

# The Domestic Sources of Détente: State-Society Relations and Foreign Policy Change during the Cold War

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## Abstract

Research on foreign policy change claims leaders seek to restructure their country's foreign relations when internal and external opportunity structures are permissive. But a number of prominent efforts at achieving change have occurred during times of considerable domestic upheaval and rigid international constraints. To understand why, this article examines three well-known cases of Cold War foreign policy change, focusing on the external relations of Charles de Gaulle in France, John G. Diefenbaker in Canada and Willy Brandt in West Germany. These cases suggest that domestic upheaval and foreign policy change were inextricably interwoven, and that efforts to effect strategic change on a grand scale were motivated by a desire to respond to the demands of marginalised domestic constituencies without incurring the costs of domestic reform. Our analysis suggests key moments of international change are best understood as domestic incorporation strategies rather than instances of significant and principled foreign policy change.

**Keywords:** Cold War; foreign policy change; state-society relations; European security; political parties.

## Introduction

Why have some of the most prominent efforts to undertake foreign policy change taken place when international and domestic constraints are at their highest? France's Charles de Gaulle, West Germany's Willy Brandt and Canada's John G. Diefenbaker each sought to break out of the US-dominated bloc system during the Cold War at times of intense domestic upheaval at home. These efforts were, on the aims the leaders set out, largely unsuccessful. French independence turned out to be a chimera and France continued to benefit from the American nuclear umbrella. *Ostpolitik* was an important contributor to détente but Brandt's efforts did not diminish West Germany's dependence on the West. And Diefenbaker proved unable to reorient the Canadian economy away from the US and focused instead on symbolic spats with the Kennedy administration and outward expressions of support for détente.

It is not the incompleteness of these efforts then that should be surprising, given that they took place against the backdrop of the 'hot' Cold War of the 1960s (Cox, 1990: 32; Lebow, 1999) and rising societal conflict (along multiple fault-lines) at home. Rather, research on foreign policy change struggles to explain the very fact that these efforts took place in the first place. In this literature, permissive opportunity structures both externally and within the state are seen as a prerequisite for undertaking major foreign policy change (Gustavsson, 1999; Siverson and Starr, 1990: 48; Welch, 2005). While second-image perspectives focus on the need to build a coalition of support at the domestic level - bureaucratically, politically, societally - in order to effect change (Hofmann, 2013; Holsti, 1982), first-image accounts highlight the need for permissive external structures of power to bring about change (e.g. Hyde-Price, 2004: 110). Most scholars would suggest some combination of favourable opportunity structures both internally *and* externally is necessary for change to occur (Cladi and Webber, 2011: 208-210; Hermann, 1990: 12; Welch 2005: 45-46). Either way, these opportunities need to be in place for change not to represent strategic folly either in the international system or

vis-à-vis domestic opponents. So then why have some of the most prominent examples of foreign policy change taken place at the seemingly most inopportune times?

In this article we argue the reason lies in the domestic benefits of undertaking strategic change. External renewal offers a useful response to crises of legitimacy which emerge from the breakdown of state-society relations: the inability of the political system, and especially its dominant political parties tasked with linking society to the state, to satisfy a variety of social interests, and the pervasive sense of a growing gap between the values the state embodies and the aspirations of domestic constituencies. Strategic change is able to satisfy marginalised constituencies that their interests are informing the policies of the state without overly disrupting existing patterns of interests. Indeed, strategic change incurs few direct costs for leaders because it relies upon signals and metaphors rather than the transfer of resources. Put differently, key strategic concepts are sufficiently broad to allow diverse groups to project their own expectations onto them, the concept of the 'national interest' provides a unifying force domestically, and external constraints on the government's action can be cited to explain away any lack of success.

Our argument helps to explain why external change occurs so often during times of domestic upheaval rather than during those times in which consensus might be more easily constructed. It also helps to explain why these efforts are enacted under constraining external environments, since what appears as costly international action is, in fact, not costly at the domestic level for which it is primarily intended. Moreover, there is a 'second image reversed' component to the argument, since we show that constraining international environments can actively help achieve domestic aims by giving policymakers more credible excuses for why substantive changes failed to materialise (e.g. Gourevitch, 1978: 882). And our argument helps to explain why efforts at foreign policy change are seldom as successful as their lofty intentions would predict, since the aim is to reincorporate domestic peripheries rather than to

fundamentally alter the state's position in international affairs. As we demonstrate, very often the principal achievements of foreign policy changes are to be found in the quieting of discontent at the domestic level.

The article proceeds as follows. The next section outlines a theory of foreign policy change based on the domestic incorporation of peripheralized constituencies, an endeavour particularly effective when attempted as *strategic change* under constraining structural conditions like Cold War bipolarity. We incorporate insights from framing and political entrepreneurship theory to complement our theoretical framework which operates primarily on the intersection of IR, FPA and comparative party politics. After explaining the logic of our comparative design, we present our three case studies of change in French, West German and Canadian external relations during the Cold War. The final section discusses both conceptual implications and ways that the insights of the analysis can apply to contemporary cases of foreign policy change.

### **A Theory of Domestic Incorporation and Foreign Policy Change**

Prominent examples of external change during the Cold War took place at times of unprecedented domestic upheaval whose magnitude went beyond the limits of conventional political representation and in one of the most dangerous periods of the conflict. How and why do such crises of domestic legitimacy bring about demand for foreign policy change? And why is change attempted under such difficult external conditions? To understand these questions, it is necessary first to understand how traditional forms of representation break down and how the interests of the state can become de-linked from those of society more broadly; and, secondly, why foreign policy change, particularly under constraining structural conditions, is an appealing way to address these gaps between society and state.

In the pluralist view of the state, which lies at the basis of much FPA theorizing, the state is a cypher for particular domestic interests. In democratic systems, the actors who are supposed to ensure that the state's interests ultimately reflect those of the citizenry are political parties (Bartolini and Mair, 1990; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). But it has also long been acknowledged, although often neglected in foreign policy literature, that the state has its own interests distinct from those constituencies it seeks to represent. These interests include both its own survival and continued conformity with norms of governance (political and economic) that are constitutive of legitimate authority in international society (REFERENCE ANONYMISED); as well as maintenance of the state's independence – and the security of its resources – from its domestic society (Skocpol, 1979). Moreover, the dynamics of the selection process ensure that, in practice, most political actors (parties included) are competing for the support of a sub-set of society, whose particular interests they will thus seek to promote (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003).

There is, therefore, an internal contradiction in the role of parties. Parties are supposed to represent society, but they also become entangled with the interests of the state. Over time, dominant parties come to be interwoven with the state, controlling (indirect) patronage, appropriating state resources, and colluding with other parties to maintain their monopolistic/duopolistic position. This is particularly pronounced in advanced industrialised democracies in the last 40 years, where parties have ceased to represent societal interests upwards towards the state and have instead become absorbed into the state itself, disciplining society into accepting its policies through a process of 'cartelization' (Katz and Mair, 1994). Cartelization denotes a cyclical process of incorporation, renewal and institutionalization of a representative system whose features include the institutional fusion and absorption of political parties into the state, and the depoliticization of party competition through the ideological

convergence of state-close parties in order to crowd out policy options that could contradict the interests of the state (see generally Katz and Mair, 2009, 2018; van Biezen and Kopecky, 2014).

This state-party nexus is accompanied by a pattern of inclusion and exclusion towards different constituencies. Political systems contain internal peripheries that are little or not at all represented by that system's policies or prevalent values system (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). Domestic peripheralisation can take the form of systematically under-represented ideological and political positions (REFERENCE ANONYMISED), regional socioeconomic discrimination (e.g. of the industrial working class and its locales under post-industrialization today, see Gest, 2016), or inter-generational exclusion (e.g. Sloam and Henn, 2019). The state-society gap can be ideological or symbolic: groups will not feel unrepresented only in terms of their material preferences, but also in terms of the state's discourses and values (Laclau, 2005). When these divisions reach a level of intensity or salience that they challenge the ability of existing governing arrangements to continue, we may speak of a failure or crisis of incorporation: a concurrent exacerbation of the material and cultural gaps between state and society that the existing party system finds it increasingly difficult to accommodate.

The need to address crises of incorporation creates opportunities for new political actors to enter the fray while calling upon existing elites to draw upon support from the periphery to bolster their position. In practice, the reincorporation of peripheries takes the form of co-optation rather than displacement, achieved by actors associated with the party-state – often leaders of major parties that have been excluded from power for long periods of time – rather than genuine outsiders. These actors have a comparative advantage in mobilising support, since they may draw on the considerable material and symbolic resources of the state when doing so (e.g. Mintrom and Luetjens, 2017). Such individuals, which we term 'insider-outsiders', hold the requisite combination of political capital and credibility to both incorporate the effervescence of peripheralized, excluded constituencies *and* remain within the confines of

ideological competition of the state-party nexus. Their primary aim is to reconcile state-society relations without undermining or imposing direct costs on powerful constituencies underlying the party-state nexus.

Insider-outsiders take on the role of foreign policy entrepreneurs (e.g. Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2012; Frohlich et al. 1971: 18-20; Macdonald, 2015; Mazarr, 2007; Mintrom and Norman, 2009; Mintrom and Vergari, 1996). They are entrepreneurs both in the sense of identifying domestic political openings to pursue new foreign policies, and perceiving international structural constraints as an opportunity structure to reshape state-society relations within limits that match their own political interests. Unlike more traditional foreign policy entrepreneurs, however, they are rooted not within the bureaucracy but within the broader political environment (e.g. Carter et al., 2004; Carter and Scott, 2009) and their strategy is more public facing as a result. Insider-outsiders come to power on the basis of novel foreign policy rhetoric and, once there, focus on implementing this agenda. In this sense they are close to ‘mercenary entrepreneurs’ who “view foreign policy entrepreneurship as politics by other means” rather than ‘revolutionary entrepreneurs’ who wish to bring about foreign policy change for its own sake (Marsh and Lantis, 2018: 219). The question then becomes why entrepreneurs motivated by domestic goals choose to focus on external relations, especially by pursuing foreign policy change?

Defined as a tangible departure or reversal of previous patterns of policy that goes beyond incremental or procedural shifts (Goldmann 1988: 10), foreign policy change tends to emerge at moments of perceived crisis in the state’s external environment (Gustavsson 1999; Hermann 1990: 13). Foreign policy change differs from foreign policy restructuring, the wholesale reorientation that usually reflects and demands a substantial redefinition of the material terms of state-society relations at home (Holsti, 1982). Foreign policy change need not encompass the totality of the state’s international orientation (Goldmann, 1988; Gustavsson, 1999), but

can concern a specific area of its external relations such as its strategic and security orientation. Being often an event of high salience and symbolical value, foreign policy change usually becomes a landmark of domestic politics (Volgy and Schwarz 1991: 639). All this makes foreign policy change an attractive option for addressing domestic crises of incorporation.

Domestic reform is costly and often threatens the primacy of concentrated interests whose support is still required in order to govern. In addition, the accumulation of rents over time by powerful sectors reinforces their domestic dominance, making it all the more difficult to overcome entrenched interests (Pierson, 2000). Aspects of external policy, too, suffer from the same problem, since foreign policy choices - economic openness, alliance ties, organisational memberships - have redistributive consequences at the domestic level (e.g. Gaddis, 1982; Gourevitch, 1986; Moravcsik, 1997; Rogowski, 1989; Trubowitz, 1998). This balance of costs and benefits is one reason, we argue, why individuals seeking to repair domestic rifts so often focus on external relations, and especially strategic change as a type of foreign policy change.

Strategic change provides political actors with a broader canvas to demonstrate their reformism: as the state redefines its position and purpose vis-à-vis the dominant lines of competition permeating the international structure, it can present this structure as something that itself needs to be overcome. Counterintuitively, it is this ostensible firmness of the international structure that makes it a resource and opportunity for insider-outsiders at times of domestic crises of incorporation, one reason why efforts to achieve domestic change during the Cold War focused so heavily on the external environment. For, as theorists of two-level games have long observed, external constraints on a government's action can be a useful means of shifting conditions of domestic possibility (Putnam, 1988).

Several aspects of strategic change make it a helpful tool for incorporating peripheral actors into the party-state nexus without damaging existing patterns of interest representation. First,

the distributional implications of strategic change at the domestic level are lower than in other domains of external actions, such as foreign economic policy or trade, meaning fewer domestic sectors are exposed to targeted costs. Second, strategic change can be achieved through signalling changes in alliance or resolve like the articulation of new phrases or concepts (like the ubiquitous ‘pivot’) or the movement or re-designation of military capabilities, neither of which involve significant direct costs. Third, since the grammar of strategic change is broad and ‘essentially contested’, concepts associated with strategic change like ‘security’, ‘independence’ and ‘sovereignty’ can act as empty signifiers onto which various constituencies may project their interests and values (Laclau, 2005). Fourth, because external strategy is premised upon the national interests and necessarily involves confronting external threats, it offers a unifying discourse associated with a ‘rally around the flag’ effect (e.g. Mueller, 1973: 209) which can (at least partly) ameliorate domestic divisions.

Because strategic change is undertaken for the purposes of managing domestic constituencies, it is also *framed* in specific ways by those leaders seeking to bring it about (e.g. Beasley, 1998; Garrison, 2001, 2007; Kaarbo, 2008; Lantis and Homan 2019). Framing, understood as “a discursive strategy used to construct meaning in relation to events occurring in the world around us” (Aran and Fleischmann, 2019: 617), is necessary to signal that a change in strategic orientation has taken place. Different frames can help actors to identify specific threats (Chaban et al., 2019), specify appropriate comparisons (Khong, 1992; Oppermann and Spencer 2013), convey the level of risk involved (Levy, 2000; Maoz, 1990: 88-90), and organise the representation of facts (Kaarbo 2008: 68). They are therefore a crucial aspect of how foreign policy changes are represented domestically. And, significantly, they not only represent objective external changes to different audiences, but are rather constitutive of them (Aran and Fleischmann, 2019: 614). In other words, framing is not only a form of

communicating strategic change, but is also a way of establishing that a given set of moves actually constitute a change of strategy in the first place.

We argue strategic change intended primarily for domestic audiences are framed in a number of highly specific ways. In particular, the examples of strategic change we focus on are all framed in a manner which makes them amenable for domestic consumption. First, a number of individual decisions are discursively framed as a single overall package of reforms. Without these labels, these individual moves might not even attract the attention of domestic constituencies. Second, they are accompanied by a new visualisation of the state's role in international affairs based upon changes in national role conceptions (Cantir and Kaarbo, 2012) and its 'imagined geography' (e.g. Hagen, 2003). The country, according to common variants of such rhetoric, is shifting away from established alliance partners, into new and flexible roles. Third, these new roles are communicated to domestic audiences as entailing benefits to 'the nation' or 'the people' rather than specific constituencies or interests. By keeping the discourse at this more ambiguous level, political actors are able to broaden the appeal of their message to a greater number of domestic constituencies (Meibauer, 2020). Often these changes are sold in terms of the initial demands of marginalised peripheries. The rhetoric accompanying them emphasises not their strategic benefits, but their role in national renewal.

Our claim is not that these changes are always purely symbolic, simply that they are motivated by a concern to transpose costly domestic reforms into less costly strategic ones. In many cases strategic change has provided both a symbol of reform for domestic peripheries *and* discernible real-world developments in the state's international orientation. Equally, in other cases, attempted changes may fail to produce any practical results at all. Ultimately, whether these attempts result in practical policy change or not, what appears as costly international action is, in fact, not all that costly at the domestic level: since the signalled foreign policy changes never achieve their maximum goal – the realignment of the international

structure away from bipolarity – the international costs are not incurred. Over the longer-term, of course, change may be significant, since even minor strategic shifts can have considerable path-dependent effects, not least given the importance of discourse and identity in framing subsequent (foreign) policy choices (e.g. Aran and Fleishmann, 2019: 618; Blyth, 2002; Katzenstein, 1996; Schmidt, 2008).

## **Methodology**

In the three sections that follow we set out three cases of attempted foreign policy change under inopportune internal and external conditions. We examine, in turn: (1) Gaullist strategy in France, (2) Diefenbaker's external relations in Canada, and (3) Brandt's *Ostpolitik* in West Germany. Each of the three cases fits the criteria we set out to investigate at the beginning of the article: They are all examples of attempted foreign policy change during times of domestic upheaval and an international context not conducive to alteration by such medium sized states. The research design is confirmatory, insofar as the aim is to study cases which fit the scope conditions of the theory in order to establish the dynamics motivating foreign policy change (Levy, 2008). While the cases do not vary significantly on these attributes, the presence of similar dynamics across each of the cases helps increase our confidence in the theoretical model. However, lower-level variation between the cases - in the manifestation of domestic crises and the partisan affiliation of the leaders involved - does help us establish that the specified theoretical dynamics apply across different contexts, although they may play out in different ways, as we discuss below.

Our argument is that the presence of societal divisions was not unrelated to the question of subsequent strategic change but rather played a significant part in establishing demand for foreign policy renewal. And we argued that such changes were articulated by individual

entrepreneurs who were able to simultaneously extract resources from the state and credibly portray themselves as outsiders to the political process. To show this, the cases offer a structured-focused comparison which traces the emergence of foreign policy change efforts within the context of the respective domestic political environment. The study is *structured* insofar as it asks specific questions of each case (Where did the impetus for foreign policy change come from? Which actors was it instigated by? How was this change framed? How successful was it? What were its longer-term effects?) and *focused* in that it emphasises specific aspects of the historical cases and does not seek to set out in detail every process which influenced the politics of the time (George and Bennett, 2005). If our theory is accurate, we would expect to establish clear evidence of domestic demand for foreign policy renewal, an emphasis on external change by those seeking to benefit from conditions of domestic crisis, these efforts being framed in terms of the interests of those excluded from the political process, little evidence of meaningful change in the material position of the state, and longer-term beneficial effects of change on the stability of state-society relations. Where these conditions obtain, it is reasonable to infer the predominance of domestic crises in motivating foreign policy change.

### **Gaullist Strategy in the Fifth Republic: Colonial Problems and Cold War Solutions**

Foreign policy in the French Fourth Republic (1944-58) was stymied by a combination of institutional inefficiency and popular disagreement over France's role in the emerging Cold War. Although Communist participation in government until 1947 prevented France from anchoring itself explicitly to the Western camp, given the extent of French economic and geostrategic dependence on the US, and its position in Europe, this was effectively the only viable option. In any case, the *tripartite* PCF-SFIO-MRP coalition came to an end in May

1947 when PCF ministers were dismissed from the government, and economic assistance from the US laid the foundations for reconstruction and for the modernisation of French economy and society (Imlay, 2009: 506). Strategic alignment followed suit: In early 1948 efforts to reach a defence treaty with the UK were stepped up and on 17 March France joined the organisation that would become the Western European Union. Formal talks on an Atlantic pact began in July 1948, leading to the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in April 1949 (REFERENCE ANONYMISED).

The construction of an Atlanticist framework for French security was an elite, and partisan, endeavour. Although strategic necessity pointed in this direction, domestically the views of centrist elements was crucial in pushing through an Atlanticist vision of French security, since the Communists and Gaullists each advocated greater independence than these ties would allow for. And these views had considerable support among the population: France had a strong Communist party, the PCF, committed to struggle against capitalism and friendly relations with the Soviet Union (Bell and Criddle, 1994: 40; Guiat, 2003: 59-60). The Gaullist RPF, also a highly significant political force, emphasised grandeur and national rehabilitation in its more 'realist' worldview (De Gaulle, 1971: 136; Hartley, 1971: 28), but was in any case similarly opposed to France throwing its lot in with the US. The upshot was that French anti-Americanism was a force on both sides of the political spectrum (Harrison, 1986: 175-176) and that tying France to the West was only made possible by carefully excluding the Communists and Gaullists from power (REFERENCE ANONYMISED).

Over time the Fourth Republic and its foreign and security policies became associated with specific interests and with the partial representation of the French body politic. Coalitions were constructed at the expense of those parties representing the regime's initial sources of legitimacy, communism and Gaullism, since these movements rejected key aspects of the American-dominated Western order. Governing coalitions comprised elements from the

centrist liberal and Christian Democratic parties, the most prominent of which was the MRP (Einaudi and Goguel, 1952) and smaller conservative parties like the Radicals and the Independents, and at times the socialist SFIO, which was “fundamentally reformist in scope”, advocating state intervention “within the context of a mixed economy” (Hanley, 1986: 114). While these parties disagreed on a number of domestic questions - not least on ecumenical matters - on foreign policy questions they were supportive of both European integration and the Atlantic alliance (Irving, 1973: 160). When the ‘Third Force’ broke down in early 1952, over the specific question of state funding for Catholic schools, but also in response to growing divergence on economic and foreign policy questions between the parties (AUTHOR REFERENCE), a series of unstable centrist coalitions took its place, continuing the broader aim of maintaining foreign policy continuity by excluding Communist and Gaullist elements, though the combined support of both groupings was a substantial minority (close to 50 per cent) in early 1950s (Giles, 1991: 69; Rioux, 1989: 122, 151).

The ostensible partiality of these governments was reinforced by economic cleavages. Liberalism created winners and losers, and – as a result – political resentment. The recovery plan drafted in 1947 (the ‘Mayer plan’) outlined a more liberal view of the French economy which would by definition come at a cost to hitherto protected sectors. Moreover, the acceptance of the Marshall Plan of American aid in 1948 contributed to the gradual liberalization of the French economy, both because of pressure from the US to remove economic controls and open the economy to trade, and because the disbursed funds allowed the government more discretion to forego controls in the first place (De Long and Eichengreen, 1991). The PCF was most adept at directing resentment towards the bourgeois political system, but Gaullists too were keen to emphasise their support for workers in sectors losing out from liberalisation (Rioux, 1989: 157, 185).

There was thus a broader legitimacy problem faced by the Fourth Republic, as governments excluded political groupings on the left and right who claimed to speak for constituencies not benefiting from the unequal effects of economic development. Governments, to be sure, were brought down by a number of issues, including the colonial crises in Algeria, Indochina and Morocco. But the broader crisis of *legitimacy* was always an important factor in the background, both stemming from – and contributing to – the problems of governing. The downfall of the Fourth Republic came in mid-1958, and while the proximate cause stemmed from events in Algeria, the fact that sizable constituencies failed to identify with the Republic helped seal its fate. The demands from many on the right for an end to the Fourth Republic, the decisions of those acting on its behalf in the investiture of De Gaulle, and the response of the public to the General's seizure of power were all suggestive of broader concerns with politics in the Fourth Republic than the system's inability to deal with the crisis in Algeria.

Upon taking power the watchword of De Gaulle's reforms was 'renewal'; of the political system, the nation, and the country's position in the international order. The early years of the Fifth Republic are known for the turnabout in Cold War strategy effected by De Gaulle, which was comprehensive in its efforts to articulate a more independent posture, seeking to balance American influence through engagement with the East. In January 1963 De Gaulle declared that France's nuclear weapons would be directed *tous azimuts* (against all), and he began to publicly criticise the American-led war in Vietnam (calling for 'neutralization') as well as beginning to restrict purchases of French companies by American business (Kuisel, 1993: 159). From the mid-1960s contacts with the Soviet Union increased, culminating in a visit to Moscow in June 1966 (Rey, 2010: 26). Efforts were also made to break with the institutional structures of the West. De Gaulle vetoed Britain's application to join the EEC in 1963, on the grounds that the UK would act as a Trojan horse for American interests, and in March 1966 he

(in)famously broke with the NATO organised command – a move nonetheless short of full withdrawal (Martin, 2011).

While the seeming withdrawal of France's commitment to the Atlantic alliance was a headline grabber, the Gaullist strategic reorientation did not in itself live up to the significance with which it was often associated. For one thing, France, America, and the Soviets, knew that France was not sufficiently strong to fulfil the significant global role it had set out for itself. Nor, of course, was an alliance with the USSR ever a credible option, thereby limiting De Gaulle's ability to play both sides off against one another (Imlay, 2009: 509). The Soviets, for their part, were keener to deal with the US and Germany, giving France relatively little influence (Trachtenberg, 2011: 189). Moreover, France continued to benefit from the credibility of the American deterrent, since it never formally left the Alliance (only the integrated command structure), and since the United States had the same interest in defending France from any potential Soviet intervention or assault. Because Western security during the Cold War was indivisible, the United States was never in a position to credibly threaten to abandon its West European allies, regardless of their position within the West's security architecture.

More valuable was the contribution the discourse of a resurgent French nation gave to the forging of a domestic consensus around a new identity. As Cerny has argued, "French withdrawal from the integrated NATO command in 1966 not only vastly complicated the whole issue of West European defence but also became central to domestic French political consensus" (Cerny, 1990: 15). The same could be said for the discourse of French nuclear independence, which was "significant primarily for its symbolic dimension", leading to concerted efforts to disguise Franco-American nuclear cooperation in later years, since this was integral to maintaining the domestic consensus constructed around Gaullist independence (Cerny, 1990: 151). Rather than defining "vital French national interests", therefore, Gaullist

ideology was valuable because it “helped to cement a strong centre-right coalition in France, which permitted...successful domestic economic and political reform” (Moravcsik, 2012: 59).

The creation of the Fifth Republic and the rhetoric of Gaullist independence helped bring about a more inclusive French identity and to ground a period of relative political stability which would last for decades and would be favourably compared with the instability of the Fourth Republic. Beyond the specific crises in Indochina and Algeria, the latter of which precipitated the regime’s eventual downfall, questions of legitimacy persisted, not least because the Republic excluded politically ostensibly anti-system elements which nonetheless represented sizable segments of the French population. De Gaulle was able to create the circumstances for this transformation because his role as resistance leader and his reputation – as well as the distance he kept from political organisations bearing his name – allowed him to speak more credibly on behalf of the nation prior to assuming the presidency. The establishment of the RPF, and De Gaulle’s distance from it, allowed him to play an influential role in the politics of the Fourth Republic while avoiding the trappings of partisanship.

### **Prairie Populism and the Liberal Backlash: Diefenbaker’s Cold War**

Canada was inextricably linked to the US by dint of its geographic contiguity and thus firmly aligned with the Western system during the Cold War. Following unprecedented coordination during the Second World War, by the 1950s high-level political-military contact between the US and Canada had become institutionalised in various formats, principally through the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD). Meanwhile, commercial ties between the US and Canada grew at an exponential rate during the 1950s, spurred on by the flurry of American investment in Canada after the war and encouraged by the Liberal governments of Mackenzie King and Louis St. Laurent (Tanguay, 1999: 97).

But the extent of interdependence between the two countries belied growing political divisions between ‘continentalists’ favouring strong relations with the US and those who believed Canada should follow either a more independent path or should prioritise its relations with the United Kingdom. Anti-Americanism peaked at the fringes of politics, meaning elements of the right and the left decried the continentalism of the post-war decade, while those at the liberal centre were more predisposed to view the American connection favourably (Campbell and Christian, 1996). For a sizable constituency of individuals close ties with the US were to be resisted, on the grounds that these reinforced American hegemony over Canada, contributed towards the intensification of the Cold War, threatened to undermine Canadian industries, and heralded the decline of Canada’s social and political model (Granatstein, 1997).

Unsurprisingly, preferences on continentalism were also informed by economic factors. Ontario and parts of Quebec possessed a near monopoly of financial, corporate and political power and accounted for much of the country’s industrial heartland (McCready and Winn, 1976: 71-73). The Western and Atlantic provinces – more rural, more sparsely populated – were dependent on the centre both for capital and for political representation. Governments in Ottawa, however, were popularly viewed as having served the interests of Central Canadian businesses at the expense of the more peripheral regions. One of the principal manifestations of this regional bias was the question of tariff reform. The western provinces, dependent on imported machinery and sensitive to the global market for grain, essentially absorbed the costs of maintaining high tariffs to protect industries of Central Canada (McCready and Winn, 1976: 84). Traditional parties were also accused of prioritising the interests of financial elites on ‘Bay Street’, who welcomed American investment, over and above the interests of rural Canada or other sectors.

Both the Liberals and Progressive Conservative parties were guilty of this kind of bias, but since the Liberals had governed uninterrupted since the end of the War, they were more

vulnerable to charges of pro-Americanism. The perception of the Liberals as the party of Central Canada thus increased over time, reinforced by Conservative opposition to various cross-border issues, including the infamous ‘Pipeline Debate’ of 1956 which saw the Tory opposition capitalise on Liberal efforts to ram the American-funded TransCanada pipeline legislation through Parliament. Criticism of Liberal continentalism peaked with the election of John G. Diefenbaker as leader of the Progressive Conservatives in December 1956. A self-confessed prairie populist, Diefenbaker railed against the Liberals for having sold out Canadian interests, running on a nationalist and anti-American platform that ultimately led him to victory in the 1956 federal election (ibid: 81).

Diefenbaker was an outsider even within his own party, and this helped him to staple his anti-elite identity. His status as a geographic ‘outsider’ meant he encountered “considerable resistance among the core-based rulers within the Conservative party” (McCready and Winn, 1976: 72). His role as a credible representative of the periphery acting within the party machine enabled him to work towards the incorporation of the Canadian periphery into the core of Canadian politics. Through his ‘symbolic patriotism’, Diefenbaker likened his opponents as “servants of American interests” (ibid). He was successful because he was able to capitalise on growing anti-Americanism and the resentments from those in the periphery towards deepening dependence on the American economy. In his addresses to American audiences, moreover, he was keen to emphasise that: “Canada is not a country that can be taken for granted or a country that follows whatever the United States does, regardless of whether it is beneficial to Canada or not” (Nash, 1990: 52). His electoral programme was premised on the notion that Canada had to be defended against American economic domination and he promised “to make a clear stand in opposition to economic continentalism”, stressing the need for “a *national* policy to provide a dynamic influence on the economy, and a sense of *national* purpose and *national* identity” (Diefenbaker, 1976: 9-10, emphasis in original).

Having promised to reduce Canada's dependence on American finance, Diefenbaker did make a number of attempts in office to address the issue. He protested frequently to President Eisenhower, for instance, about the damage resulting from the Americans offloading surplus grain onto the Canadian market.<sup>1</sup> Efforts were also made to rebalance the Canadian economy away from the US and towards Europe and the Commonwealth. But these policies were either unsuccessful or pursued with very little vigour, and a common complaint from the left was, that, while they agreed with Diefenbaker's policy of diverting trade away from the US, the government's implementation of this agenda lagged far behind its rhetoric (Carrigan, 1968). The Kennedy Round of tariff negotiations was instructive. Diefenbaker feared that further tariff reductions would cement Canadian dependence, but when Finance Minister Donald Fleming informed the Americans that Canada's support for further liberalisation would not be forthcoming, the negative US response convinced Diefenbaker to change his mind and re-instruct Fleming to support the proposals (Nash, 1990: 150).

The domain in which the Diefenbaker government *did* precipitate a seeming turnaround was the realm of Cold War defence and security, not economics or trade. Interestingly enough, this was not an issue that featured prominently in the election campaign, nor in the ostensible conflict between core and periphery, but it did offer an opportunity to distance Canada from the United States symbolically, in a domain where change would not bear electoral consequences. As Glazov has argued, "Diefenbaker's anti-American posturing in the period from 1961 to 1963 lead to a softer Canadian position on the Cold War" (Glazov, 2002: 77). This position involved talk of disarmament, weaker support for US positions (as with the delayed Canadian response during the Cuban missile crisis) and more frequent denunciations of American actions. Tellingly, direct engagement with the Soviets themselves was limited,

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<sup>1</sup> Memorandum of conversation between Diefenbaker and the US Ambassador to Canada, Livingston Merchant, Ottawa, 22 June 1957

and the new approach to Cold War strategy was articulated almost entirely through Canada's interactions with the US and in meetings with its NATO allies. It was therefore more of a rhetorical challenge than a substantive one.

And while discord in US-Canada strategic relations during the period did have negative consequences for the relationship (and for the credibility of the Atlantic alliance), these never came close to constituting any kind of full break between the two allies. Indeed, in spite of the rhetoric of greater 'distance' from the Americans, Diefenbaker signed NORAD into existence during his first year of office. Whilst most of the discussion over NORAD was conducted by the previous Liberal government, Diefenbaker showed no hesitation in acquiescing to the creation of an institution with a significant sovereignty cost when it was clearly of strategic necessity. Rather, his ire – and much of his political posturing – was reserved for largely symbolic issues, as was the case with Canada's decision not to purchase nuclear warheads for the country's Bomarc missiles, a decision that would precipitate both a crisis in US-Canadian relations as well as the eventual downfall of his government.

Ultimately the Diefenbaker government was brought down by a combination of fractious infighting within the Tory ranks and their leader's ongoing spat with Kennedy regarding the Canadian decision not to purchase nuclear-tipped warheads for Canadian missiles. Diefenbaker's decision precipitated a crisis in US-Canadian relations in 1962-63 so severe that the Cabinet split in their support for the prime minister (Nash, 1990: 261) and the opposition Liberals and NDP collaborated in a no confidence vote to bring down the government. The leftist NDP, which held the balance of power in the chamber, argued that while they supported Diefenbaker's policy agenda, the extent of disarray in the government obliged them to vote in favour of the motion (Harrop, 1984: 134).

Diefenbaker's rhetoric left its mark domestically, if not externally. Successive Liberal and Conservative administrations would do more to cultivate support among the provinces, and to speak for a broader diversity of Canadian interests than previously. Moreover, both foreign economic policy and Canadian grand strategy reflected the influence of Diefenbaker's tenure, and the governments that followed him – most notably the Liberal administrations of Lester Pearson and Pierre Trudeau – were at pains to show their distance from the US. Strong voices in the Liberal party, including future Finance Minister Walter Gordon, advocated increased state intervention and efforts to wean control of the Canadian economy off American business (McCall-Newman, 1982: 14). The geo-strategic rhetoric of the Diefenbaker administration, therefore, while contributing relatively little to any sense of a genuine strategic shift at the time, served to alter the underlying basis of legitimacy on which the government was based, re-incorporating excluded regions, sectors and societal groupings into the political mainstream.

### **Triumphant Progressives, Accommodated Nationalists: Brandt's Ostpolitik**

West Germany's foreign policy reflected its founding (i.e. post-World War II) domestic considerations as much as its strategic ones, defined by the ascendancy of Catholic statesman Konrad Adenauer and his CDU party. Adenauer aimed to establish a functioning liberal democracy and market economy, goals linked to alignment with the West (Engelmann-Martin, 2002). But Adenauer also knew that an unconditionally pro-Western German state would fail to stabilize. West Germany had received millions of German refugees from eastern Europe, while its citizens were energized by the demand of reunification. Faced with potential nationalist attacks against the new state (Glaessner, 2005: 47), Adenauer formulated a 'policy of strength' against the Soviets to bring about 'reunification within freedom'. West Germany

did not recognize the communist regime in East Berlin and the new borders in Eastern Europe, claiming that it constituted the only legitimate German state (Clemens, 1989: 16-30).

Aided by economic growth, CDU dominated West German politics in the 1950s. The legitimacy of the new state however came at the price of exclusion of the working class. While the liberals of the FDP, nationalist but also anti-communist, became CDU's coalition partners for most of the period between 1949-1966, the social-democratic SPD found itself on the wrong side of all the choices of the new state. It rejected Westbindung in 1949 because it considered that it entrenched the national division (Tilford, 1975: 1). Challenging both the Western orientation and the policy of strength against the Soviet bloc in the 'hot' Cold War of the 1950s condemned the SPD to opposition and excluded the concerns of its core constituency, the working class, from the decisions of the state (Lehmbruch, 1968: 183).

But Adenauer's tenets started crumbling after 1960 when the SPD accepted the market economy and Westbindung. In the early 1960s Adenauer's anti-Soviet antagonism appeared increasingly anachronistic and at odds with the interest of West Germany's allies in a more normalized relationship with the Soviet bloc (Granieri, 2003). The erosion of Adenauer's anti-Communism as the legitimating basis of the West German state created new challenges for the regime. The Grand Coalition between the CDU and SPD in 1966-69 enlarged the state's inclusivity by incorporating for the first time a *non-bourgeois* party, but its immobility in domestic and foreign policy accentuated the impression of the state's unresponsiveness and exposed both major parties to challenges from their flanks (Edinger, 1970; Lehmbruch, 1968). The resurgence of the far right demonstrated how the conservative ideology of West Germany was not enough of a legitimation in light of the national division (Lehmbruch, 1968: 203). On the other hand, student mobilization and leftist radicalism put new social demands on the agenda and critiqued West Germany's Western alignment (Shell, 1970).

It is with this multifaceted threat to the West German state's legitimacy as the background that a coalition of the SPD and FDP under Willy Brandt took over in 1969. On the one hand, that coalition was a novel development, excluding for the first time since 1949 the CDU from government. The FDP had presented itself as the party of renewal, being the sole opposition party against the Grand Coalition in 1966-69. And the SPD's participation in government with the CDU in the Grand Coalition, with Brandt as foreign minister, had demystified it as a threat to the state; but the party also maintained its image of reformism since it had previously spent 17 years in the opposition and had never led a government.

Both the SPD and FDP then had a vested interest in the survival of the political system and were committed to maintaining the key features of the West German state: its democratic political system, its social market economy, and its Western orientation. The new coalition however also knew that these elements needed renewal in light of both nationalist discontent and demands for reform of the state's conservative structures by a restive younger generation, currents that found expression in demonstrations, student unrest, and the assertiveness of radical parties outside the state-party nexus (most notably the far-right NPD, barely missing entry into the Bundestag in the 1969 elections).

The new government undertook the task of domestic renewal – in Brandt's words, to 'dare more democracy' (*mehr Demokratie wagen*) (Pridham, 1975: 46). Interestingly however its work became consumed by its flagship foreign policy initiative: the new Ostpolitik of signing treaties with the USSR, Poland and the German Democratic Republic, accepting the legitimacy (although stopping short of formal recognition) of the East Berlin regime and the validity of post-War borders in Eastern Europe. In all these ways, the new foreign policy was undoing Adenauer's policy, antagonizing conservatives, refugee organizations and nationalists.

Ostpolitik was a multifaceted phenomenon which allowed Brandt to appeal to multiple constituencies. Most obviously, the SPD-FDP coalition redefined reunification away from a Bismarckian statist ideal and towards a progressive societal view, as a process of human contacts and penetration of the communist German Democratic Republic by Western values (Paterson, 1975: 31). This meant that West Germany finally accepted that there were ‘two states in the German nation’ (Glaessner, 2005: 52-53), acknowledging the legitimacy of the communist regime in East Berlin for the sake of peace. This shift was accompanied by Brandt’s performance on the international stage, capped by his emotive kneeling in front of a World War II monument in Warsaw, a symbol of a new West Germany that actively repented for the Nazi past, as opposed to the relative silence of the Adenauer years. At the same time, Brandt’s energetic diplomacy and statesmanship next to Nixon, Kissinger and Brezhnev projected an image of a more confident West Germany. He thus managed to present what was essentially a concession – de facto relinquishing West German claims in the East – as a project of ambition and confidence, capturing the imagination of the post-War generation.

But Ostpolitik also preserved key features of the West German state. First, while Brandt’s cultivation of the global climate of détente spoke to reformers and progressives in West Germany, it also was an extension of Westbindung (Clemens, 1989: 241; Glaessner, 2005: 169), aligning West German foreign policy with the priorities of its allies. In this way, Ostpolitik updated the legitimacy of the West German state’s Western orientation in the eyes of its citizens at a time when many, especially the young concerned with developments like the Vietnam War, had started seeing it as antithetical to democracy and peace. Second, Ostpolitik did not relinquish the goal of reunification. The treaties signed with the USSR, Poland and GDR were interim documents that accepted in practice the security order, regimes and borders in the East (Clemens, 1989: 107-108), but West Germany still maintained its claim to a future permanent settlement of its national question.

Ostpolitik was never only a project of ideological renewal, but also spoke to the sense of national disenchantment that many West Germans had begun to feel with the perpetuation of national division during the Cold War. In this sense, Ostpolitik renewed the national credentials of the West German state and its Western orientation. Classical nationalists were accommodated by the formerly principal party of the state-party nexus, the CDU, which opposed Ostpolitik as a project betraying the cause of reunification and opening West Germany to communist infiltration (Tilford, 1975: 14; Clemens, 1989: 60). The result of this opposition along conservative-nationalist lines by a party that had until then been identified with the state's Western orientation was that in the 1972 elections fought over Ostpolitik the CDU absorbed the nationalist protest vote of the NPD (Conradt and Lambert, 1974). These elections were won by the SPD-FDP coalition, confirming the three parties' collective ability to absorb both the left-radical and right-nationalist threats to the legitimacy of the West German state.

Finally, a key dimension of Ostpolitik was its incomplete nature, at least judged against Brandt's level of ambition after his electoral triumph in 1972. The promise to resolve national division in a pacified Europe was frustrated by Brandt's removal from power in 1974. The final equilibrium of Ostpolitik, continued by Brandt's moderate successor Helmut Schmidt into the 1980s, was to resolve the legitimacy question of West Germany as a democratic German state anchored to the West and in coexistence with its communist neighbours while the two superpowers retained their preponderance over Europe. The re-election of the SPD-FDP coalition under Schmidt in 1976 and 1980 pointed to the success of the equilibrium Brandt had established (one that perhaps would have been upset if Brandt had been allowed after 1974 to pursue an even more accommodative policy towards the Soviet bloc or a more independent posturing of West Germany, both bound to face resistance by segments of West German society and its allies). The three major parties won together almost 100% of the vote in these elections, crowding out any nationalist or left-radical discontent. As such, Ostpolitik's incomplete

promise of overcoming German and European division ensured the incorporation in a broad centrist state-party nexus of new elements – the working-class basis of SPD, the post-War generation, German nationalists of both traditional and progressive ilk – without displacing older ones.

## **Conclusions**

This article has examined cases of foreign policy change during the Cold War, focusing on the Gaullist revolution in French security policy, Diefenbaker's efforts to resist American domination of the Canadian economy, and Brandt's *Ostpolitik* in West Germany. These cases continue to confound theoretical expectations of those factors conducive to foreign policy change, since change was attempted against the backdrop of domestic upheaval and significant external constraint. We argued that this puzzle can be explained by recognising the role foreign policy change plays in responding to crises of domestic legitimacy in which state-society relations have broken down. These three cases illustrate how crises of legitimacy – stemming, respectively, from marginalisation in political, regional, and generational terms – pushed elites towards foreign policy change as a means of incorporating hitherto marginalised constituencies into the party-state nexus without disrupting existing patterns of interests.

Our argument helps to solve a number of puzzles. It explains why foreign policy 'change' frequently emerges from domestic environments which are polarised or in which the requisite consensus for reform simply does not exist. These conditions are, we argue, precisely why elites turn to the articulation of a new foreign policy agenda and, specifically, why they focus on strategic change most of all. It also helps us explain why policymakers choose to effect change in external settings which would seem to augur poorly for the ability of small states to alter their strategic setting, since it stresses the importance of the domestic game and the

corresponding *value* of citing non-conducive international constraints. Finally, the argument explains why these efforts were largely unsuccessful on the grounds their advocates had set out for themselves, pointing us rather to the domestic effects - which were markedly *more* successful - as providing the principal *raison d'être* for these initiatives.

Our argument has a number of broader theoretical implications for how we study foreign policy. First, it contributes to our understanding of the politics of Cold War foreign policymaking, foregrounding the importance of domestic factors. The Cold War is often considered a difficult environment in which to find evidence of partisan influence on foreign policy, and the vast majority of second-image research relies on the very decline of the Cold War as an enabling condition (Milner, 1998: 759), though some research has identified evidence of Cold War partisanship (e.g. Holsti, 1982; Fordham, 1998; Hofmann, 2013, 2017; REFERENCE ANONYMISED). Our argument shows that domestic factors were very much at the forefront of explanations for foreign policy change, but also this was only possible because the rationale of such change was focused on the domestic level itself.

Second, the argument helps to broaden our understanding of how political parties matter in foreign policymaking. Recent years have seen a surge of research on the connection between parties and external affairs, focused mainly on party ideology and government-opposition dynamics (e.g. Kaarbo 2015; Noël and Thérien 2008; Rathbun, 2004; REFERENCE ANONYMISED). But far less has been written about the relationship between parties, societies, and the state, or on the various roles parties may fulfil in different party systems. Our argument suggests that a broader conception of party systems can help us understand better the dynamics of foreign policy change than a focus on party ideology or power alone.

Third, we contribute to another surprisingly neglected dimension in foreign policy analysis; that of foreign policy change (Hermann, 1990; Welch, 2005). We showed that, somewhat

counter-intuitively, change often takes place at times of domestic upheaval and external constraint, in spite of the limiting effects resulting from the absence of conducive political opportunity structures. By conceptualising strategic change as a tool through which leaders can overcome domestic crises of legitimacy, our argument contributes to our understanding of when efforts at strategic change are likely to take place and why they may be more limited in practice than their adherents often proclaim.

Fourth, our argument contributes to existing work on entrepreneurship and framing in foreign policy decision-making by highlighting the background societal conditions which incentivise mercenary entrepreneurship in foreign policy and the kind of individuals (insider-outsiders) best able to perform this role successfully. It also helps us to understand the importance of framing when it comes to the discursive construction of foreign policy change and why the field of strategy is more amenable to this kind of framing than other facets of external relations. Our analysis thus helps to suggest new avenues of inquiry for students of these well-established modes of foreign policy analysis.

Fifth, and finally, our argument can help us understand the politics of populism and foreign policy, currently an area of growing interest (Destradi and Plagemann, 2019; Steel and Homolar, 2019; REFERENCE ANONYMISED). The insider-outsiders we describe are not substantively dissimilar from many populist leaders today, who have similar trajectories to power and who equally view strategic change as a means of promoting a new identity between state and society. Understanding why individuals seek to manage domestic divisions with strategic change may help us to understand the emphasis populist leaders place on external policy, why their rhetoric is often loftier than their initial promises (as with the Global Britain discourse, for example (e.g. Turner, 2019)), and the real-world limitations on implementing populist foreign policy agendas (Plagemann and Destradi, 2019; Verbeek and Zaslove, 2015).

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