to construct themselves as victims of oppression by Allied powers as well as the Federal Republic. In addition, the fact that pensions for Wehrmacht veterans were cut back after the war also served to create the feeling that the West Germans were victims of disdain from the Allied occupying powers, despite the considerable sacrifice that they had made. (Melendy, 2005: 108).

2.3 Ontological security in the West German population before the Luxembourg Agreement

The section above had the aim of elucidating continuities or disruptions in the ontological sense of non-official West German collective and identity in the immediate post-war years. From our analysis, it seems clear that biographical narratives in the aftermath of the war and the Holocaust cannot be painted with a broad brush. Indeed, from available polling data, it seems that the West German people rejected the political goals of the N-S regime. However, a majority also felt that Nazi leaders mislead the German people to their demise, which can be interpreted as seeking ways to diminish the feeling of guilt for the destructive war. A goat-scaping phenomenon can also be found in West Germans' attitudes towards the outcome of the Nuremberg trials. The West German population were happy to see the prominent N-S figures be tried for their crimes, in part because the implicit political message displayed was that the people responsible for the war, as well as the Holocaust, had been found guilty and convicted. In that sense, it could be argued that the trials alleviated many West Germans from the burden of self-reflection and soul searching that might have resurfaced repressed memories of injustices, and perhaps even guilt or shame. Interestingly, many West Germans thought that the trials did not go far enough: lower-ranked officers and public servants should also have been made to stand before a jury. Denazification measures were insufficient, according to many authors. In part because of the sheer number of cases, but also because of the clemency showed to people who were found to be guilty of even the most serious crimes. Blanket clemency granted to keep the administrations running certainly did not invite self-reflection.

If there was a sense of rejection for the N-S political era, the question of Jewish persecution was certainly more ambiguous in the immediate aftermath of WW2. The uniqueness of Jewish suffering was not prevalent in post-war West German collective memory. Antisemitic views were still very present in the minds of many, and paradoxically only grew in the first years of occupation. Tolerance towards Jews was also seen to be dropping. Reports of tensions between the west German population and authorities and Jewish returnees also point to difficulties in overcoming the past. In this sense, we can argue that in the immediate post-war era, ontological security was characterized by a continuation of German national identity through the adoption of a

protective stance, as well as a rejection of personal and collective guilt by significant segments of the population.

The collective memories that make up biographical narratives were subject to selective remembrance and amnesia. A parallel ecosystem of non-official national biographical narratives rapidly flourished, which sometimes overstepped the schism in the physical integrity of the German Nation, divided by the Iron curtain. New anchoring points were laid in the face of the devastation of West Germany and the accusation of collective guilt by the Allies. Typical myths about the victimhood and sacrifice of the German people during the war, sometimes explicitly at the hands of criminal Allied military tactics, quickly developed to counter the arguments made by the Western Allies about guilt and moral bankruptcy. Images, such as the German fallen soldier serving his *Vaterland*, his nation, became widespread in the collective minds of the mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers who had lost a loved one at the hands of Soviet brutality for example. The legitimate pain incurred by Germany's utter defeat, as well as repressed guilt and shame, served to deflect acceptance of responsibility. Even, within families, discourse about the past was subject to selective memory, exaggeration and relativisation.

Thus, we argue in this paper that the self-identity of the German people, in the primitive years of the FRG, was essentially unchanged. Biographical narratives, centred around German suffering and sacrifice, were instrumentalized to form a "protective cocoon" from the assaults to the ontological security that the accusation of collective guilt represented. In the basic trust system that Mitzen and Giddens put forth, we can say that biographical narratives about the German people were routinized through commemorations and remembrance surrounding the suffering of the German people under the N-S regime and the war. It can also be argued that the rejection of the reproaches that constituted the continuation of the German population's self-identity is what gave it some sense of agency. If the selection mechanisms had not been adopted by a significant part of the West German post-war society, a deep crisis of identity would have ensued. This condition, according to the ontological security perspective, represents a threat to its existence, as basic trust systems set apart the "self" from the "non-self". As can be expected, a society with a sense of self-identity will rather cling to biographical narratives that protect them from the 'outside' rather than succumb to the anxiety that will lead it to crumble and disappear. Even if the biographical narratives, in the case of post-war

Germany, are based on deflection, illusions and lies about what happened to the Jews in their country, or their part in their annihilation.

From this, we can safely conclude that the German population would hold strong views about policies that would signify a recognition of guilt, as that would compromise the basic trust system that allows them to 'be' in the world. However, such positions, through the Luxembourg Agreement, did take place only seven years after the end of the war, when responsibility rejection was high within society. To understand the stark contrast between a population that rejects collective guilt, and a government that recognizes the Jewish suffering to a point of acquiescing to compensation for Jewish victims, we need to understand the context within which the FRG and the State of Israel came to that agreement. This is precisely the aim of the next chapter.

Chapter 3: The Luxembourg Agreement of 1952

3. 1. Introduction

The drafting of victim compensation laws in West Germany began as early as 1946. The first attempts between the German authorities and the Allied occupying powers failed, but only due to legal technicalities, not the principle of compensation itself (Henry, 2002: 10). Ultimately, the USA military authorities decided to force the matter by promulgating the "Restitution of Identifiable Property" law, which sought to provide the "speedy restitution" of identifiable property to those who had been destitute under the NS-era (OMGUS, 1948). If the legal procedures remained messy, the Allies' stance on the matter could not be clearer. Indeed, John McCloy, the USA High Commissioner for Germany, had stated that West Germany's handling of "the Jewish issue would be considered the test of character for the young and emerging democracy". (Engert, 2010:115). Other Allied statements reinforced this idea, proclaiming that the FRG's failure to provide compensation to the victims of N-S was a "major obstacle to the acceptance of the German people by the free peoples of the world". (Goschler, 1991: 13). Such statements were taken literally. In West German policy circles, sporadic signs of Jewish compensations began being detectable. Indeed, as early as 1949, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer himself addressed the issue in an interview with the German-Jewish paper *Allgemein Wochenzeitung der Juden in Deutschland*:

> "Das deutsche Volk ist gewillt, das Unrecht, das in seinem Namen durch ein verbrecherisches Regime an den Juden verübt wurde, soweit wiedergutzumachen, wie dies nur möglich ist, nachdem Millionen Leben unwiederbringlich vernichtet worden sind. Diese *Wiedergutmachung*[8] betrachten wir als unsere Pflicht."/ "The German folk is willing in the measure that is possible, after millions of lives have been irretrievably destroyed, to *make amends* for the injustice that has happened, in their name, to the Jewish. We see this amend-

[8] It was the first time that Adenauer used that expression. A word should be said about *Wiedergutmachung.* While there is no direct English translation, its most relevant meaning is "something right again". (Hockerts, 2001: 167). The usage of the term was heavily criticized by Jewish and Israeli circles because it implies that the Holocaust was something that could be "made good" through payments. Israelis instead used the word *Shilumim.* More on that distinction later.

> making as our obligation". (Konrad Adenauer in interview with the Allgemein Wochenzeitung der Juden in Deutschland[9]).

As a gesture of goodwill, the Chancellor also proposed the shipment of goods worth 10 million Deutsche Marken (DM) for Israel to support its reconstruction efforts. It was the very first concrete proposal coming from Bonn. Noteworthy is that Adenauer's proposal was directed to "all the Jews in the world", many of whom did not live in Israel. But the Chancellor was not the only West German official who made public his amenability towards some form of Jewish and Israeli compensation. The FRG's liberal President, Theodor Heuss, also made similar declarations. In a speech at an event of the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation, he alluded to a feeling of shame that inhabited the West Germans after 1945, characterizing it as a "moral burden" (Geller, 2006:7). So straightforwardly addressing these ideas was a rarity at the time in political circles, and its Presidential origin sent an important message all across the political parties at the time. Interestingly, Heuss was quite ambiguous about certain aspects of this moral burden. For instance, at multiple times in his speeches, he urged to differentiate the *Kollektiveschuld* (collective guilt) from the *Kollektivscham* (collective shame), only the latter of which Germany was culpable. According to the *Bundespräsident*, the collective guilt of which the Germans as a whole were accused, was a gross simplification. It was also an illiberal tactic not unbeknownst to the N-S regime, for whom the very fact of being Jewish then was enough of a reason to incriminate a person. (Dahrenforf & Vogt, 1984: 382).

3.1.1 Jewish Claims

The history of the 1952 Reparations Agreement would be incomplete if it omitted the role of Jewish organizations. Indeed, they were an unavoidable actor in the talks, being represented by a delegation separate from the Israeli one. They also had different claims, representing Jews instead of Israelis. To better understand their function, it is meaningful to briefly lay out their origins, and their demands. While their role in the negotiations will be more superficially analyzed than the Israeli's, it is nonetheless important for the reader to grasp the full scope of interests and demands made by world Jewry. Furthermore, as will be shown, the excellent relationship between Nahum Goldmann and Konrad Adenauer undoubtedly encouraged the successful outcome of the negotiations.

[9] Konrad Adenauer. https://www.konrad-adenauer.de/seite/25-november-1949/. Last consulted 2. January 2023.

While West Germany was first coming to terms with the philosophical possibility of paying compensation for its past antisemitic crimes, Jews and Israelis had already been drafting their own concrete claims. General claims of German damage payments had been made in the immediate aftermath of WW2, to counterbalance the absence of Jewish reparations in both the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences. (Jelinek, 2014: 51). As early as 20 September 1945, the *Jewish Agency for Palestine* issued a note to the Allies, demanding that Germany indemnify and compensate Jews for their suffering. (Von Jena, 1986: 458). The first contact that international Jewish representatives attempted to initiate with West German officials took place through a letter, written by Gehrard M. Lewy on 26 March 1950. Lewy was a businessman, and a close friend of Noah Barou, the President of the European Section of the World Jewish Congress. He also had friendly relations with Herbert Blankenhorn, a member of the Christian-democratic party. The letter, sent in response to Adenauer's 10 million DM proposal, deplored the fact that only individuals - not the government - had taken a clear stance on West Germany's moral responsibility of *Wiedergutmachung.* It also highlights that Germany was not expected to compensate for the integrity of Jewish losses, as the number would be astronomically high. However, it was expected that the German people, through their representatives, make a clear acknowledgement of the Jewish suffering. Such recognition could only be attained through the admission of the crimes and the need for *Wiedergutmachung*, as well as the implementation of strict anti-discrimination laws in the *Bundesländer*. (Von Jena, 1986: 462). It is impossible to know if the letter made its way to the very peak of the FGR government. However, the letter set the basic moral premises for negotiations with world Jewry representatives, for whom official recognition of crimes was a *sine qua non* condition for negotiations.

Many American Jewish organizations, such as the Jewish World Congress and the American Jewish Committee also requested German compensation for the Jews who had fled Germany. These organizations decided, under the leadership of Dr Nahum Goldmann, to federate into the Jewish Material Claims Conference Against Germany (JCC) in 1951. Its purpose was straightforward. The JCC, which pooled over fifty American Jewish organisations, claimed to represent the interests of the diaspora Jewish communities, but also of the individual survivors of the Holocaust that were not covered by Israeli claims (Zweig, 2014, p. 244). Its requests were threefold. Firstly, it sought to

secure a collective compensation payment for the survivors of the Holocaust and the restitution of the properties and other assets that had been confiscated by the N-S regime. Secondly, it demanded that care be provided to the elderly who had survived the Holocaust. And thirdly, it pleaded for the proper lessons to be drawn from this calamitous event. (Jelinek, 2014: 579). Within its compensation claim, it included East German payments for its participation in the Holocaust and the confiscation of Jewish property, which the USSR would reject altogether (Tovy, 2013: 96). The JCC initiative was born when the Israeli Foreign Minister, Moshe Sharett, suggested to Nahum Goldmann (at the time president of the World Jewish Congress) to federate Jewish organizations in order to support Israeli claims and help implement them (Henry, 2002: 15). Goldmann accepted the proposals, as he thought that Israel alone, without representatives of all Jews, would be unable to negotiate successfully with the FRG (Henry, 2022: 15). To strengthen and reinforce their legitimacy, JCC and the Israeli government laid complementary claims, requiring separate payments. Yet its political purpose was the same: to get Germany to pay for its crimes. It was agreed that the Israeli State would strictly pursue repayments of a reparatory nature, meaning due in order to pay for the resettlement of the European Jewry that emigrated to Israel. It would not seek to represent all Jews (Goscher, 1991: 15). The JCC, on the other hand, would make a global claim for all Jewish victims.

3.1.2. Israeli claims

The issue of *Wiedergutmachung*, following Chancellor Adenauer and President Heuss's declarations, was put to rest for the remainder of 1950, at least insofar as the West Germans were concerned. Adenauer's 10 million DM proposal was completely ignored by the Israelis, as it was inconceivable to hold discussions with the FRG directly. Since its conception in May 1948, Israel had adhered to a strict boycott of anything that bore the name "Germany". (Dawidowicz, 1953: 473). Opinions held by Israeli officials, as well as the population, were explicitly anti-German. Concluding a deal with the perpetrators of immense Jewish suffering was simply not just unspeakable, but very much unthinkable. Yet four years after its foundation, the State of Israel would do exactly that. What changed?

Part of the answer lies in West Germany's quick regain of sovereignty and its subsequent reintegration with the West. Indeed, in the fall of 1950, Israel was presented with a fact

that forced it to react. The Western Allies' Foreign Ministers, meeting in New York to decide the future of their relations with the FGR, concluded that the "State of War" with Germany should be abrogated, and West Germany should be gradually reintegrated into world affairs, starting with membership to United Nations (UN) bodies, such as the World Health Organization (Jelinek, 2004: 81). It also suggested to Israel that it does the same.[10] The State of Israel was officially made aware of this decision on 24 October 1950 (PG, 1954: 259). Of course, this news came as a shock to the Israeli government. The American representative to Tel Aviv reported back to Washington that the Israelis had not - and would never - receive news about peace with Germany with anything but distrust (Jelinek, 2004: 81). Yet, Bonn's rapid reintegration was a shock for the Israelis, some of whom began facing the reality of the situation. The news led to many emotionally charged discussions within the Israeli Government and Ministries about strategies towards German reparations. Some voices within the Foreign Ministry began to be heard, arguing that limited, but direct relations with Bonn were unavoidable if the case for reparations was to be made. Within the Cabinet, several responses to the 1950 Allied note were drafted. They ranged from complete disregard for the matter, to recognition of the note, to rejection of peace proposals, and the outlining of Israeli reparations claims. No option seemed ideal to the members of the Cabinet, and no decision was taken until 3 January 1951, when it was determined that Israel would *not* bring forward reparation claims *directly* to West Germany. Instead, the Allies would be made aware of the Tel Avivian reparation demands, and it was expected that they pressure Bonn into payments (Brecher, 1973: 74; Jelinek, 2004: 83;). The first note conveying this message was sent to the Allies on 16 January 1951. In it, the Israelis made clear their ineptitude to follow the Allies' policy towards West Germany yet emphasised that they had a right to reparations, which would be guaranteed by a third party, preferably the Allies (PG, 1954: 259).

An Israeli second note, reiterating such claims, was sent to the Western Allies on 12 March 1951, though this time its language was much more forceful. The note made both physical and moral demands. Firstly, the text made the philosophical statement that no amount of money could "make good the suffering and agonies of the men, women and children put to death by every inhumane device" (Henry, 2002: 13). As such, the Israelis

[10] The State of Israel could not have been in a "State of war" with West Germany, as the Second World war ended before either State was created. Yet Israel's attitude towards Germany - complete detachment - would not be changed at that time. (Honing, 1954: 566).

began using the uncongenial term *Shilumim*, which translates from Hebrew as “payments" (Lavy, 1996: 19).[11] As a result of the moral gravity of the issue of reparations, it was demanded that the Allies couple the effective payments to the restitution of West German sovereignty (Brechenmacher, 2012: 309). Furthermore, the note berated the absence of Jewish people’s legal claims to reparations in the post-war agreements with Germany. Presenting itself, as had been decided within the Israeli government, as the sole negotiating partner concerning the reparations for Jewish victims, the Israeli note demanded that Germany pay for Jewish losses and damages incurred by the N-S regime, as well as the integration costs of immigration from Europe. In total, the note required a payment of $1,5 billion, or approximately three thousand dollars per immigrant that Israel had to rehabilitate. The note also added that the cost should not be borne alone by Bonn, but also by Berlin to the ratio of two-thirds and one-third correspondingly (Von Jena, 1986: 464).

The Israeli note fell on deaf ears at that time. The USSR never bothered to acknowledge it with a response (Tovy, 2013: 96) The American reply came a few months later on 5 July 1951, when in concert with Great Britain and France, the three Allied powers diplomatically made it clear that the Israelis were on their own to negotiate with the Germans. The Allies could not “impose " compensation payments onto West Germany (Brecher, 1973: 77). However, the Allies did recognize the *moral claim* that Israel and the Jewish people had to be compensated, but that there were legal obstacles paving the way, as neither State had existed at the time of the crimes, and because the two states had no official diplomatic relations and reciprocal recognition (Honig, 1954: 567). In private meetings between the American Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Ben Gurion, it was made clear from the American side that economic considerations, especially budgetary, were a concern, as deficits would necessarily be covered by USA taxpayer money (Jelinek, 2004: 100). It was clear from the Allied response, that they regarded West Germany as an independent, sovereign State. Direct contact with the Germans would be inevitable. The Allies could not - or would not - force West Germany to pay. If Israel sought reparations payments, she had to get them herself (Jelinek, 2004:100). Therefore, from an Israeli perspective, time became an important stimulant: Israel needed to take steps before Germany lost interest in the *Shilumim* agreement and became once again

[11] The contrast with West Germany’s klutzy *Wiedergutmachung* could not be starker.

active on the international scene. In order to accelerate the payments, direct contact would have to be taken up with Germany, even if they were to be shrouded in secrecy (Sharett, 2011: 6). Thus, it was decided that Israel would test the waters of German resolution by establishing unofficial contact through Jewish and Israeli representatives.

3.2. Negotiations leading up to the Luxembourg Agreement

The official negotiations that led to the Luxembourg Agreement took place in various, clearly distinguishable phases. There were three such stages, but this paper will mainly focus on the two first. The first segment is the preliminary contacts that paved the way for further negotiations. These sporadic meetings took place between 21 March 1952 and 6 May 1952. The second phase begins after the first round of negotiations fails. It consists of semi-official contacts between Adenauer and Böhm, as well as Goldmann and Moshe Sharrett on the other side. Within a few days, crucial meetings occur. It was during those days that a breakthrough was found in the negotiations with a West German proposal that built Israeli and Jewish delegations' confidence. The third phase is the final negotiation round. These talks are more of a technical nature and will not be the subject of any analysis. These rounds of negotiations spanned from the end of June 1952 to the signing of the agreement on 27 August 1952. In addition to temporal separations, negotiations also were multilevel in the sense that the single FRG delegation was consulting two delegations: those of the Israeli State (led by Shinnar), and the JCC delegation. (PG, 1954: 261)

3.2.1. Preliminary secretive meetings

To this end, on 19 April 1951, a secret meeting was organized in Paris between Chancellor Adenauer and Horowitz, the Israeli Finance Minister. It was the first meeting of high-level officials between the two countries. The Germans were open to hearing the Israeli demands, while the Israeli side wanted to hear a clear willingness to come to an agreement. Horowitz came with two demands. The first was that West Germany officially and publicly recognized and denounced the crimes committed by the N-S regime. The second request was that negotiations for collective reparations begin at $1.5 billion. A lower proposition would result in the failure of the talks (Brechenmacher, 2012: 310). There was, again, a clear underlining of the moral, as well as physical responsibility that Germany bore. Such demands had been made before. To much of the surprise of the

Israeli officials, Adenauer posed no resistance to the conditions and assured his counterpart that there would be no issue concerning the amount. For the Israelis, this meeting was an important step in the right direction, as public recognition by West Germany would justify the direct engagement, to which the Israeli public opinion was vehemently opposed at the time (Sharett, 2011: 17).

In parallel to the tentative and informal FRG-Israeli dialogue, other Jewish claimants were working towards a German declaration of moral recognition. Indeed, Noah Barou from the World Jewish Conference, alongside Adenauer's advisor Blankenhorn, was formulating the declaration of confrontation with the German past. The counsellor had been tasked by Adenauer in June 1950 with writing a governmental declaration following discussions with Jewish and Israeli representatives (Bundesarchiv: 9 June 1950). The question of "collective guilt" quickly became the centre of discussions as Blankenhorn wanted the declaration to be acceptable not just for the Chancellor himself, but for all political parties, institutions and even the German people (Deutschkron, 1983: 20). It was feared that recognition of collective guilt would prove unacceptable to West Germany at the time. The resulting draft clearly distinguished between the Third Reich and the German people. Yet the paper equally consecrated the moral need to compensate victims of N-S (Von Jena, 1986: 463). It was an important step because the Jewish world in effect agreed to drop its indictment of the German people in order to secure an official declaration. The proclamation was put on the agenda of the Cabinet meeting of 26 September 1951. It received minor amendments, bearing witness to the FRG's willingness to make explicit their intentions regarding the recognition of Jewish suffering (Bundesarchiv: 26 September 1951) The next day, Chancellor Adenauer pronounced the governmental declaration in front of the Bundestag. The plenary debate session that followed suit was marked by two minutes of silence to commemorate the Jewish victims (Jelinek, 2004: 114) In a speech that is now historic, the message could not be misunderstood.

> "Im Namen des deutschen Volkes sind (...) unsagbare Verbrechen begangen worden, die zur moralischen und materiellen *Wiedergutmachung* verpflichten."(...) Die Bundesregierung ist bereit, gemeinsam mit Vertretern des Judentums und des Staates Israel (...), eine Lösung des materiellen Wiedergutmachungsproblems herbeizuführen, um damit den Weg zur seelischen Bereinigung unendllichen Leides zu ercleichtern" / "Undescrible crimes have been

> committed that require a *moral* and material *amendsmaking* have been done in the name of the German folk. (...) The German Federal government is ready, together with the representatives of Judaism and the State of Israel (...) to bring about a solution to the amends-making problem, in order to ease the path to moral reparation from unending suffering". (Vogel, 1987: 46). Translated by this author and emphasis added.

The magnitude of Adenauer's declaration before the West German Parliament could not be understated. It was West Germany's official invitation to negotiate with Israel, and the world was held as a witness. The Chancellor's words resonated loudly in the mind and heart of Nahum Goldmann:

> "What was truly revolutionary was the fact that the new Germany was to make global restitution to the Jewish people as a whole to help it secure a new life (...). To ask reparations for these people was as audacious as it was ethically justified". (Goldmann, 1969: 271 cited in Henry, 2002 :14)

Adenauer's *Wiedergutmachung* policy led to a secretive meeting on 6 December 1951 in London between Goldmann and the Chancellor. Goldmann, recently elected chairman of the JCC, had discussed this with the Israeli Prime Minister before the meeting. Both agreed that it would be requested from Adenauer that the negotiations begin at the sum of $1 billion and that the Chancellor make that promise without consulting his Cabinet (Von Jena, 1986: 465). In his elocution, Goldmann expounded on the great moral significance material compensation would be for the recognition of Jewish suffering. In addition, Goldmann requested that Adenauer's promises would be put pen to paper, so as to further solidify the Chancellor's credibility. In his memoirs, Blankenhorn, present at the meeting, remembers the Chancellor's highly metaphorical reply:

> "Sie werden es darum zu würdigen wissen, wenn ich Ihnen sage, dass ich, während Sie gesprochen habe, die Flügel der Weltgeschichte in diesem Raum gespürt habe. Mein Wille zur Wiedergutmachung ist aufrichtig. Ich betrarchte sie als ein großes moralisches Problem und eine Ehrenschuld des neuen Deutschland. (...) Ich bin bereit, die Verantwortung für eine Erklärung, die sie wünschen, auf mich zu nehmen. Ich bitte Sie, gleich jetzt (...) den Entwurf eines solchen Briefes zu diktieren (...)." "You will appreciate it, if I tell you that while you were speaking, I felt the wings of world history in this room. My will to make amends is sincere. I see it as a great moral problem and debt of honor for the new Germany. I am willing to take responsibility for whatever declaration you desire. I ask that you dictate a draft of

> such a letter right this moment." (Goldmann, 1980: 382 cited in Von Jena, 1986: 465) Translated by this author.

The written declaration that resulted from these discussions contained the requests made by the March 1951 note sent to the Allies that had been left unresponded. Indeed, it was agreed that the compensation sum would be no lower than one billion dollars, which would be carried out in the form of German goods supplies (Adenauer, 1967: 138). These could come a second too early, as Israel's economy was on the brink of implosion. Faced with Israel's total bankruptcy, Israel's Finance Ministry was in dire need of money, no matter its provenance (Jelinek, 1989: 133). However, the signing of an agreement necessitated the beginning of official negotiations, which was beyond unpopular at home. With Adenauer's letter in his hand, the Israeli Prime Minister had at least a tool with which to work public opinion, and most importantly, the national Parliament. It was indeed needed, because large segments of the Israeli public observed the declaration with mistrust, accusing West Germany of deceiving the international community without actually intending to fulfil its promises. In addition, any compensation was in any way just the rightful restitution of the Aryanized goods, not a testament of good faith (Jelinek, 2004: 137).

Ben Gurion understandably faced fierce opposition in the Knesset when he introduced the idea of direct negotiations with West Germany on 7 January 1952. Debates were heavy and intense, foreshadowing a deep national crisis. Members of the Knesset (MK) warned of the loss of the country's identity. For instance, Elimelech Rimatlt argued against the acceptance of German money, no matter how logical that would be because the Israeli nation had "a vision", a set of values and moral foundations that sets it apart from the "logical" economic calculations. There would never be reconciliation with the Germans, he argued, for it would bring about the moral destruction of the Jewish people of Israel (Lorch, 1993: 711). Another representative likewise equated the negotiations with the "selling of the soul" to a "neo-Nazi" Germany in which the murderers and plunderers had been all but eradicated (Brecher, 1973: 76) Menachem Begin, a hard-nosed conservative who would later become Prime Minister himself, was particularly rancorous towards Ben Gurion's proposal. In his speech, he made half-conceived threats of raising arms against the government, for the greatness of the matter called for it. According to him, the Jewish people of Israel would not stand idle in the face of

negotiations with Germany, and confrontations with the government would lead to deaths. As such, Begin begged his fellow representatives to “prevent a holocaust” in the “concentration camps" of the government (Lorch, 1993: 731). Such intense sentiments were undoubtedly shared by the 15.000 Israelis who had amassed the surroundings of the Knesset, hurling stones at the building and police officers and chanting vituperations of “blood money” (Engert, 2010: 120). On 9 January 1952, following two days of heated and passionate debate, the Israeli Parliament adopted the government proposal by 61 votes to 50 (Von Jena, 1986: 466). The USA Secretary of State Dean Acheson told the Israeli ambassador that he would watch the proceedings of the negotiations with “sympathy” and “interest” (Wollfsohn, 1988: 700).

3.2.2. Beginning of official negotiations

The *official* negotiations could therefore be launched. In their second official meeting on 18 February 1952, Goldmann forwarded the Knesset’s decision to Adenauer, whose Cabinet was already aware for a month and had prepared for the commencement of negotiations. Adenauer had nominated Dr Franz Böhm at the helm of the West German delegation. He had been suggested by State Secretary Hallstein for his particular closeness with the matter of *Wiedergutmachung.* He shared the same viewpoint as the Chancellor on West Germany's moral obligation. (Adenauer, 1967: 139). During the N-S era, Böhm was openly critical of the persecution of a Jewish administrative official in Germany. In fact, as a professor of law at the time, it got him expelled from his position. (Brechenmacher, 2012: 6). The likeminded professor was supposed to represent Adenauer’s government in the negotiations with the JCC as well as the State of Israel, which began on 21 March 1952 in Wassenaar, near The Hague in the Netherlands. The location was chosen instead of Brussels out of fear of right-wing Jewish terrorist attacks against the delegations. (Adenauer, 1967: 139).

From the onset, the Jewish and Israeli delegations made their expectations transparent. Negotiations would be conceivable only if a clear sum and a clear payment method were to be determined as the basis for further discussions. The following joint demands were expressed. Firstly, there would be a global reparations payment of $1 billion to the State of Israel for the resettlement and rehabilitation of refugees (half a billion was asked of East Germany). Secondly, there would be a global payment of $500 million to the Jewish Claims Conference for the compensation of heirless claims. Thirdly, there would be

efforts in West German laws to facilitate individual compensation claims-making. Concerning the method of payment, the delegations demanded that there be foreign exchange payments (dollars or British pounds), at the level of three or four million dollars per month. The rest of the payments would be made through the delivery of German goods, at about $100 million per year. (Adenauer, 1967: 140).

The West Germans received those demands without committing. Indeed, for the time being, German negotiators predominantly highlighted the financial and economic difficulties that their country was facing on top of already crushing debts stemming from the war damage payments from both World wars. (PG, 1954: 262). The German delegation also made its own position evident. An agreement would be found if the demands met the FRG's capacity for payments. West Germany would also wait for the outcome of the London Conference for its final accord.[12] The Jewish and Israeli delegations felt betrayed by the displayed West German attitude and strategy. For them, coupling Wassenaar and London were in complete contradiction with the earnest spirit of the promises and declarations that Adenauer had made just months before.

In reality, this decision was made on 5 April 1952 in a Cabinet meeting (Schwarz et al, 2000: 260-269). On the occasion, both delegation leaders, Abs and Böhm, as well as the Finance Minister and the Chancellor were present. During that meeting, Adenauer shared the information that McCloy had warned him that the fall of the Israeli government due to the failure of negotiations with the Israelis had to be carefully avoided. Joseph Abs repeatedly affirmed that the outcome of the London negotiations would define any West German ability of payment, not just to Israel or to the JCC. Abs furthermore warned that the USA would eventually not support reparations agreements, because they would have to provide the funds. As Böhm explained the state of negotiations, Adenauer made clear that they should not get "cheated" by the Israelis into accepting actual, arithmetic-based reparation sums (Schwarz et al, 2000: 263). Instead, the negotiations were merely supposed to be a sign of "reconciliation". Therefore, Adenauer instructed the head of the

[12] Since February 1952; and in parallel to the negotiations in Wassenaar, West Germany had also been negotiating at the London Debt Conference. At the head of the German delegation stood the banker Joseph Abs. Its purpose was to deal with Germany's pre-war and war debt. West Germany's goal was to reduce as much of its debt towards foreign creditors, while assuring the continuation of financial and economic support from the US. Its total pre and post-war debt amounted to more than 30 billion DM but received considerable restructuring so as not to burden economic growth. (Bundesarchiv: 1952)

German delegation in Wassenaar not to name any precise figure. More pressing than the amount was the question of methods of payment.

Even there, Adenauer showed suspicion. In the eyes of the Chancellor, the shipment of goods was a tactic for the Israelis to industrialize their country on the back of West Germany. Other members of the Cabinet also showed detachment from the issue. Joseph Abs, the negotiator in London, emphasised that West Germany was in no capacity to pay annuities of more than 10 to 15 million dollars per year, to which Böhm reminded the Chancellor of the obligations that he had handwritten to Goldmann. If the negotiations were to reflect the attitudes displayed, it would be better to reject the Israeli claims altogether so as not to build hopes up. Küster, Böhm's second in the German delegation, also warned that West Germany would "lose face" if the negotiations with Israel were to depend on financial considerations stemming from London or Washington's generosity. (Schwarz et al, 2000: 266). Adenauer, at the end of the meeting, concluded that the delegation in the Netherlands existed only for the "psychological" effect it produced and that the Germans had "convinced" themselves that there was something to be paid to Israel, without understanding how or when those payments should be made. (Schwarz et al, 2000: 267). Böhm was in effect asked by Adenauer to buy time for the delegation in London to report a clearer image of West Germany's credit situation. (Von Jena, 1986: 467).

3.2.3. Freezing of negotiations

The ambivalence of Adenauer's Cabinet became glaringly obvious to the Israeli delegation, and by extension, the government. Foreign Minister Sharett, in a Cabinet meeting on 6 April 1952, shared his apprehensions concerning the "financially-oriented" German Ministers who wished to couple the outcome of the reparation negotiations with the creditor's conference in London. He felt that the German refusal to commit to a fixed sum, and was a challenge to Adenauer's "integrity". (Sharett, 2011: 314). In the eyes of the Jewish and Israeli delegations, the German attitude, namely, to inscribe the *Shilumim* on the "bankruptcy sheets", as if the repayments for NS-induced damages and losses were compared with its other foreign debts was seen as Germany trying to elude to intrinsically *sui generis* character of the claims. (Jelinek, 2004: 177).

Sensing the dwindling Israeli patience, the German delegation was ordered to concede to the $1 billion demand, but to specifically link it to the outcome of the London Conference. The Israeli delegation refused the proposal, and the negotiations were halted on 8 April 1952. (Jelinek, 1990: 125). Looking at a dead-end in the negotiations, Israel tried to lobby the USA to build pressure on Adenauer's government. However, America's position on *Shilumim* payments was the source of Israeli overestimation. While there is evidence that the USA put some pressure on Bonn, it was nowhere near what the Jews or Israelis had wished for. In a meeting, on behalf of USA Secretary of State Dean Acheson, McCloy told Adenauer that the USA were interested in finding a satisfactory solution for both sides and that the Israelis were under great political difficulty, in regard to which the failure of the Wassenaar would only exacerbate. (Jelinek, 2004: 179). Notwithstanding, Acheson also wanted to make clear that the issue was essentially West German, and that there should be no mistake as to the US's supposed obligation towards a reparation agreement. There was, in fact, none. (Jelinek, 2004: 179) However, there could be "great repercussions" for the FGR if their promises of negotiations were to be found empty, Acheson warned McCloy. (Frohn, 1991: 20). On the other side of the Atlantic, the Secretary of State advised his President not to make a public statement where he might show expectations from the Wassenaar negotiations, for it might lead the West Germans to think that the USA were ready to financially back such an agreement. (Goschler, 1991: 20).

On 23 April, Böhm once again pleaded to the Chancellor to make the moral choice over the financial one. In a biting letter, he wrote that

> "the overcoming of the ungraspable bitterness, that the National Socialist crimes have evoked in all Jews good-natured people of the world, but also the overcoming the terrible blow that they have made to the *German reputation*, is the most important and pressing issue facing German politics. It is at this present moment the German contribution to the reconstruction of a free world (...)". (Translated by this author. Found in Adenauer, 1967: 144).

Böhm clearly emphasized that the issue concerned West Germany's identity. The credibility of the Federal Republic's self-identity was in play. Adenauer, in subsequent meetings, replied to Böhm's worries that the Israeli words should not be taken too literally, as the State was fighting for its survival. In addition, the Israeli delegation was well aware of the positive effect that a favourable outcome in London would represent

for their own reparation claims: the more creditworthiness it got on the international markets, the more West Germany could pay for the reconciliation (Von Jena, 1986: 474).

3.2.4. Breakdown of negotiations

On 6 May 1952, the Knesset, debating the advancements of the negotiations, decided to pull the plug on the whole endeavour, citing West Germany's apostasy of their promises. In their speeches, representatives rejected a continuation of direct discussions with West Germany, who had disrespected its word on their promises by insisting on coupling Wassenaar and London, as well as insulting Jewish suffering by demanding discounts of reparation and compensation claims. (Sharett, 2011: 330). Fifty MK voted in favour of ceasing negotiations, 34 against.

The breakdown of negotiations alarmed Adenauer, who ordered the continuation of unofficial discussions with the Israelis. Ten days later, in a Cabinet meeting, Joseph Abs, the leader of the London delegation proposed that an offer of 100 million DM per year be made to the Israelis, to be funded through the delivery of goods as well as the taking of credit. This offer was well below Israeli expectations. Von Jena asserts that Abs only made that proposal because he had heard that the British had just refused credit to the State of Israel, which meant that the acute economic situation of the country could be played to the advantage of West Germany. (Von Jena, 1986: 473). Finance Minister Schäffer, yet again highlighting the precarious state of West German financial capacities, argued that essential Marshall Plan resources intended for the industrial recovery would need to deviate to afford such figures. Furthermore, the delivery of German goods as payments would lead to a contraction of the West German economy. But Adenauer believed that an offer of up to 150 million DM per year seemed reasonable without needing to fear serious economic decline. In fact, he argued, the economic and financial danger would be much greater for the country if the negotiations were to fail, as the Federal republic's creditworthiness on the international markets would be put in jeopardy. Therefore, it was decided that Joseph Abs, who was to meet Israeli representatives in London three days later, would make the offer. Böhm, who had argued for much greater *Wiedergutmachung* payments - amounting to around 200 million DM per year - refused to take part in the meeting out of protest for the insufficient proposal. (Bundesarchiv: 16 May 1952). In his memories, Adenauer denies being aware of the proposal made by Abs. (Adenauer, 1967: 147)

It turns out that Abs's proposal contained another bombshell: West Germany would only pay for half of the *Shilumim*. East Germany was to cover the rest. (Jelinek, 2004: 193). Unsurprisingly, Abs' proposal erupted in a crisis on 19 May 1952. Both the Jewish and the Israeli delegations found the initiative to be utterly "unacceptable". (Brechenmacher, 2012: 314) On 20 May 1952, in reaction to Abs' proposal, Dr Franz Böhm resigned from his position as lead negotiator, in protest against Bonn's "evasion from its obligations". (PG: 1954: 263). Küster went on to give interviews to radios, blaming Schäffer's antisemitic arguments for the shameful state of Germany's *Wiedergutmachung.* (Jelinek, 1990: 130) Böhm's resignation provoked feverish reactions in the Cabinet. The Vice-Chancellor Blücher stood just short of accusing him of treason by alleging that Böhm was "convinced of German collective guilt". Moreover, his lucidity was generally questioned, and Justice Minister Dehler even went as far as to assert that Israel had no right to make moral claims, as they were just that: moral. (Von Jena, 1986: 474).

As Israel's repudiation and Böhm's subsequent resignation became public news, Chancellor Adenauer suddenly became the subject of intense pressure both at home and abroad. In the Bundestag, the Foreign Affairs Committee pressed the government to prioritize "satisfaction" over the "law". In other words, moral debts should prevail over financial ones. (Von Jena: 475; Adenauer, 1967: 147). The international press had also followed the negotiations, and published incendiary articles to the point that the USA Department of State asked the American journalists to abstain, so as not to build up popular opinion in favour of too great West German payments, which the USA would have to bear (Jelinek, 2004: 189) Deeply preoccupied with the state of the negotiations, Dr Goldmann, the Chairman of the JCC, who had up until then decided to observe from a distance, reached out to Konrad Adenauer. On the 21 of May 1952, the Chancellor received a letter from him expressing his deepest disappointment of the "insulting" proposal of 100 DM million, which was in clear contradiction to the spirit of his past declarations. In a highly emotionally charged display, Goldmann exhorted Adenauer, the "representative and speaker for the *Wiedergutmachung* philosophy", to rekindle relations with the negotiators with a proposal that matches the seriousness of the crimes. (Adenauer, 1967: 148). There was a clear petition to Adenauer's conscience and sense of morality. The same letter was sent to McCloy (Jelinek, 2004: 193). The crisis erupted at a bad moment for the Federal republic, as Bonn was about to sign important defence

agreements with the Allies[13] and its handling of the *Shilumim* issue cast a bad light on Adenauer's leadership, as well as West Germany's reputation.

3.2.5. Adenauer's proposal

On the day of Abs' proposal, Adenauer invited Böhm to hold discussions. Adenauer wished to know what he could do to make the Israeli and Jewish delegations come back to the negotiating table. Böhm proposed what he had already recommended in the past: 3 billion DM. Adenauer accepted and sent Böhm to Paris to meet Goldmann on 23 May 1952. Adenauer wanted to receive Goldmann's support for the following proposal: 3 billion DM, to be paid exclusively in goods over a period of eight to twelve years. The first two annual payments should amount to 400 million DM, then followed by 250 million DM annual payments (Adenauer, 1967: 148). Bonn adopted simplified individual claim laws, and the JCC received compensation for heirless property amounting to $107 million (instead of the petitioned $500 million). Goldmann spoke favourably to such a proposition. A few alterations were made, such as the introduction of direct currency payments. Both the Israeli and Jewish delegations accepted the Chancellor's offer, and the final phase of negotiations resumed on 24 June (PG, 1954: 263). However, it was decided between Goldmann and Adenauer that the JCC would negotiate with Israel for a share of its endowment. (Adenauer, 1967: 149). Contradicting *Wiedergutmachung* opponents, the shareholders at the London Conference took no issue with the news and accepted Böhm's plan. (Jelinek, 2004: 195). The USA immediately reiterated that it would not provide Bonn with the financing.

On 10 June 1952, a fortnight after the integration of West Germany into the EDC, Adenauer and Goldmann joined their respective delegations to polish the last details of the agreement. It was concluded that Bonn would make reparations of 3.5 billion DM, at the rate of 250 million DM per year, for which West Germany would have to take on more debt. (Adenauer, 1967: 152) Despite Adenauer's clear positioning in favour of *Wiedergutmachung* payments, the Chancellor nonetheless had to pull all the levers to counter unrelenting opposition. There was a clear backlash on 17 June 1952, during the

[13] The agreement in question was the European Defense Community (EDC). Based on the Pleven Plan, its purpose was to create a pan-European army to which West Germany was to contribute. It was seen as a method to utilize West Germany as a military ally while maintaining control over its military power. (Large, 1996: 91). The possibility of rearming Germany caused great distress to the Israelis and Jews alike, who often made their objection clear to the Allies. (Jelinek, 2004: 184).

Cabinet meetings where Adenauer presented the offer to his Ministers. Schäffer firstly reiterated his opinion that the current state of the German economy and budget could not afford to give out payments of 200 DM million per year and that if this decision were to go through, it would only be possible through the credit-issuing through the banks of *Bundesländer*, not the Federal state. (Bundesarchiv: 17 June 1952). In addition, and perhaps more distastefully, Schäffer attempted to shed doubt about the calculations that the Israelis had presented to make their claims. He contested the number of refugees for which Bonn should pay, arguing that almost 340,000 migrants came from countries in the communist blocs, whose reasons for migration could not be attached to the heritage of the Third Reich (Bundesarchiv: 17 June 1952). According to him, the FRG should be absolved from paying for immigrants from Bulgaria, Hungary or Romania who had fled to Israel because of antisemitism attributable to communism, not Nazism. In addition, Schäffer also rejected the Jewish demand that individual compensations claim legislation to be introduced in West Germany. *In fine,* he declared himself unable to support the idea of reparations brought forth by the Chancellor. Adenauer retorted that West Germany's economic and political situation would be far more precarious if the topic was not resolved quickly. (Von Jeina, 1986: 477; Brechenmacher, 2013: 317) From Cabinet minutes, it is clear that it was Adenauer's resilience against the onslaught by some of his Ministers that pushed *Wiedergutmachung* over the line. The Cabinet adopted the proposal, and the Agreement was signed in Luxembourg on 10 September 1952. (Agreement Between the State of Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany, 1952)

Chapter 4: The Ontological/Material Dilemma

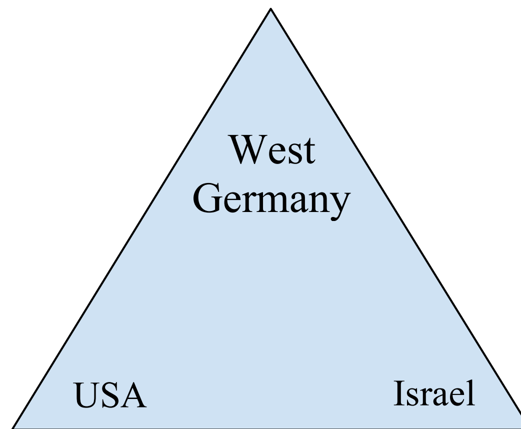
The case of the Luxembourg Agreement of 1952 can be analyzed through the perspective of ontological security. This section will aim at interpreting the history of the negotiation in light of the theoretical components that were explained in the first chapter of this paper. The ontological security of three states, West Germany, Israel, and the USA will be analyzed, with an emphasis on FRG. A theoretical framework of analysis will be proposed to understand each State's decision-making during the negotiations. A general appreciation of the ontological perspective will also be given.

Following the analysis of the negotiations, it is argued that the three most important players, West Germany, Israel, and the United States, all had to strike balances between ontological and material considerations, and whether to securitize or insecuritize them. These decisions can be described as an "ontological/material security dilemma". All of those States had two sets of choices when making their foreign policy decision concerning reparations. It could choose to increase its material security or decrease it. Identically, a State can also pursue choices that increase its ontological security, just as it can accept to decrease it. In this dilemma, one factor's (in)securitization can have an impact on the other factor's (in)security. For example, the decision to securitize ontologically can have a long-lasting effect on its material security. There is also a temporal component to this dilemma, as short-term security can increase or decrease the State's security in the long term. In the figure below, these are marked by (LT) for the long-term and (ST) for the short-term. The equations in each of the triangle's points should be understood as calculations that States made.

It will be argued that West Germany committed to losing some of its short-term ontological and material security to *gain* long-term material and ontological security. Israel, on the other hand, chose *long-term* material security over *short-term* ontological security. The United States, pressed by geopolitical events, decided that it would not reduce its *long-term* material security for *short-term* ontological security. The following figure illustrates the material/ontological insecurity dilemma, as it was perceived during the negotiations for the Luxembourg Agreement.

Figure 1. The ontological/material security dilemma applied to West Germany, Israel, and the USA during the negotiations of the 1952 Luxembourg Agreement.

Undergoing material insecurity (ST) and ontological insecurity (ST) would eventually bring material security (LT) and ontological security (LT).



Undergoing ontological insecurity (ST) and material security (ST) would eventually bring material security (LT).

Undergoing ontological insecurity (ST) would eventually bring material security (LT).

4.1.1 West Germany

The FRG's response to its own dilemma can be characterized as the following: an increase in both its short-term ontological and material *insecurity* would result in an increase in both ontological and material *security* in the longer term. We argue here that West Germany's ontological security and its material security were intimately linked to a point where they were inseparable in the mind of the Chancellor. Let us take the first part of the equation. As we have seen, before the negotiations, the USA had made clear its conditions regarding West Germany's reintegration with the Western world. This is in effect what McCloy and Acheson had stated in the early days of the Federal Republic, announcing that "the Jewish issue would be considered *the* test of character for the young and emerging democracy" (Engert, 2010:115. Emphasis added). As such, the test of Jewish treatment was both an ontological, but also a material one. Could it effectively protect the Jewish people within their territory? But also, could the Germans accept the Jews as part of their national *Volk*? Those were the internal ontological and material requirements for the Allies to grant some competencies back to German authorities. The

material and ontological security considerations were already linked domestically in 1945 by the US, even before the FRG was born. When Bonn became a partially sovereign State, the Allies' domestic expectations were superposed onto Bonn's foreign relations. In Adenauer's mind, longstanding material and ontological security would be the outcome of temporary insecurity. He explains this several times in Cabinet meetings, pointing to the great dangers that West Germany faced were it to fail negotiations with Israel. His preoccupation with embellishing the FRG's reputation in the eyes of the world also points to the cardinal belief that West Germany's future was directly dependent on its ability to prove to the Allies that it "belonged". Belonging inextricably implies a certain compatibility between the self-identity and the self-identity of another.

Let us look at the first part of the aforementioned equation. The material and ontological *insecurity* are undeniable: material reparations and recognition of guilt are sources of insecurity. Material compensations are the easiest to comprehend. In the early years of the Federal Republic, the economic situation was so precarious, and resources so few, that adding additional debt was a real risk to the reconstruction efforts. Failure to eradicate poverty would also make West Germany more prone to falling to communism, which naturally unnerved the US. The London Conference and the rolling out of the extensive Marshall Plan were in full swing at the time of the negotiations. Their heavy footprint is felt across the negotiations. In fact, it was by far the biggest subject of contention between the German delegation in London and Wassenaar, epitomized by Schäffer's utter obstinacy against the agreement. The other source of insecurity is the recognition of guilt. Unlike material insecurity, based on economic and financial considerations, this insecurity touches upon the ontology of West Germany as a State. It deals with the recognition that West Germany is the continuation of the Third Reich, and thus bears responsibility for the Holocaust. Admitting this was for Adenauer, who was trying to reintegrate the West, a painful yet essential step. He, therefore, reiterated that belief many times, most manifestly in front of the Bundestag. The recognition of guilt by Bonn in the name of the German people might, at first, seem counterproductive. Indeed, the Federal Republic was trying to adorn its image in the eyes of the world, not tarnish it. But as rightly sensed by the Chancellor and Böhm, West Germany in fact needed to integrate the Holocaust and other atrocities at the heart of its reformed identity, in order to prove to others that it was not fleeing from its past. Thus, it had to commit to *insecurity*, both on a material (payments in a fragile economy and general poverty) and an ontological

plane (admission of guilt). But Adenauer's FRG did not undergo identity reckoning and fiscal tightening for naught. As stated before, its goal was to reintegrate the "family of nations" (Jelinek, 1990: 123). But the insecurity brought by material and ontological realignment was a necessary condition for the trust-building that would bring about material and ontological security. That is the second part of the equation for West Germany.

The material security aspect that would result from *Westintegration* was twofold. From an economic perspective, the creditworthiness of the FRG, which was crucial to finance rebuilding efforts, was a function of its reputation. In addition, it was also necessary for Bonn to be a recipient of the Marshall Plan checks. This is most compellingly verified in Adenauer's correspondence to Abs on 8 April 1952, where he writes the following passage:

> "I believe that if we succeed in reconciling the Jewry, at least its powerful men, we will be able to count on stronger economic help than if we let this stark contrast persist. Apart from this reason, I am also moved by the sense of moral obligation we have towards Judaism. Of course, the outcome of your negotiations in London, which is decisive for our economic future, should not suffer from this." (Wollfsohn, 1988: 728) Translated by this author.

From a military security perspective, the rearmament of West Germany, in order to become a bulwark against Soviet aggression, was similarly a product of renewed trust. France's protests against rearming, and the *Assemblée Nationale*'s ultimate revocation were testaments to the deep mistrust that reigned between the neighbours. Reconciliation with Israel would, for Konrad Adenauer, be an important step to reassure the West that the Federal Republic was different from the Third Reich. Thus, we can conclude that for West Germany, its foreign policy was ultimately dictated by the assumption that it would have to commit to material and ontological insecurity in order to secure its reintegration with the West, which would provide it with its material and ontological security.

Besides the ontological/material security dilemma, other aspects of the theoretical framework can be commented on. For instance, as mentioned in the theoretical part of this paper, biographical narratives are often instrumentalized. In particular, the selection of certain aspects of collective memories, and the rejection of certain others are common for leaders to justify certain policies. (Subotic, 2016: 611; Banchoff, 1996: 38). In the

case of West German leadership, it is argued that some selective instrumentalization has occurred. Indeed, even in the early days of the Federal Republic, Theodor Heuss's public declarations sought to undermine the arguments of German collective guilt, which can be understood as attempting to lead official collective memory in a direction that alleviates the German self-identity of (allegedly disproportionate) moral burden. Such a selective approach was also adopted by the Chancellor. While his famous declaration in front of the Bundestag may have recognized the atrocities that had happened under the N-S regime, he implicitly rejects the charge of collective guilt by the German people. Of course, an absolute rejection of German collective guilt is probably not reflective of the actual history, as there were considerable numbers of Germans who had directly or indirectly taken part in the crimes or had stood idle. On the other hand, the Israeli public discourse was also imprinted with a selection of memories. Indeed, in the Knesset, debates about reparations with Germany were filled with amalgamations that were supposed to incriminate the German nation as a whole. The greatest leftist critic of the negotiations was Menachem Begin, who argued that "from the Jewish point of view, there is not a single German who is not a Nazi, nor is there a single German who is not a murderer." (Lorch, 1993: 723). In contrast to Adenauer's complete and utter rejection of collective guilt, Begin's view is equally extreme. Indeed, just like there were co-conspirators, there were those who resisted the N-S regime. But such views were held by large segments of the population, media, and the political class. Indeed, whereas Germans felt indifference towards the subject, the Israeli and Jewish opinions were passionate. Direct negotiations were seen as a betrayal for the victims of the Holocaust.

But even then, material security arguments, pointing to the extreme precarity of the young State of Israel ultimately prevailed over ontological security considerations. Proponents of direct negotiations argued that it would be immoral for Israel and Jews not to claim *Shilumim* because the properties of the Jewish victims would remain in the hands of the thieves and murderers who had taken their possession. (PG, 1954: 267). German political opinion, towards the end of negotiations of the Luxembourg agreements, shows that the political views had not been influenced by Adenauer's attempt at *Wiedergutmachung*. Asked, in August 1952, days before the signing of the historic agreement, who between Adenauer and Hitler had done more for Germany, nearly three times more respondents answered the latter. Only three per cent of Germans chose the current Chancellor, which meant that the vast majority were unable, or unwilling to answer the question. Hitler was

also still relatively well appreciated, with nearly one in five respondents agreeing that he would have been a great German leader, were it not for the war. (Gardner Feldmann, 2012: 29- 30) These figures demonstrate the great aloofness of the population to the whole matter of reparations towards the Jews. Germans were, at this stage, unreceptive to their country's attempts to confront their past. Changes in opinion about the NS regime would only be discerned a decade later. Sympathetic attitudes towards Jews surprisingly went down after the Agreement was signed. Opinion polls show that almost half of respondents considered the reparations "unnecessary", whereas 35 per cent regarded it positively. In addition, West Germany's relations were not deemed to be as worthy of pursuing as other States. Close cooperation with Israel, along with Russia and Poland, was superfluous, according to many West Germans. (Gardner Feldmann, 2012: 31).

Another interesting aspect to consider - and which has only been briefly touched upon - is the reparations issue in the East/West German contest for international recognition. Although the Hallstein doctrine, which consists of the rupture of relations with States who recognized East Germany, would only come into full effect in 1955, (Horigan, 2002: 101), it could be argued that it affected West Germany's feet-dragging. Indeed, Bonn's attitude could have been dramatically altered if East Germany had responded positively to *Shilumim* claims. For West Germany, the very existence of East Germany posed a considerable ontological threat, due to the asserted indivisibility of the German people. Therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that if negotiations with East Berlin had taken place, West Germany would have adopted a stronger, speedier, and less contrarian position concerning sums. Otherwise, there might have been a risk that Israel could have recognized East Germany, instead of West Germany. These considerations would become instrumental a decade later when normalization of relations between Bonn and Tel Aviv was on the table, and the Arab States threatened to recognize East Germany as a response. The Hallstein[14] doctrine, of which the outlines began to be seen, can therefore be interpreted as a cognitive "bridge", whose purpose is to link the united self-identity of the Germans as a unified nation and the realities of the fission of the German spirit by the Iron Curtain. The need for the "reunification" of the German people, and therefore the self-identity, is a reason for it to pursue policies that would have gotten the Allies' support

[14] Walter Hallstein was himself the leading figure of the FRG's Foreign Office at the time of the negotiations, and thus could exert influence on the Chancellor's decisions.

for German reunification. It may well be that the reunification of the two Germanies was Adenauer's ultimate material security objective, even if during the negotiations, he did not refer to it.

4.2.2 Israel

Let us apply the same exercise to the State of Israel. It too stood before the ontological/material security dilemma. Indeed, previous to the direct negotiations with West Germany, Israel found itself in a precarious situation. Its material security was all but endangered. Its economy was nearing collapse, not least in part because of the massive waves of European Jewish immigration. Its physical security was also greatly in peril by the Arab States that rejected its very right to existence. Israel had just fought a two-year civil and international war for its independence. (Morris, 2008: 79). Its existence remained under constant threat. On the other hand, its ontological security was also imperilled by direct negotiations with West Germany. Indeed, in light of the hypersensitive debates that surrounded the Knesset's approval to begin negotiations, it is not difficult to argue that the matter of *Shilumim* touched the deepest aspect of Israeli self-identity. The governmental opposition criticized the Prime Minister for wanting to speak directly with the perpetrators of the Holocaust because Germany represented the very reason for Israel's self-identity: Jews were safe nowhere, especially not in Germany. As such, discussing with West Germany, which was also being rearmed by the West, was in its most fundamental form contrary to its identity, which explains the risk of serious popular upheaval.

Thus, even in the face of huge popular backlash, Ben Gurion's government still decided to engage officially with West Germany, a State that it would not even diplomatically recognize for another decade. A clear balance of interests can also be drawn in the Israeli case. It could either choose its ontological *security* or undergo material *insecurity*. Or it could choose to accept and face an ontological threat - discussing with the successor of the Third Reich- in exchange for some material security through goods and currency shipments. Ben Gourion and the representatives of the Jewry chose the latter. This choice tells us two things. Firstly, economic matters overrode ontological considerations. In those negotiations, Israel especially privileged the continuation of its long-term economic security, over the short-term securitization of its self-identity. Secondly, it demonstrates

the importance of Israeli individuals in the analysis of foreign policy, even from an ontological security perspective. Indeed, equally important as Adenauer and Böhm on the German side, were Ben Gurion and his advisors in accepting to deal with the "enemy".

4.1.3 United States of America

The material/ontological security dilemma can also be applied to USA decision-making. In the very early days of the Federal Republic, Washington had made clear that it was expecting it to make amends with Israel, be it in the form of financial reparations. McCloy had, in 1949, pushed indemnification and restitution reforms. (Jelinek, 1991:33). Thus, it was expected from West Germany that it undergoes ontological and material *insecurity*. However, this attitude changed quite rapidly. From an American perspective, the geopolitical crisis brought about by the outbreak of the Korean war in the summer of 1950 made them reconsider their approach to the *Wiedergutmachung* issue. As the prospect of the Cold war turning hot in Europe became worryingly apparent to USA decision-makers, ontological considerations towards West Germany were quickly replaced by hard realism. The rearmament of Germany as a bulwark against Soviet expansion in Europe became a question of time, rather than choice. (Wollfsohn, 1988: 695) The war in Korea also made the USA want to make West Germany self-sufficient economically, through the expansion of the Marshall Plan. These grants would naturally be covered by the US, as a supporter of the economic recovery of Europe, and especially Germany. The misuse of taxpayer money was not desirable from the American perspective, as the government was facing domestic pressure to level the national budgets. Such messages were also passed along by McCloy to Goldmann, in a meeting regarding Jewish compensations even before the North Korean invasion. (Wollfsohn, 1988: 695) *Wiedergutmachung* claims thus added to an already long list of expenses for the USA in Europe. Their posture was made clear throughout the negotiations and was also explicitly shown to Israel, for instance in their reply to the note sent on 12 March 1951. In light of shifting priorities, linked to geopolitical realities, the USA simply had to reduce their insistence on West German reparations with Israel.

While West Germany's moral obligations were a condition for the effective reintegration of Germany in world affairs, as well as the recovery of its sovereignty, it would not get directly involved. (Goschler, 1991: 35) Reconciliations between West Germany and

Israel became a second-order issue, overshadowed by the realist implication of the Cold War. From the USA perspective, if these two States could find an agreement that would not prejudice the USA's material security, it would not oppose it. However, the ontological *security* component that it had expected from West Germany was no longer on the agenda. Therefore, we can conclude that the USA position underwent a shift. In the earlier years of the Federal republic, it expected West Germany to commit to material and ontological *insecurity* to reach material and ontological security. However, realist factors, such as geopolitical tensions and financial and economic considerations altered these expectations of West Germany, or at least greatly reduced its insistence on them. The German Agreement, whereby the state of war between the Allies and West Germany was abrogated, is evidence of American willingness to build a strong and sovereign State that would be able to resist Soviet expansion, while also protecting American interests. The integration of West Germany into the EDC before the signature of the Luxembourg Agreement shows the order of priorities. To a lesser extent, it was also feared that high reparation costs would reignite memories of the humiliating Versailles Treaty. (Jelinek, 2014: 51; Jelinek, 2004: 19)

In addition, the USA Cold war-induced realism can also be found in its relations with Israel. Indeed, as seen from the examination of the negotiations, the USA expressed repeated concerns that the failure of the reparation talks would become an excellent pretext for Israel’s left-wing, as well as right-wing opposition to win elections and backtrack on Tel Aviv’s rapprochement from the West sphere, which had been brought about by the Korean invasion. (Brecher, 1973: 75; Jelinek, 1991: 39; Bialer, 1990: 207). For the USSR’s foreign policy, Israel was a complex case, because it was seeking to increase its foothold in the region by pulling the Arab States away from the Western Bloc. Instead of further deepening relations with Israel’s enemies, most intently Egypt, who had shown by its rejection of the Western bloc by refusing participation in the Baghdad Pact, a military alliance in the Middle East in 1951. (Steele, William: 19) To gain the Arab’s favour, the USSR, therefore, was generally opposed to the reparations agreement for Israel and resisted Israeli attempts to put pressure on the Democratic Republic of Germany (DRG) (Wollshohn, 1988: 712). Interestingly, it should also be noted that on an ontological plane, Israel also posed legitimacy questions for the USSR’s internal order, as Zionist calls for Jewish emigration to Israel threatened to fracture national identity sentiments in the multi-ethnic USSR. (El Hussini, 1987: 44). In any case, geopolitical

considerations were also at the forefront of USA decision-making towards Israel, as the fall of the pro-Western Ben Gurion government would present a loss of a strategic ally in a contested region.

4.2. Ontological security as a research paradigm

After having used the ontological perspective to understand both the domestic and foreign identity construction, this brief section will assess its adequacy for the study of the Luxembourg Agreement. Let us begin with the aspects that it was able to capture well. The ontological security perspective is convenient to understand which moralistic forces were driving the signature 1952 Reparations Agreement. The role of identity can, of course, not be understated in our case: ontological considerations were undoubtedly important parts of the foreign policy decision-making in Bonn, Tel Aviv and to a lesser extent, Washington. Discussions, statements, and declarations before and during the negotiations were stuffed with mentions of the "identity", the "soul", "fate" and "moral obligation" that a State supposedly has. Of course, these beliefs are constructed through certain endogenous or exogenous frames, just as are biographical narratives and collective memories. But they are nonetheless real, and can, *in fine,* greatly impact foreign policy. The ontological justifications were central in both West Germany and Israel, albeit in opposite directions. West Germany played up the Agreement's importance in its self-identity, while Israel played it down. The slim margin of overlapping interests is what ultimately allowed for a compromise between two countries that were destined for enmity. The ontological security perspective is also very relevant in the analysis of the *individuals* in charge of shaping foreign policy. Indeed, the "basic trust system" conceptual assumptions proposed by Giddens and Mitzen proved useful, in particular in the analysis of West German decision-makers. Individual imaginations about self-identity, be it in favour of or against reparations clashed, in the Federal government's Cabinet. National biographical narratives, such as those held by men like Böhm or Küster, the German negotiators, were crucial for their influence on Adenauer's foreign policy. Without their insistence on reparations, it is possible that Adenauer would have conceded to his Finance Minister, and history would have taken a different path. On the other side, men like Goldmann and Ben Gurion's conceptions of Jewish and Israeli self-identity were also crucial in order to come to an agreement. It could be argued that a "progressive" yet remembering understanding of their respective self-identities is what enabled the two

States to overcome the history between them. Ontological security is also an excellent perspective to analyse the post-war West German self-identity, as examined in the second chapter.

However, as seen through our case study, ontological considerations are far from being the exclusive factors in decision-making. In our examination of the negotiations, as well as the analysis thereof, economic, and military interests are almost systematically pushed to the front of the agenda. For Israel and the US, they were the deciding factor. West Germany, they were also part of the balance: temporary insecurity was accepted in part because it provided future material security. Here, we hit a limit of the ontological security perspective, as it can be argued that it was not self-identity that truly drove the signatories, but cold, hard, *realist* interests. This does not, however, completely discredit the ontological security perspective as a whole. Indeed, the Luxembourg Agreement was the beginning point of relations between the FRG and Israel. But since the perspective centres around routines, it would be therefore interesting to study the case of their relations throughout the decades that follow, to discern how the Luxembourg Agreement shaped the routinizations of relations that occurred. The material aspects during the negotiations of the agreement were indeed dictated by the straitjacket that the Cold war imposed on all State relations at the time.

Even if the ontological security perspective can only account for an incomplete picture, its theoretical components still withstood the test of analysis. Both on the individual and State level, the theoretical assumption that routines are constructive of self-identity (both defended by Steele and Mitzen) was confirmed in the case of West Germany. Indeed, it was Adenauer's repeated declarations, both in private and in public, that created the biographical narratives that characterized the intersubjective relations with Israel and the Jewry. The Chancellor had in effect created high expectations for West Germany which impacted its future relations. Its self-proclaimed self-identity based on the past would be a marker of expectations for other States in their dealing with Bonn. If West Germany were to distance itself from its biographical narratives, it would represent a breach of the mutually-expected "routines" with other States. There would appear a "discrepancy" between Steele's proposed 'imagined self' (willingness to face the past) and the 'true self' (Bonn's cold calculation regarding the *Wiedergutmachung*-centered collective memory). We can see that a routinization of social life occurred, as instances when Adenauer's

government departed from the expected actions, the basic trust system was breached.[15] Those are the 'ontological crisis' that led a State to engage in self-reflection and the reevaluation of its intersubjective relations. In those instances, the Israelis and Jewish representatives lacerated relations, and would only resume when Adenauer returned to the expectations that he had built through the routinization of biographical narratives. Discussions that occurred between Nahum Goldmann and Konrad Adenauer on 6 December 1951 and the letter of 19 May 1952 were particularly striking in their ability to remind the Chancellor of the promises he had made in the name of the German people.

This echoes the ontological security perspective directly. As such, West Germany's lack of sovereignty can be likened to the "anxiety" that grasps actors when they are faced with the possibility of *being*. While the USA showed sympathy for Jewish and Israeli claims, it never put pressure on Bonn directly. This resulted in Adenauer's realization that it was truly *his* own issue to handle. In this state of anxiety, actors cling to the cognitive frameworks that make their surroundings predictable and comprehensive. Also, because West Germany was an infantile State, having been created in 1949, it could be argued that Adenauer's government was deeply marked by the identity "directives" that it had received from its occupying powers in regard to its internal affairs. The Allied biographical frameworks that were imprinted on Bonn's domestic self-identity were thus replicated in its foreign policy. They became Adenauer's basic trust system, which was centred around the belief that West Germany would only be granted its full sovereignty if it chose to construct its identity on democratic, tolerant, and apologetic pillars. Within the ontological security framework, trust between actors can only be created through the building and keeping of routines. In our case, the routines that created the trust between Bonn and the Allies, as well as Israel, the Jews, and the world as a whole, were in part the multiple declarations that Adenauer had made, and the first steps taken towards *Wiedergutmachung*.

However, even with regard to such events, there remain some grey areas in the theory's application. For instance, were Goldmann's successful interventions evidence of endogenous (inward-looking) routines or exogenous (outward-looking) routines? Their

[15] Interestingly, even relations between the Israeli and German delegations were subject to their own kind of routinizations. The glacial atmosphere quickly thawed, and the procedural English was dropped for German, which many Jewish and Israeli delegates mastered. (Von Jena, 1986: 476)

origin is foreign and yet had internal consequences. In all probability, it was a bit of both. Adenauer's own personal beliefs about the FRG's identity (endogenous) were recalled in his social routines with other actors, such as the Jewish and Israeli representatives (exogenous). The theory of ontological security applied to States is in that sense too uncertain, considering the "State" as a unitary and monolithic actor and insufficiently describing how individual humans can impact the "State".

Furthermore, the 'anxiety', supposedly at the source of all self-identity needs, is not particularly striking in our examination either. Indeed, it was mentioned above that West Germany might have been confronted with the daunting prospect of having to resolve the issue of reparations by itself. But the argument that *Wiedergutmachung* presented a deep ontological crisis is unconvincing. That is because West Germany already had constructed a robust sense of self-identity in 1949 based on its "belonging" to the democratic and de-Nazified West. Its recognition of specific Jewish suffering came belated, and its absence was not an obstacle to beginning Bonn's integration with the West, as shown by its integration in the EDC in May 1952. In that sense, it would be erroneous to posit that the question of *Wiedergutmachung* with Israel, in itself, induced much anxiety. It was rather the prospect of failing to meet the conditions of the Allies that caused anxiety. However, it could be argued that the presence of anxiety was much more pronounced within the German population, especially in the immediate post-war years. Indeed, the rejection of the "collective guilt" charge, as well as the discredit of Jewish persecution can be likened to some form of anxiety. The anxiety of coming to the realization that many people, perhaps themselves, carried blame for the atrocities, is justifiable. The rewriting of biographical narratives, presenting the German people as victims of the N-S regime rather than the perpetrators betrays a certain unwillingness to open up about the past, for fear of what might confront them.

Another purely theoretical inconsistency that was picked up while writing this paper is the question of how basic trust systems, or for that matter routines and biographical narratives are created without self-identity. Indeed, Giddens, Mitzen, Steele, and all other theorists posit that routines and biographical narratives are the mechanisms through which an actor is supposed to construct their identity. But how does the State choose which basic trust systems to build, in which endogenous or exogenous routines to engage, or in which biographical narratives to entertain? These require an active and conscious will, a purpose

that can only be directed by some primitive form of self-identity. It is a paradox because self-identity needs biographical mechanisms, but these can only occur if there is a sense of purpose, which supposes an existing identity. Which came first: the identity or the narrative? In our case study, this mystery was overcome through the explanation that the FRG already possessed some sense of self-identity, interwoven in its very conception by the occupying forces in 1949. Were it not for this argument, this paper would have found it difficult to assert that States do indeed have an identity beyond those of the men and women who lead them.

Conclusion

This paper aimed at understanding West Germany's identity in the immediate post-war years through the perspective of ontological security. By undergoing a multi-level analysis, focusing both on West Germany as a nation and a State, it became clear that self-identity was an important aspect of reconstruction after the atrocities of the 1930s and 1940s. In the rubbles of its cities and in the ovens of its concentration camps lay West Germany's moral integrity and its international reputation. Our two initial hypotheses are at least partially confirmed. Indeed, as hypothesized, biographical narratives and collective memories, which shape self-identity quickly developed to counter the ontological threat that the past represented. Indeed, at a national level, an ecosystem parallel to the official memory became prevalent in shaping remembrance of the war and the persecution of Jews. While among the West German population, the continuation of the political self-identity centred around N-S seemed to wane off, no special considerations could be discerned in relation to the persecution of the Jewish population. On the contrary, antisemitic beliefs remained widespread and sometimes even led to violence towards Jews. In the very first years, German – not Jewish – suffering would become a pillar of collective memory. Clearly identifiable tropes such as the death of the 'German Soldier' who had been sacrificed during the capitulation on 8 May 1945 would be much more identity constructive. The lack of memorials concerning the Holocaust, too, demonstrates the rejection of the confrontation with the past, which presents an ontological threat because of its sheer atrocity. Therefore, selective memorization, as conceptualized by Subotic, occurred to build the 'protective cocoon' that allowed for ontological security. This fully confirms our hypothesis that collective memories and biographical narratives were instrumentalized in order to provide the securitization of the population's self-identity. As ontological threats arose, certain aspects of the past were highlighted, while others, were downplayed.

On the international level, West Germany also faced ontological challenges, namely its recognition of past crimes and its willingness to make amends with Israel and the Jewish world. The question of what sort of State West Germany wanted to *be* was central to the reparation agreement. The ultimate decision to sign the agreement can be interpreted as a balancing act between material and ontological interests. In times of ontological crisis, Adenauer's basic trust system played a critical role in the shaping of Bonn's foreign

policy towards Israel. By analyzing Adenauer's discussions in Cabinet, we can argue with a certain degree of certainty that Adenauer was convinced that to regain sovereignty, West Germany needed to gain the trust of the Western Allies. Indeed, trust is what confirms the acceptance of self-identity in the eyes of the social other. In the case study, Adenauer clearly believed that Bonn's *Westintegration* could only be acquired if West Germany showed its Allies that it had made the necessary historical introspection and was willing to confront the past by agreeing to make reparation payments. This was especially apparent in times of ontological crisis, such as when the talks with Israel were at their rupture point. From our analysis of its foreign policy towards Israeli reparation payments, it is clear that considerations about self-identity were at play, even if the material aspects were at least equally as important. Indeed, for Israel, short-term ontological insecurity (engaging with West Germany directly) was the price paid for long-term material security (reparation payments). The USA also chose material security over ontological security. Thus, our second hypothesis is only partly confirmed, because while identity considerations were relevant, they were not decisive. A further study applying the ontological/material dilemma to further occurrences of West Germany's foreign policy towards Israel could be of interest. Another interesting point of interest would be to analyze the ontological discrepancy that appeared between West German's official and non-official collective memorization and biographical narration. In this paper, it was observed that prioritization of Jewish suffering varied greatly between the West German population and the State's foreign policy. As such, an interesting research topic would be to inquire into how this discrepancy developed over the decades, especially in key moments of the Israel-West German relation such as the Arab-Israeli wars.

This paper has provided some helpful insights into the FRG's identity construction in the immediate post-war years. Yet, the question remains far from being comprehensively answered. Indeed, the Luxembourg Agreement was only the first step in a long, tenuous West German *via Crucis* towards repentance, an endeavour which it would pursue for many decades, up until today. The agreement was a symbolically and historically highly significant event. But it cannot be characterized as anything but the first occurrence of a routinized relationship that consists of regular collective memory-imprinted meetings, dialogues, and rapprochements. In that sense, we can argue that the sole case of the post-war years is too narrow a framework to truly analyze West Germany's search for self-identity, both on the level of non-official national collective memory, and also on the level

of the State's foreign policy. Self-identity is too complex a phenomenon to be acquired with a signature. The history of the Germano-Israeli relation would prove that the possibly the hardest steps - true, national confrontation with the past was yet to be begun. Indeed, it would take a new generation of young Germans, innocent through the date of their birth, to plunge German self-identity back into the crisis that it faced in 1945. Their inquiry into the silence of their parents ultimately led to the resurfacing of the matter into political matters. Historians, such as Habermas and the Frankfurt School, greatly accelerated this important debate.

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This paper dealt with West Germany's identity in the immediate post-war years (1945-1952) using the IR "ontological security" perspective as well as the concept of collective memory. Two levels of analysis are apprehended. Firstly, the domestic level is studied, where the West German population's collective memorization and biographical narratives were used to securitize self-identity. We find that while political identities may have been discontinued, recognition of the uniqueness of Jewish persecution remained low in those years. Antisemitism even grew, paradoxically. Furthermore, biographical narratives, spun around the myths of 'German suffering' and the 'Fallen German Soldier' were instrumental in the denial of collective guilt. Secondly, West Germany's foreign policy towards Israeli reparation payments is also the subject of analysis. Through meticulous description of the negotiations leading up to the signature of the Luxembourg Agreement of 1952, they key actors' ontological securitization will be put to the test. We find that each State faced a dilemma between securitization of their material well-being or of their self-identity. Material considerations often outweigh ontological security in the case study.

Key words: ontological security, collective memory, biographical narratives, West Germany, Israel.

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