GENERATIONS IN WORLD POLITICS:
CYCLES IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY, THE CONSTRUCTION OF
THE “WEST,” AND INTERNATIONAL SYSTEMS CHANGE
1900-2008

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I examine the explanatory value of the concept of “generations” and the role of political generations in foreign policy and international politics. In the wake of the attacks on September 11, 2001, the economic recession of 2008, the “Arab Spring,” and the “Occupy Wall Street” movement, debates over the emergence and possible effects of new generations have increased dramatically. Yet, despite the fact that several scholars in the field of International Relations have either pointed towards the potential importance of generational processes or even used the notion of generations in their own research the concept has not been conceptualized in a systematic manner.

The dissertation fills this gap in the literature in two steps. First, I resolve the definitional problems surrounding the concept of generations by arguing that a generation in its most abstract form constitutes a temporal unit of analysis that locates individuals or groups in the process of time. This temporal location is constituted by the nexus of individual life stage (i.e. age) and collective history and it fundamentally shapes the political worldviews of those who occupy it. Based on the concept of generations, I
develop a theory of political generations, which I define as cohorts in the age of youth that develop a generational consciousness and distinct political worldview in response to a set of formative experiences. Political generations become either “radical” or “traditional,” depending on whether they perceive their formative experiences as evidence of the failure or success of the prevalent political culture. Whereas radical political generations will strive for political change, traditional political generations will reproduce the culture of their predecessors. I argue that radical and traditional political generations alternate across time and thereby explain cycles of change and stability in foreign policy and/or international politics.

In the empirical chapters, I apply this theoretical framework to explain cycles of change and stability in foreign policy and at the level of the international system. The first empirical chapter shows that cycles between radical and traditional political generations explain (1) periods of foreign policy change and stability and (2) the timing of shifts between extrovert and introvert foreign policy moods in the United States from roughly 1900 until 2008. In the second empirical chapter, I argue that political generations have become increasingly transnational phenomena due to the spread of mass media and changes in communications technology. Focusing on Western civilization, the chapter shows that increasingly transnational political generations have constituted a main causal mechanism for the diffusion and political evolution of liberalism over the course of the last century and have played an important role in the construction of the “West.”
For

Emma
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ii
Dedication ........................................................................................................................... iv
Acknowledgments ............................................................................................................... v
Vita ....................................................................................................................................... viii
List of Figures ..................................................................................................................... x
Chapter 1: Introduction ....................................................................................................... 1
Chapter 2: A Theory of Political Generations and Generational Change......................... 31
Chapter 3: Generational Cycles and U.S. Foreign Policy, 1900-2008.............................. 86
Chapter 4: Transnational Generations, the Construction of the “West,” and International Systems Change, 1900-2008................................................................. 169
Chapter 5: Conclusion ....................................................................................................... 242
Bibliography ......................................................................................................................... 254
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: A Theoretical Framework of Generations ........................................ 47
Figure 2.2: A Theory of Political Generations and Generational Change ............. 56
Figure 3.1: Generational Cycles and U.S. Foreign Policy, 1900-2008 ................. 168
Figure 4.1: Number of NGOs 1909-2012 ..................................................... 224
Chapter 1: Introduction

“The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living”

Karl Marx

“The inescapable fate of living in and with one’s generation completes the full drama of individual human existence”

Martin Heidegger

“Each and every time, a new generation has risen up and done what’s needed to be done. Today we are called once more—and it is time for our generation to answer that call”

Barack Obama

Political leaders often explain their policy decisions and proposals with reference to generational experiences that have affected their personal values, attitudes and beliefs.

For example, the very first two sentences of Adolf Hitler’s Mein Kampf read as follows:

1 Marx, Karl (1851). The Eigteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, in Tucker (1978): 594-617. The full passage reads: “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please, they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something entirely new, precisely in such epoch of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle slogans and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honored disguise and this borrowed language.”

2 From Being and Time, quoted in Mannheim (1952: 28). Also, see Heidegger (1962: 436).

“Today it seems to me providential that Fate should have chosen Braunau on the Inn as my birthplace. For this little town lies on the boundary between two German states which we of the younger generation at least have made out life work to reunite by every means at our disposal” (Hitler [1927] 1999, emphasis mine). More than thirty years later, John F. Kennedy, in his 1961 inauguration address famously stated: “Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans – born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace”. According to Thurton Clark, who is author of a book about this address and its impact, Kennedy had written much of this speech himself and “He did not need much help revising his dictation because it was essentially autobiographical. It told his story, and that of his generation: ‘born in this century,’ ‘tempered by war,’ ‘disciplined by a hard and bitter peace’”. German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, “delivering his first official statement of government policy to the new Bundestag in November 1998, declared that his government represented ‘a generational change in the life of our nation’” (Szabo 2004: 118). Five years later Schroeder presided over one of the deepest crises in US-German relations since the end of World War II.

Policy makers are obviously not the only group who talk about the past and its lessons in terms of generations and concepts such as the ‘baby boomers’, the ‘sixties

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4 New York Times

5 Ibid.
"generation’, the ‘generation gap’ and ‘generational conflict’ are fundamental to popular thinking” (Edmunds and Turner 2002: 1-2). Especially since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in September, 2001, however, the interest and discourse on generations has increased dramatically. Many politicians, commentators in the news media, and even some academics quickly claimed that the experiences of September 11th, 2001 and the war on terror would result in a distinct “9/11 generation,” which would fundamentally re-shape American attitudes, ideas and values. About two months after the attacks in 2001, Newsweek magazine featured a cover story with the title “Generation 9/11” arguing that the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon had provided a generation of U.S. youth with their defining historical moment.\(^6\) Presidential candidate Rudolph Giuliani opened an essay in Foreign Affairs outlining his future foreign policy program for the United States with the sentence “we are all members of the 9/11 generation” (Guilani 2007). In an interview with the Harvard International Review, Robert Putnam asserted that a 9/11 generation had emerged whose members are displaying new attitudes toward civil engagement and political activism. Putnam noted in the interview that he was contacted by the White House after 9/11, “and spent time working with the George W. Bush administration on how to make use of the tragedy of 9/11 to create a ‘new greatest generation’” (Putnam 2006: 2).\(^7\) And in his address to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the attacks of 9/11, President George W. Bush


\(^7\) On the notion of a “9/11 Generation,” see also Reissman, Thomas (2005).
asserted that the war on terror was “the decisive ideological struggle of the 21st century, and the calling of our generation.”

Since 2001, the prominence of the concept of generations in the public discourse has only increased further. In the United States, the Pew Research Center featured a year-long project dedicated to investigate the attitudes of the “Millenial Generation,” the Brookings Institute has examined the foreign policy beliefs of the Millennials, and Barack Obama won the 2008 presidential election to a great extent because he was able to mobilize the American youth, a demographic usually not known for its enthusiasm for voting and politics, by declaring the necessity for a generational change in U.S. politics. Finally, many commentators have suggested that the “Arab Spring,” the recent uprisings in the Middle East, were a generational phenomenon and the New York Times featured a series of portraits of young Arabs under the title “A New Arab Generation Finds Its Voice.”

But, why are politicians and political analysts alike so interested in whether 9/11 or the revolts in the Arab world produced a distinct generation? After all, it seems fairly commonsensical to argue that 9/11 or the 2008 economic crisis had, and probably will have, significant repercussions on future beliefs and values of US foreign policy.

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9 See http://pewresearch.org/millennials/.
makers. What difference therefore does it make whether these events will produce a distinct generation? Why are generations important?

Part of the reason seems to be the belief that the emergence of a new generation would indicate a deeper and more profound shift in American values and beliefs and consequently suggest a change in future US foreign policy. With respect to the “9/11 Generation,” for example, William Kristol stated that “It is the 9/11 generation that will have to construct and maintain a new American century” (Kristol 2007: 2). The implicit hypothesis that this argument presupposes is that only events which become formative for an entire generation will lead to long-lasting and deep changes in the beliefs and attitudes of individuals and groups. In some sense, therefore, Kristol seems to argue that the “9/11 Generation” will act as an agent of social change.

Another reason for the interest in generations and generational change seems to be based on the idea that a generational perspective allows us to predict the timing, and possibly even the content, of future changes in U.S. domestic and foreign policy. If 9/11 has resulted in lasting changes in the worldviews of young Americans, then studying those worldviews should enable us to predict the likely policies that this generation will pursue once it reaches positions of political power. With respect to the “Millenial Generation,” Peter Singer at the Brookings Institute states that examining the “attitudes of the next generation of leaders is not just fascinating in and of itself, but also could
prove potentially useful in everything from voting pattern prediction and analysis to geopolitical forecasting.”

However, what makes the debate over the possible emergence of a “9/11 Generation,” a new generation in the Arab world, or the “Millenial Generation” interesting both theoretically and empirically is the fact that it is not even clear whether the generational hypothesis holds any water. Will a “New Arab Generation” emerge? And if yes, will it affect the relations between the Arab world and the rest of the world? We all talk about history and politics in terms of generations and the belief seems to exist that particular historical experiences will often lead to deep and fundamental policy changes in the future if they produce a distinct generation. But, is it really the case that generational change results in deep changes of beliefs and attitudes at a societal level? And if yes, do these changes affect foreign policy and international politics more generally? In short, why and how do generations matter?

Despite the significant public interest in the idea of generations and notwithstanding the fact that the concept of generations has spurred significant research interest in sociology, social psychology, education studies, and American politics, IR scholars have few answers to the question of whether and how generations can have an

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impact on foreign policy and international politics because so far the field has paid little attention to the concept of generations. In 1974, Michael Roskin wrote an insightful article about the role of generational shifts and their effect on U.S. foreign policy in the wake of Pearl Harbor and Vietnam (Roskin 2005 [1974]). George Modelski has called generations the “basic units of social learning processes” (Modelski 1996: 337) and Robert Jervis has repeatedly pointed to the importance of generational changes in beliefs and discusses the concept of generation at some length. Jervis notes that generational effects on the beliefs of foreign policy makers should be “important because the claim for a causal role of the early experiences is especially strong and because it affects large numbers of people” (Jervis 1976: 253). Put differently, generational change could be a potential very powerful “cause” of foreign policy change since it affects both elites and the general public. He even suggests the outlines of a generation model which would predict generational cycles in policies, even though he does not elaborate the framework in much detail (Jervis 1976: 261).

Yet, hardly anyone in the IR community has followed the thread laid out by Roskin, Modelski, and Jervis and no systematic theoretical treatments of the question currently exist. Consequently the explanatory potential of this concept has been left unexplored in the discipline. This lack of theoretical work on generations and generational change is surprising given that much of the IR literature on ideational

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14 See Jervis (1976); Sears, Huddy, Jervis (2003).
15 Some notable exceptions include Holsti and Rosenau (1980); Beissinger (1986); Klingberg (1952). However, none of these studies provides a fully developed theoretical account of generations and generational change.
change and reproduction implicitly, and sometimes even explicitly, relies on the concept of generations and generational change, without, however, providing a clear theoretical conceptualization of the term. A major exception to this trend has been the recent publication of *Theory and Application of the ‘Generation’ in International Relations and Politics* (2012), edited by Brent J. Steele and Jonathan M. Acuff. Not only does the volume illustrate the explanatory potential of the concept of generation for security studies, foreign policy analysis, and the study of value changes across countries over time, but it also includes a sophisticated discussion of the conceptual and theoretical challenges of generational analysis. However, despite the fact that *Theory and Application of the ‘Generation’* has gone a long way to illustrate the potential of a generational approach to foreign policy analysis and security studies, it nevertheless does not overcome what Karl Mannheim called *The Problem of Generations* (1997 [1952]), the fact that to this day, no one has developed a clear definition of the term. As Steele and Acuff point out in the introduction to the volume, “[g]enerations may be conceived of in a number of different ways” (Steele and Acuff 2012: 5), which is a problem that has bedeviled generational analysis since scholars have taken an academic interest in the term. The problem of generations then resides in the fact that as long as the concept is as ill defined, or “fuzzy” as Giovanni Sartori would have put it (1970), the full potential

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16 See for example, Modelski (1990, 1996); Farkas (1996); Berger (2002); Szabo (2004).
18 Ibid., chapters 1-4, and 10.
19 I will discuss this debate in more detail in the theory chapter.
of the concept of generations and the explanatory value of generational analysis in IR will be underdeveloped.

The goal of this dissertation is to solve the problem of generations and to show the explanatory value of generational analysis for foreign policy and IR more generally. I argue that the “generation” at the highest level of abstraction is essentially a unit of analysis, which indicates the position of individuals or groups in time.\(^\text{20}\) Once I have categorized the major competing definitions of the concept of generation in this framework, I will focus on the concept of “political generations” and discuss how it can be applied to the study of foreign policy and international politics.

The Problem of Generations

Since the beginning of the 19\(^{\text{th}}\) century, when Auguste Comte published the first scholarly treatment of the concept, the debate over the correct definition of what exactly we mean by a “generation” has not abated. Even within the academic literature on generations, therefore, the concept has yet to be clearly conceptualized, and a variety of seemingly incommensurable definitions are vying for recognition. For example, the concept has been defined genealogically, as the time-span between individual off-spring and their parents (Kertzer 1983); it has been understood in the sense of “cohorts,” groups of individuals who share the same birth-year (Ryder 1997); and it has been conceptualized as socially constructed groups, or political generations, whose members

\(^{20}\) I am thankful to Randall Schweller, who first suggested to me to think of the generation as a “unit of analysis.
identify with one another based on a shared set of formative experiences and the desire to bring about political change (for example, Corsten 1999; Feuer 1969; Fogt 1982). Consequently, generational analysis has been employed to explain changes in attitudes, worldviews, and policies (Schuman and Rieger 1992; Roskin 2005 [1974]); yet, scholars have also drawn on it to explain political stability and the transmission and persistence of collective memories (Berger 2002), foreign policy moods (Klingenberg 1996), or scientific paradigms (Kuhn 1996). Given the variety of definitions and the numerous applications of the notion of generations, the question arises as to what sort of “variable” is the generation?

The lack of a clear definition of the concept of generations explains why the field of IR has so far not systematically investigated generational effects in international politics. As long as we are not clear on what we mean by a “generation,” we will not be able to assess the potential impact of generations on FP and IR, since the conceptual jungle surrounding the concept allows scholars to choose whatever definition of the term works best for their purposes. And even if we conduct empirical analyses of generational hypotheses with sufficient data and methodological rigor (see Holsti and Rosenau 1980), the results of such tests might not be supported under a different definition of the term, thereby making generalizable claims difficult to obtain. In short, before we can determine whether or not, and to what extent, generations play a role in international politics, we need to cut through the conceptual jungle surrounding the term “generations” and clearly define the term, as well as, delineate the scope conditions under which it applies.
I argue that the conceptual confusion surrounding the term “generation” can be resolved once we follow the concept formation strategy suggested by Giovanni Sartori (1970) and organize the various definitions of the term on a conceptual ladder of abstraction. Sartori’s ladder of abstraction consists of three levels at which concepts can be categorized depending on how specific and therefore amenable to empirical analysis they are in a given context. At the high level of abstraction, concepts are essentially universally applicable, yet not empirically testable. Medium-level concepts can be applied to general classes of phenomena, whereas low-level concepts provide detailed and more contextual definitions. The ladder of abstraction provides the possibility to reconcile the fact that a variety of definitions have been suggested in the literature on generations. Concepts such as “genealogical generation,” or “social generation” should simply be considered as medium- or low-level concepts of the larger genus “generation.” Furthermore, Sartori’s ladder then also suggest a strategy for defining that larger genus. High-level concepts need to be able to encompass all lower-level concepts in their own definition in order to be universally applicable across time and space (Sartori 1970: 1041). The challenge therefore is to develop a definition of the concept of “generation” that is abstract enough to encompass all other definitions and therefore provide the genus for the general class of generational concepts.
What all current definitions of the concept of generation try to capture is the implications of the fact that human experience, and by extension social and political behavior, is always situated within a finite temporal horizon. Instead of being merely a “variable” with a single conceptual definition, a “generation” at the most abstract level, therefore constitutes a *temporal unit of analysis*, a unit of analysis, which denotes the “location” of either individuals or groups in time, rather than in space. No matter whether we refer to generations in terms of the distance between parent and offspring, or to political generations, such as “Generation of 1968,” in both cases the term is used to describe individuals or groups, who pass through a determinate and finite set of individual life-stages, and experience a limited set of macro-historical events against the background of their established socio-cultural environment. The nexus between these three temporal dimensions (1) individual life-history, (2) collective history and (3) historical events produces generational phenomena. The goal of my dissertation is to show that these phenomena have a range of important implications for the study and practice of foreign policy and international politics.

Seen in this light, the conceptual diversity of the term “generations” is no longer surprising and it explains why the debate between, for example, proponents of quantitative and qualitative approaches to generational analysis is misguided. Since generational processes are temporal phenomena, their contextual effects will vary in kind, depending on the research question and/or the “vertical” dimension of spatial levels of analysis that is of interest. Concepts such as “genealogical generation,” or “social
generation,” then simply constitute mid-level sub-categories of the general definition of the concept “generation” at the highest level of abstraction.

More precisely, the generational framework that I develop distinguishes between two medium-level concepts; (1) “genealogical/biological generations,” defined as a unit of analysis based on the temporal distance between parents and off-spring and (2) “social generations,” or cohorts, defined as a unit of analysis that distinguishes between different age-cohorts. Both of these concepts are purely analytic and indicate the particular position of either individuals (genealogical) or groups (cohorts) in time. The concepts are more specified than the genus “generation” and are therefore not necessarily universally applicable, yet they are abstract enough to “travel” across time and space. Whereas the genealogical concept of generations has not been applied to questions of IR, the same cannot be said for the concept of social generations or cohorts. Howard Schuman and Cheryl Rieger (1992) have used a cohort approach in order to test the hypothesis that people in the United States whose formative years coincided with World War II are more inclined to perceive foreign interventions as a necessary means to maintain international order and peace, whereas those who grew up during the Vietnam war are more inclined to perceive such interventions as running the risk of turning into quagmires. Vincent Jeffries (1974) has adopted a cohort approach in order to assess whether public support for the use of nuclear weapons has decreased over time and Paul Abramson and Norman
Inglehart (1987; 1992; Inglehart 1977) have used a similar approach in order to show that younger generations are increasingly adopting “post-materialist” values in the West.21

Finally, at the low level of abstraction, we have the concept of “political generations.” As I will explain in more detail in the theory chapter, political generations came to matter only in modernity, and more specifically after the French Revolution, which began the age of mass politics. It would be impossible to investigate the entire generational model and each level of abstraction in detail. The focus of this dissertation will therefore be on the concept of political generations and how they affect foreign policy and international politics. For this reason, I will discuss the concept of political generations in more detail before turning to the question of how to apply the generational framework to questions of international politics.

A Theory of Political Generations and Generational Change

I define “political generations” as cohorts of youth that come to share a generational consciousness in response to a set of events that are perceived to challenge social and political order. Political generations therefore not only constitute a temporal unit of analysis, but refer to actual social collectivities whose worldviews have been shaped by a set of formative experience during their youth. Political generations can be either “traditional” or “radical” depending on whether their members interpret the response of the older generation that occupies positions of power in society as successful

21 Also, see the chapter by Jon Carlson “Generational Analysis Meets the World Values System,” in Steel (2012).
or as a failure, respectively. Whereas traditional political generations will therefore reproduce the political culture of the preceding generation, radical political generations will attempt to replace the dominant culture and push for political change. However, due to the fact that political generations emerge when their members are in their youth, the effects of a new political generation unfold with a time-lag of about 15-25 years at a time when the new political generations replaces the old generation from positions of power.

Furthermore, radical and traditional generations are causally linked in so far as radical political generations are followed by traditional political generations and vice versa. The reason for this linkage is two-fold. First, there is a time-lag of 15-25 years between the “birth” of a political generation and its coming to power during the time of generational change. If the new generation turns out to be radical and motivated to bring about political change, any events within this time period that might be formative for a new generation will be taken as further evidence that change is indeed necessary. In addition, once a radical political generation has come to power it will institutionalize its new political culture and emphasize the need for stability. Lastly, radical political generations are usually highly utopian, politically active, and will constantly attempt to mobilize the rest of society.

Once a radical political generation has come to power, we can therefore expect that the desire for political change will be exhausted and that people will want to return to their daily routines. Potentially new formative events are therefore likely to result in
traditional political generations, which will try to adapt the new political culture to changing environmental circumstances. Traditional political generations, however, at some point will no longer be able to adapt their political culture to new circumstances, which will result in new formative events that challenge the political culture. In addition, the relative lack of political activism by traditional political generations will create “political space” for a new radical political generation. Radical and traditional political generations therefore alternate throughout time, constitute an endogenous theory of change, and therefore have the potential to explain cycles of change and stability.

How to Apply the Generational Framework

What then is the explanatory contribution of a framework of generations? The method of generations that I have outlined above is intended to constitute a free-standing conceptual framework, which can be applied across all levels of analysis, span different time periods, and account for different types of ideational change. In addition, the application of a generational perspective is not restricted to particular methodological or theoretical paradigms in IR, such as constructivism or realism, even though approaches which consider the role of ideas to be epiphenomenal will not get much purchase out of a theory of generations. In the next section, I will outline how a generational approach can be applied to a variety of research questions in the study of foreign policy and international politics. The section will begin with a discussion of the general benefits of
studying international politics through a generational perspective. In the second part of the section I will show how a method of generations can be applied to a number of specific research questions in IR.

*General Contributions*

The main value of a generational method rests on the fact that it provides a unit of analysis which enables us to understand the implications which arise from the ontological fact that all social behavior is based on the interactions of individuals and groups who are located in time. As philosophers from Plato to Heidegger have recognized, time is one of the most primary and fundamental dimensions of human experience. One would therefore assume that IR, as a discipline that studies the social behavior of human beings, would have a special interest in conceptualizing how the experience of time structures social behavior and thereby affects foreign policy and international politics. Yet, one finds little, if any, explicit discussion of the problem of time in IR literature. This seems especially surprising given the rise of social constructivism, which emphasizes the importance of history, process, and social interaction across time.22

Most studies in IR implicitly rely on a linear, quantitative notion of time by adopting chronological units of analysis, such as years, centuries, etc. However, the problem with a simple chronological concept of time is that it does not adequately capture the temporal experience of the human beings whose behavior we want to study.

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22 Also see Steele’s discussion of the relationship between constructivism and generational analysis in Steele (2012), chapter 1.
(Giddens 1984). It is not necessary to resolve the philosophical question of whether we experience spatial objects because their form and substance remain unchanged over a period of time, or whether we experience time because there are spatial objects in the world whose persistence and decay provides us with the impression of temporal duration. What this example illustrates quite nicely, however, is that the phenomenological experience of time depends on the “content” of time, or put differently; we experience time because there are “things that happen in time”. Numbers such as “1945,” “1989,” or “2001” are only meaningful to us in so far as they symbolize a set of events that occurred during these calendar years. In addition, we do not experience time as a linear process, but as the interaction of various temporal processes, such as individual life-history and social history, which run simultaneously, yet move at different speeds. Just like any individual is part of several overlapping identity relationships, all human beings are located at the nexus of several temporal processes.

Phenomenologically speaking, time is therefore neither linear, nor easily quantifiable, but instead a highly complex phenomenon of several overlapping processes. In order to understand how the experience of time affects social behavior and ultimately international politics we consequently need to study the interplay between various relevant temporal processes. The general value of a generational approach rests in its ability to simplify this complexity by providing a temporal unit of analysis that captures the location of individuals and groups within the nexus of these temporal processes.
Second, in contrast to most ideational theories of IR and FP, a generational methodology explicitly recognizes and theorizes the fact that all ideas, including subjective beliefs, inter-subjective norms, collective myths, political ideologies, etc., ultimately depend for their existence on the cognitive processes of human beings whose life is, quite literally, finite. We commonly assume that social institutions, such as sovereignty, that exist over long stretches of time and therefore transcend the duration of individual life-spans, do not require explanations that refer back to their biological “carriers.” However, social structures, even if multiple-realizable, are the result of the interaction of real human beings; human beings, who are born, interact with society over the period of their own individual life-course, die, and are replaced by new human beings. Not taking generational processes and the fact of human finitude into account is likely to result in distorted historical accounts of foreign policy and international politics.

A third general contribution of a generational approach is that it can compensate for analytical limitations of the concept of the state, which remains the most important unit of analysis in IR. The fact that IR theory has faced difficulties incorporating history and time in its analytical frameworks is actually not really surprising, given that the “state” is a spatial, rather than a temporal unit of analysis. State-centric perspectives are therefore ill equipped to explain political phenomena that occur across time. Generations, on the other hand, are temporal units of analysis and a generational perspective therefore overcomes the lack of temporality of the state. In addition, formative events that are experienced across national boundaries result in trans-national political generations. A
A generational perspective consequently allows us to uncover trans-national political dynamics and processes that can be easily overlooked with a purely state-centric perspective (Horn and Kenney 2004).

**Specific Contributions to the Study of Foreign Policy and International Politics**

However, a generational framework not only provides a temporal unit of analysis, but sub-level concepts and theories also generate a set of hypotheses about how generational phenomena affect international politics. More specifically, the method of generations can be applied to four broad issues areas of research in the literature of IR that deal with questions related to (1) communication, (2) the transmission of knowledge, (3) change in foreign policy and international politics, and (4) the political integration of social systems.

**Communication**

In recent years, IR scholars have become increasingly interested in causal micro-mechanisms of change, such as arguing and deliberation (Risse 2000; Müller 2004, Lynch 2002), persuasion (Checkel 2001), and rhetoric (Schimmelfennig 2003). Whether or not these mechanisms operate successfully depends to a large extent on how successful actors are in communicating with each other. A necessary precondition for successful communication is that the involved actors share a common life-world (Risse 2000). The
level with which actors share a common life-world, however, is determined by the generational difference that separates the involved actors.

Generational differences result when two individuals or cohorts experience similar events during different stages of their life-cycle, or when they experience different events during the same period of their life. Generational differences express themselves in the fact that different generations quite literally live in different times. Put differently, even when they are socialized into the same ideas, such as for example “democracy,” they will attribute different meanings to the concept, since they were socialized into the idea at different points in time. As Julian Marias put it, “[w]e cannot understand the meaning of what a man says unless we know when he said it and when he lived” (Marias 1967: 7). Generational differences will be even more pronounced between radical and traditional political generations, since the former undergo a more fundamental learning process.

An increase in generational differences is related inversely to the extent to which individuals and/or groups share the same life-world and therefore decreases the chance for successful communication. However, being part of the same generation can actually help actors to overcome problems of communication that might arise, for example, due to differences in nationality. Especially members of political generations that arise in response to transnational events will be more successful at communicating with one another, even if they are from different cultural backgrounds, than with individuals in their own national communities who are not members of the same generation.
Generational differences between actors therefore constitute both positive and negative scope conditions for successful communication. Studying the effects of generational differences on prospects of successful communication should therefore help us to refine our understanding of the conditions the successful operation of the micro-mechanisms of change such as arguing, persuasion, and rhetoric.

Reproduction and Transmission of Social Knowledge and Collective Memories

The succession of generations constitutes a crucial mechanism to explain the transmission of social knowledge and the reproduction of social and political order. As Berger and Luckman (1967) have noted, the fact that social institutions appear as “natural” or “timeless” can only be explained through the transmission of social knowledge from one biological generation to the next, since only a new generation can “forget” the creation of the social knowledge that constitutes the institution and therefore confront it as a social “fact.” This yields, for example, the hypothesis that changes within ideational structures brought about by norm entrepreneurs require at least one genealogical generation, or about 25-30 years, until they are fully institutionalized and perceived as a taken-for-granted part of social reality.

The theory of political generations and generational change, on the other hand, can contribute to the growing body of literature concerned with the role of collective
memories, historical analogies, and collective trauma (Mueller 2002; Alexander 2003; Khong 1992; Bell 2006). Scholars of collective memory and trauma,

“insist that it is crucial to identify the relevant political carriers of personal and collective memories – or else memory studies are in danger of deteriorating into a mere enumeration of free-floating representations of the past which might or might not have relevance for politics” (Mueller 2002: 3, emphasis as in original).

Thomas Berger (2002) explicitly discusses generations as carriers of collective memories and based on a theory of political generations and generational change we can derive specific hypotheses concerning the time during which particular collective memories or historical analogies are most likely to dominate the political discourse of society. Since political generations come to acquire positions of political power only after the period of generational change, the collective memories of their formative experiences will have the strongest impact on political culture and discourse 15–25 years after the actual events. In addition, the theory helps us to explain why certain age groups in society perceive foreign policy through one set of analogies, such as the “Munich” analogy, rather than through other possible analogies, such as the analogy of “Vietnam” (Schuman and Rieger 1992; Schuman and Scott 1989; Khong 1992).

*Change in Foreign Policy and International Politics*

Generational change caused by a radical political generation and constitutes a powerful causal mechanism for political change. Several age cohorts, and therefore potentially millions of people, identify with a political generation (Jervis 1976), and for

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this reason “[t]he phenomenon of generations is one of the basic factors contributing to the genesis of the dynamic of historical development” (Mannheim 1997 [1952]: 61).

Generational change brought about by a radical political generation results in changes in political culture that are analogous to what Thomas Kuhn has called “paradigm shifts” (Kuhn 1996; Roskin 2005 [1974]). We can expect that structural changes in political culture will deeply affect foreign policy discourses and practices and from the theory of generational change we can derive the hypothesis that active political generations will bring about significant changes in foreign policy behavior with a time-lag of about 15-25 years.

This also implies that a theory of political generations is able to predict the timing of future changes in foreign policy and international politics. For example, assuming for a moment that the period between September 11, 2001 and the economic crisis in 2008 constituted a formative period for a new political generation in the United States, we would expect the first signs of significant changes in U.S. foreign policy to occur between the years 2016 and 2026. The theory does not specify and can therefore not predict the nature or content of these changes, since what is experienced as a formative event and how this event is interpreted needs to be uncovered inductively. However, given that it is possible to study political generations and their political worldviews already a decade before they come to power, it should be possible to at least forecast the direction that political change is likely to take.
As explained above, politically radical and traditional generations are causally linked and alternate across time. The alternation between radical and traditional generations corresponds to periods where change in foreign policy is more or less likely. Periods during which active generations begin to dominate the political system are very likely to be characterized by foreign policy change. Once the generation has institutionalized its political culture and is followed by a traditional generation, however, the likelihood for change decreases until a new radical political generation emerges. A theory of political generations therefore provides a causal mechanism that has the potential to explain long-cycles of “alternating moods” in U.S. foreign policy (Klingberg 1996; Pollins and Schweller 1999) and can account more generally for the evolution of foreign policy behavior across time. Since political generations can be transnational, or even global, phenomena, their effects are not confined to domestic political cultures and foreign policy, but also have the potential to result in changes at the level of the international system. For example, a generational framework can account for the timing of the emergence of international norms, when they will be accepted as social facts, and when they are likely to be replaced by a new set of norms.

Integration of Social Systems

Finally, transnational political generations provide a causal mechanism that helps to explain the integration of national social systems into larger regional or, potentially, even global systems. Despite the fact that every generation is internally split into several
generation units that provide competing interpretations of their generational experiences, the fact that these interpretations are all based on the same historical event results in the fact that the members of a generation become conscious of the fact that they are intimately related through a shared past. Historical events that are experienced across national boundaries result in the emergence of trans-national generations, whose future politics will be based on (1) an increased awareness of the interdependence of their national societies, (2) a shared understanding of the salient issues that dominate international politics, and (3) shared knowledge concerning the limited range of potential foreign policy tools to address these issues. Much of the history of the “West,” I will argue below, can be explained in terms of generational change and succession, where each cycle created another historical reference point, another part of the life-world that we nowadays call the “West.”

A generational framework therefore makes three major contributions to the field of IR. First, it provides a new unit of analysis, which is better equipped to take into account the fact that all political action always originates and is maintained by individuals or groups whose thoughts and behavior are conditioned by their particular location in time. Importantly, the theory of political generations that I develop implies a time-lag of 15 to 25 years between the moment a new political generation emerges and the moment that it comes to power and translates its new political beliefs into action. This allows the theory of generations and generational change to predict the timing of major changes in foreign policy and international politics and to some extent even to forecast
the likely content of these changes. Second, the time-lag between generational “birth” and “generational change” also suggests that a generational approach can provide new answers to old questions, which I will illustrate in the empirical chapters. Finally, a generational approach does not stand in competition to any particular research paradigm in the field of IR, but instead it can be applied to all levels of spatial analysis and to a wide range of research questions, relevant to realist, liberal, and constructivist scholars.

Overview of Dissertation

As stated above, an examination of the entire generational framework would clearly exceed the scope of this dissertation and at this stage the main focus clearly rests with further theory development. I will therefore adopt a “building block approach” (Berger and Bennet 2005) and concentrate my attention on a sub-class of generational concepts, the notion of political generations. The theory chapter will provide a short history of the concept of generations in social scientific discourse and further specify the framework and develop a theory of political generations and generational change. The research design will specify the dependent variables, operationalize the theory of generations and generational change, justify the case selection and general research design, and discuss the methods that will be used to empirically assess the validity of my theory. Chapters 3 and 4 assess the plausibility of the generational framework empirically and apply the theory of political generations to three of the four research areas outlined.
above; (1) foreign policy change and stability, (2) change at the international level, and (3) the political integration of national social systems into larger regional systems.

Chapter 3 will discuss the generations that emerged in response to the events of World War I, World War II, and the 1960s in the American context and show how the alternation between those generations can account for periods of change and stability in U.S. foreign policy. The question that motivates the first case-study of the WWI Generation is why it took the United States almost forty years, namely until the late 1930’s to adopt its position as an international great power, despite the fact based on its material power, it had already acquired this status at the end of the 19th century. My explanation is that the time-lag is a result of the fact that this change in U.S. foreign policy was caused by a new political generation, whose formative years coincided with World War I, and which came to power with the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower. Even though this generation was certainly not as radical as, for example, the Generation of 1914 in Germany, its coming to power nevertheless explains one of the most consequential foreign policy shifts in modern history; the shift from isolationism towards Europe to the decision of the United States to become heavily invested in the military and economic affairs of Western Europe. In contrast to the conventional wisdom about U.S. foreign policy during this period, therefore, I argue that it was not the Second, but the First World War, which can explain the move away from Isolationism towards Europe.
World War II in the United States gave birth to a traditional generation. This political generation perceived that FDR, Truman, and Eisenhower had confronted the challenge of fascism and war successfully. The members of this generation therefore adopted and reproduced the political culture of the Generation of World War I, which explains the stability of U.S. foreign policy from JFK until George Bush senior. Finally, the Vietnam Generation constituted a radical political generation, which emerged in response to the perceived failure of Vietnam, and the generational change that it produced in the 1990s resulted in significant structural changes in U.S. foreign policy. The chapter as a whole illustrates the alternation between radical and traditional political generations in the United States and I will argue that this generational dynamic also explains the cycles of introvert and extrovert foreign policy moods, which, according to Frank Klingberg, have characterized U.S. foreign policy since the country’s founding (Klingberg 1996).

Chapter 4 will develop the concept of transnational political generations and show that cycles between radical and traditional generations can account for periods of change and stability at the international system level. Political generations emerge against the background of formative events that challenge the existing political order. Due to the spread of mass media and changes in communications technology, more and more people in different countries are able to directly or indirectly experience traumatic experiences that provide the trigger for the emergence of new political generations. As a result, I argue that political generations have become increasingly transnational in character over
the course of the last century to the point where some scholars of generations have announced the emergence of “global generation[s]” (Edmunds and Turner 2005).

In order to substantiate these claims, the chapter will trace cycles of generational change and stability in Western civilization from World War I until roughly 2008. I will show that over time, political generations in the West have become more and more transnational, while at the same time, establishing a shared cultural background for the emergence of even more transnational generations by diffusing and adapting Western liberalism. In this respect, political generations in the West constitute the carriers of the intellectual evolution of liberalism and thereby provide a unit of analysis to empirically test Francis Fukuyama’s (1992) argument concerning the The End of History. In contrast to Fukuyama, however, the analysis presented in this chapter suggests that current and future political generations will continue to adapt Western liberalism to an ever changing international system. In addition, the chapter will show how increasingly transnational political generations have caused two major changes at the level of the international system, namely the creation of a system of International Organizations (IOs) in the post-World War II period and the emergence of global civil society, signified by a dramatic increase in the number of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that began in the early 1980s and has still not abated. The final chapter will summarize my findings, discuss the explanatory value of the generational approach, and consider avenues for further research on the concept of generations and the role of political generations in world politics.
CHAPTER 2: A THEORY OF POLITICAL GENERATIONS AND GENERATIONAL CHANGE

The goal of this chapter is to lay the conceptual foundations for a generational framework, which can be applied to a range of questions and research areas in the study of Foreign Policy (FP) and International Relations (IR). In pursuit of this task, the chapter begins with a short literature review of the intellectual history of the term “generation” in order to show both, the variety of definitions of the term that came to be adopted over time, and the lack of consensus amongst scholars of generations that resulted from this variety. In the second section, I will resolve this problem based on the argument that the various definitions of the term “generation” can be categorized into a conceptual hierarchy, akin to Sartori’s ladder of abstraction and synthesized into a method of generations. Once this general framework is established I will narrow in on the concept of political generations and explain how it can account for cycles of change and stability.
A Short History of the Concept of Generations in Academic Discourse

The concept of generations has occupied a prominent place in most cultures around the world since the beginning of recorded time. As David Kertzer points out, “[i]ts privileged place in Western societies is reflected in its codification in the Bible, while the most disparate societies of Africa, Asia and Australia have incorporated the generational concept in their notions of social order” (Kertzer 1983: 125). However, as can be seen from the intellectual history of the concept of generations, the definition of what constitutes a generation, as well as the range of social and political issues that are affected by generational phenomena, has changed over time in response to shifting ideas about the nature of time and history, the status and function of youth in society, and the pervasiveness and possibility of social and political change.

The Concept of Generations in Ancient Thought

Ancient cultures and religions were mostly concerned with the problem of generations in so far as it relates to the maintenance of political order and stability. The succession of generations was primarily seen as a challenge to the transmission of social and political norms of appropriate behavior. As a consequence, ancient thinkers emphasized the need for the proper education and socialization of new generations of young men and women. For example, the oldest surviving fragment of moral philosophy, the Maxims of Ptahhotep, a vizier during the Fifth Dynasty of Egypt around 2,450 B.C., provides instructions on how to socialize children into the rules of conduct deemed
appropriate by their parents in order to avoid generational conflict and consequent political decay Ptahhotpe (1986). Plato and Aristotle both considered the succession of generations and generational conflict a potential threat to political order (Feuer 1969: 27-30; Bertman 1976: 40-45). Plato argues in the Republic that the decline of democracy into tyranny is caused amongst other things by the fact that complete equality and freedom result in a lack of respect by the young towards the older generations, which no longer discipline and educate their sons (Plato: 560B-E, 516 A-E). Aristotle considered generational struggles as a universal fact of social life that was rooted in difference of psychological characteristics between young and old. According to Aristotle, youth is always highly idealistic, generous, full of hope and courage; but for these reasons it is also prone to excess and naiveté. The older generation, on the other hand, is materialistic, ungenerous, and bases its decisions on rational calculations, rather than on idealistic principles (Aristotle, Rhetoric: 2.12.3-14; 2.13.6, 9, 13-14, cited in Bertman 1976: 41/42).

In the new testament, Saint Mathew traces the genealogy of Jesus in terms of succeeding generations: “So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying way in Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations” (Matthew 1:1-17 in Marias 1967: 3-4). Judaism has always emphasized the need for generational continuity and harmony. Starting with the Babylonian Captivity, the family was accorded central importance for the maintenance of social solidarity and therefore for
the survival of the Jewish people, and a system of legal codes and social norms was created to mitigate the threat of generational conflict (Marias 1967).

Classical thinkers adopted a genealogical definition of generations, which defines a generation as the temporal distance between father and son. With the advent of modernity, however, the emphasis on social order was replaced with an interest in the role of generations in social and political change. This change in emphasis went hand in hand with the emergence of the notion of social generations, which extends the notion of genealogical generations to entire age-cohorts.

*Concepts of Generations in Modern Thought*

Both of these developments in intellectual thought about generations can be traced back to the emergence of modernity itself and how it changed popular and intellectual conceptions of social change, youth, and time. Most ancient cultures conceived of time and history as cyclical and therefore essentially static. In addition, even though generational conflict occupied a prominent place in Ancient thought, it rarely resulted in political revolutions or social upheaval (Bertman 1976: 44), largely, because the family, and therefore the older generation, constituted the main locus of socialization. The rise of public education and the increasing differentiation of the division of labor in wake of the Industrial Revolution, however, resulted in a shift away from the family as the primary agent of socialization (Eisenstadt 2003: 350-352). Instead, individuals in their youth were
now increasingly socialized by agents of the state and by their own peers. In addition, the
very social and cultural status of the age period of youth underwent radical
transformation. Even though the period of youth has always occupied a special position
in all cultures around the world, in modernity “youth became more and more seen not
only as preparation for the possibilities of independent and creative participation in social
and culture life, but as the very embodiment of permissive, often unstructured creativity”
(Eisenstadt 2003: 355).

The creation of the modern educational system, which for the first time in history
offered at least the chance for upward social mobility and enabled a broader segment of
society to actively engage in social and political affairs, emerged in conjunction with the
notion of the modern nation state. The nation, in turn, was thought of as an organic unity,
in which each part plays its proper role. Even though the idea of the nation as an organic
unity was especially prevalent in German Romanticism, it was essentially adopted by
most thinkers during the Enlightenment (see, for example, Comte 1988). Significant for
our purposes, however, is primarily the fact that within this conception of an organic
national unity, youth was seen as the primary agent of social and cultural renewal
(Roseman 1995). Lastly, the spread of secularism resulted in the de-legitimization of
political orders justified on the premise of divine law. Political structures lost their
“natural” and god-given appearance and were consequently open to political challenges.
Pierre Nora, for example, argues that the emergence of the modern notion of (social)
generations can only be explained with respect to the growing influence of ideals of
egalitarian democracy: “‘The Generation’ is the daughter of democracy and of the acceleration of history” (Nora 1996: 508). According to Nora, generations symbolize the idea of egalitarian democracy, since they are based on a “violent affirmation of horizontal identity that suddenly dominates and transcends all forms of vertical solidarity” (Nora 1996: 503/04). In the context of the French Revolution, this horizontal solidarity was mobilized especially against notions of hereditary rule. In this vein, Condorcet’s 1793 *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, for example, states that “a generation has no right to subject any future generation to its laws” (Article 30, quoted in Nora 1996: 502). The sweeping social and political changes brought about by modernity explain why the notion of social generations became theoretically and practically plausible for the first time and why in the modern age social generations have been predominantly understood as agents of political and culture change.

It therefore comes as no surprise that modernity and the Enlightenment also gave birth to the first academic studies of the concept of generations itself. Already in its early stages, scholarly work on generations was divided into what Mannheim called the “positivist” and the “romantic-historical” approach to the problem. Positivists thought about generations primarily in biological terms. Biological factors, such as life and death, and the continuity of generational replacement seemed to provide an opportunity to develop theories about political continuity and progress on the basis of elementary, and measurable, facts about human nature. Assuming history to be linear process of
intellectual ad social progress, positivists attempted to deduce a general law for the rate of progress on the basis of a biological understanding of generations.

Auguste Comte has been credited for providing the first serious study of generations and their effects on social reproduction and change (Marias 1967: 20). Assuming that “our social progress is essentially dependent on death” (Comte quoted in Marias 1967: 21), Comte argued that changes in the average duration of individual life spans should impact the rate of social change. A shorter life-span should increase the tempo of change, whereas a longer life-span should retard it, given that the older and more “conservative” elements of society are able to have a longer lasting influence.

Following Comte, most positivist work on generations becomes heavily focused on determining the average period of time that it requires a new generation to supersede the older generation in order to “find a general law to express the rhythm of historical development” (Mannheim 1997 [1952]: 24). Though estimates of this time period varied, most positivist generation scholars agreed that the average duration of a generation should be about 30 years. Importantly, most positivists adopted a genealogical definition of generations, meaning a generation was defined as the temporal distance between parents and their offspring. Positivists, therefore, aggregated an individualistic conception of generations to the societal level in order to make inference about social change and reproduction on the basis of three quantifiable biological factors; life, death, and age.

Opposed to this notion of generations was the “romantic-historical” school, which had its roots predominantly in Germany. Wilhelm Dilthey was the most prominent
representative, though as Jantz (1933) points out, much of his thought on generations had been adopted from previous work of romantic intellectuals, such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schlegel, as well as Johann Gottfried Herder. The romantic-historical approach to the problem of generations differed from the positivist treatment of the question in three important respects. First, whereas positivists had tried to develop a definition of generations that could yield a quantifiable chronological measure of the rate of progress, the romantic-historical school of thought adopted generations as a unit of analysis for understanding historical processes because they argued it constituted a temporal unit of analysis superior to arbitrary temporal distinctions, such as seconds, days, years, etc.

The background for this claim is provided by Dilthey’s distinction between a quantitative, or “external”, notion of time and a qualitative, or “interior”, form of time (Dilthey 1921: 561-565). Quantitative time denotes time as measured by ultimately arbitrary temporal units, such as seconds, minutes, days, etc., and is imposed on the historical process by an external observer. Positivists had resorted to a genealogical definition of generations in order to arrive at such an external, quantitative measure for the rate of progress. Qualitative time, on the other hand, is time as actually experienced by those who are embedded in its flow. Qualitative time can therefore not be measured by an “external” temporal unit, and Dilthey argued that “the adoption of the ‘generation’ as a temporal unit of the history of intellectual evolution makes it possible to replace such purely external units as hours, months, years, decades, etc., by a concept of measure
operating from within (eine von innen abmessende Vorstellung)” (Mannheim 1997 [1952]: 27).

Second, in contrast to positivists defenders of the romantic-historical approach conceived of generations primarily as social phenomena. Based on the notion of qualitative time, Dilthey points out that generations are not merely defined by their temporal succession, but are characterized by the fact that certain age groups in society are subject to the same historical experiences while passing through similar life stages:

We denote those people, who simultaneously grew up together, who passed together through the age of youth, and who later in their active life co-existed, as the same generation. In so far as these people were subject to the same dominant influences during their formative period of life they constitute a homogenous whole, despite differences in the relative weight of these influences and their interaction with other factors (Dilthey 1921: 563, my translation).

Dilthey therefore expands the definition of generations from a purely diachronic dimension, where one individual generation follows the next over time, to a second, synchronic dimension, by introducing the concept of the co-existence of age groups, thereby making the notion of social generations conceptually plausible for the first time. Dilthey’s qualitative definition of generations acquires a strong foothold in the humanities in Germany. In Being and Time, Heidegger draws on the concept in order to explicate his notion of Fate:

Fate is not the sum of individual destinies, any more than togetherness can be understood as a mere appearing together of several subjects. Togetherness in the same world, and the consequently preparedness for a distinct set of possibilities, determines the direction of individual destinies in advance. The power of Fate is then unleashed in the peaceful
intercourse and the conflict of social life. The inescapable fate of living in and with one’s generation completes the full drama of individual human existence (Heidegger, quoted in Mannheim 1997 [1952]: 28).

Since the 19th century, academic interest in the concept of generations has waxed and waned. Yet, the pattern of this variation in scholarly interest in the subject has not been random. Especially the periods after the First World War (1920-1940) and the years following the global outburst of youth protests in the 1960s (1970-1980) were characterized by a flurry of academic treatises on the subject of generation. The most important study on the subject that was published in the wake of WWI is certainly Karl Mannheim’s *The Problem of Generations*, which was originally published in 1923.23 Virtually every contemporary study on generations credits Mannheim’s work as one of the first and most sophisticated attempts to systematically address the conceptual problem of generations. Mannheim’s main contribution rests in the analytical distinction between “generation location,” “generation as actuality,” and “generation unit” (Mannheim 1997 [1952]). By “generation location,” Mannheim essentially meant that cohorts who are born at the same time will be exposed to the same influences and external events. However, a generation location only turns into a “generation as actuality” when the individuals who occupy the same generation location actively reflect on the challenges that they are facing collectively. Lastly, each “generation as actuality” is further distinguished by two or more “generation units” which develop different responses to the challenge that they are facing.

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23 It was translated into English in 1952.
as a generation. As I will show below, these three concepts provide necessary building blocks for a theory of generations and generational change.

However, Mannheim was not able to assemble his trilogy of concepts into a unified theory of generations and several aspects of his framework were not been fully developed, which prevents a straightforward application of Mannheim’s essay to social scientific questions (Fogt 1982: 13; also see Zinnecker 2003). Most importantly, he did not clearly determine the conditions under which a generation location turns into a political generation (Edmunds and Turner 2002). He suggested that generations as actualities emerge in response to “social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic process of de-stabilization” (Mannheim 1997 [1952]: 47), but the meaning of this obscure statement still puzzles generation theorists today (Pilcher 1994).

Part of the reason for this lack of clear specification certainly resulted from the fact that many of the necessary sociological concepts for a full theory of generations and generational change were not available at his time (Fogt 1982: 13; Pilcher 1994). More importantly, however, Mannheim never attempted to develop a consistent theory of generations in the first place, but confined himself to “sketching the layout of the problem” (Mannheim 1997 [1952]: 32) of generations in order to lay the conceptual foundations for future work on generations. Yet, Mannheim’s essay initially failed to spark the kind of research program he seemed to have in mind. Despite the fact that a number of sociological and historical studies in the 1930s and 1940s relied on the notion of generations, none of them attempted to further extend Mannheim’s work and refine the
initial framework he provided. Most work on generations during this time relapsed into atheoretical, commonsensical notions of generations.\textsuperscript{24}

Since the publication of Mannheim’s essay, the only serious challenge to his framework has come in the form of cohort-analysis developed by Norman B. Ryder (Ryder 1997 [1967])\textsuperscript{25}. Ryder argued that Mannheim’s conception of generations should be replaced with the notion of “cohorts,” which he “defined as the aggregate of individuals (within some population definition) who experienced the same event within the same time interval” (Ryder 1997 [1967]: 68). A cohort denotes a group of individuals who are aggregated on the basis of their shared date of birth, or some other arbitrarily chosen “entry date” into the social system. Proponents of cohort analysis suggested that the term “generation” should no longer be used to signify age-groups passing through time, but “be used solely in its original and unambiguous meaning as the temporal unit of kinship structure” (Ryder 1997 [1967]: 79; Riley 1973). The cohort is a purely analytical device, or as Ryder himself puts it, a “mere category in statistical tables” (Ryder 1997 [1967]: 82). Cohort analysis therefore “largely jettisoned the notion of shared consciousness and the distinction between ‘generation’ and ‘generation as actuality’ that was central to Mannheim’s view of the structural linkage between agency and social change” (Hardy 1997: 5).

\textsuperscript{24} For an overview of the literature on generations during this time period see Fogt (1982), Ch. 3.
\textsuperscript{25} Exceptions to this trend included Helmut Schelksy’s (1953) “The Skeptical Generation”, as well as the work by Rudolf Heberle (1951) and Sigmund Neumann (1946), who introduced Mannheim’s conception of generations in the United States. See Fogt (1982: 31-37).
However, even though cohort analysis enjoyed considerable success in the social sciences, it has failed to replace Mannheim’s approach to generations. The main reason for why the cohort approach has been unable to replace the notion of social generations is that cohort analysis can be easily incorporated into Mannheim’s framework. As one proponent of cohort analysis exclaims with some bitterness, “Ironically, many of the sociologists who employ ‘generation’ in the sense of cohort cite Ryder’s article as their authority” (Kertzer 1983: 128). This however, should come as no surprise, given that a cohort is essentially akin to a generation location, except that the latter concept assumes members of a cohort share some cultural background. In this sense, Mannheim’s framework subsumes the cohort approach.

A second reason for the inability of cohort analysis to develop into a serious challenge to Mannheim’s approach is that the notion of cohort cannot account for generations as actualities, or cohorts that self-consciously define themselves as a generation. Ryder argued that generations as actualities rarely emerge, and if they did, they would likely encompass only “a small minority of the cohort in a mass society” (Ryder 1997: 83). However, just because something does not occur often does not imply that it cannot have important consequences. Any approach that claims to replace the notion of social generations, yet cannot account for phenomena such as the “Generation of 1968”, whose members consciously identified themselves as a generation and who radically changed political cultures around the world, is by itself clearly inadequate. This also explains why academic interest in the concept of generations and the work of Karl
Mannheim soared again during the 1970s in response to the world-wide student revolts that took place during the 1960s\textsuperscript{26}. The majority of the few studies that exists in the field of IR and Foreign Policy on the concept of generations also date back to this period (Holsti and Rosenau 1980; Roskin 2005 [1974]; Jervis 1976).

However, despite the fact that the concept of generations has been part of the vocabulary of societies and cultures around the world for more than 4,000 years and in spite of almost 300 years of academic research, the notion of generations still awaits clear conceptualization. Recent contributors agree unanimously that no single definition of the term exists and that consequently many generational analyses are muddled by conceptual confusion\textsuperscript{27}. Marvin Rintala, for example, states that “[c]onfusion about its meaning appears to be widespread among those sympathetic to a generational approach as well as those who are critical of such an approach” (Rintala 1979: 6).

The distinction between genealogical generation and social generation is certainly the oldest and most general example of this problem. However, the definitional problems surrounding the notion run even deeper. Troll (1970), for example, lists five different concepts of generation, and finds them all useful” (Kertzer 1983: 126). Kertzer himself distinguishes four different meanings of the term, namely, “generation as a principle of kinship descent; generation as cohort; generation as life stage; and generation as historical period” (Kertzer 1983: 126). Samuel Huntington in turn suggests three types of


\textsuperscript{27} Laufer and Bengtson (1974: 182/3); Kertzer (1983: 125-128).
generational analysis; the maturation theory, the interaction theory, and the experiential theory of generations (Huntington 1974: 23, fn. 31).

The conceptual confusion surrounding the concept of generations has led some scholars to argue that the concept of generations is analytically useless. Indeed, the great diversity of definitions of the term seems to allow scholars the opportunity to pick and choose whatever definition appears most consistent with their prior expectations about the outcome of their research. Furthermore, recent efforts to operationalize particular definitions and to subject them to empirical testing will not be able to shed light on the question whether generational phenomena are relevant for the study of international politics, since they fail to address the general conceptual problem of generations. Paraphrasing Giovanni Sartori, even the most exact operationalization of the concept of generation is not going to help because “[i]f we have fuzzy concepts, the fuzziness will remain as it is” (Sartori 1970: 1046).

Nevertheless, I argue that the skepticism concerning the analytical value of the concept of generation is unwarranted and that Sartori’s essay on concept formation (1970) actually provides a relatively elegant solution to the conceptual problem of generations. The confusion surrounding the notion of generation stems largely from the fact that generation scholars have ignored the possibility that the various definitions which exist in the literature constitute lower-level, or middle-range, concepts that can be traced back to a single definition of generations at a higher level of abstraction. This

28 See, for example, Hardy (1997).
genus “generation” is based on the conceptual properties that are shared by all major
definitions of the notion and is characterized by maximal extension and minimal
intension (Sartori 1970), making it universally applicable across space and time.

Based on such a “meta-definition”, existing definitions of the concept that
circulate in the literature can be organized and categorized into two lower levels of
abstraction. This argument recasts concepts of generations, which were previously
considered incommensurable, such as “genealogical generation,” “social generation,”
“political generation” as medium- and low-level concepts and theories, that instantiate the
abstract notion of the genus “generation” in more concrete and particular ways at lower
levels of abstraction. The question then is no longer necessarily which definition of the
concept of generations is “correct”, but instead, the task becomes to clarify the
conceptual boundaries of each definition. The total set of lower-level concepts and
theories of generation constitute the generational framework.

In the next section, I will develop this framework on three levels of abstraction.
The highest level of abstraction hosts the genus “generation”, whereas the concepts of
“genealogical generation” and social generation, or cohort, are located at the medium
level of abstraction. Finally, the concept of political generation, which I further subdivide
into “radical” and “traditional” generations, is located at the lowest level of abstraction.
The conceptual hierarchy of generations is depicted in Figure 2.1.
High Level of Abstraction: The “Generation”

In order to subsume existing definitions under the single genus “generation” at a higher level of abstraction, the term needs to capture the conceptual properties that the most prominent definitions of the term in the literature on generations share in common.
The most commonly employed definitions of the term share two conceptual attributes. First, agreement exists that generations are ultimately based on the biological facts of birth, ageing, and death (see for example, the quote by Comte above). Second, most definitions of the term „generation“, implicitly or explicitly, treat the concept as a temporal unit of analysis. At the highest level of abstraction, we can therefore incorporate these two attributes and define a generation as a \textit{unit of analysis that designates the location of individuals and/or groups within the process of time}.

This definition is essentially synonymous with what Mannheim called a “generation location”. Drawing on the work of Max Weber, Mannheim developed the concept of generation location in analogy to the notion of “class-position”, which he defined “as the common ‘location’ (Lagerung) certain individuals hold in the economic and power structure of a given society as their ‘lot’” (Mannheim 1997 [1952]: 34; Fogt 1982: 10-11).\textsuperscript{29} By analogy, a generation can be defined as a group of individuals that share a similar location \textit{in time}: “Individuals who belong to the same generation, who share the same year of birth, are endowed, to that extent, with a common location in the historical dimension of the social process” (Mannheim 1997 [1952]: 35). Since a generation is defined as a temporal location, the term “generation location” seems redundant and I will consequently use the term “generation” throughout the text when I refer to the position actors occupy in time.

\textsuperscript{29} On the concept of social position/location see also Giddens (1984) and Bourdieu (1977).
A generation, therefore, understood as unit of analysis that designates the position of actors in time, is based on the intersection of two analytically distinct temporal processes; namely individual life-cycles and collective history. For example, members of Tom Brokaw’s famous “Greatest Generation” were in the age of youth (stage in individual life-cycle) during the time of the Great Depression and World War II (collective history). The nexus between individual life-cycles, which partly depend on the biological facts of birth, ageing, and death, and collective history therefore provides the “coordinates” that identify actors’ position in time, or put differently, that define their “generation”. Actors therefore share a generation when they experience the same macro-historical events at the same stage of their individual life-cycles.

According to Mannheim, any social location, be it class position or generational location, acts as both a negative and a positive constraint on the individuals occupying it. In a negative sense, a particular social location “excludes a large number of possible modes of thought, experience, feeling, and action, and restricts the range of self-expression of the individual to certain circumscribed possibilities”. In a positive sense, however, these constraints result in the formation of particular dispositions and “certain definite modes of behavior, feeling, and thought” (Mannheim 1997: 36).

This means that the definition also excludes certain lower-level definitions. For example, Kertzer’s (1983) definition of a generation as either, (a) life stage, (b) cohort, or (c) historical period is obviously untenable, since a generation, according to the definition provided, constitutes the nexus of life-stage and historical period. However, even intuitively it seems odd to define a generation as a life-stage or a historical period because what is it that the term “generation” adds to these concepts.
Generational differences in turn result either when two or more actors experience different historical events during the same life-stage, or when they experience the same event at different stages in their individual life-cycle. For example, despite the fact that my grandfather and I both have passed through the age of youth, we belonged to two different generations since he was in his youth during the end of the Second World War, while my youth coincided with the end of the Cold War. With respect to the latter case, even though my grandfather and I both experienced the events of 9/11, we were not of the same generation, since we were at different stages in our life when the terrorist attacks occurred. Generational differences express themselves in the fact that the cognitive schemas and the meaning that is attributed to political ideas differ between two generations due to the fact that these schemas and ideas were developed against different historical backgrounds. These examples also show, however, that at any point in time, several generations co-exist, yet live in different “times.” The interaction between these generations in the more concrete setting of society gives rise to generational phenomena, such as generational transmission and generational change that have significant implications for international politics.

Medium Level of Abstraction: Genealogical and Social Generation/Cohort

The notions of genealogical generation and social generation, the latter of which is essentially synonymous with the concept of a cohort, specify the more abstract genus generation by designating whether a particular location in time is occupied by a single
individual or by an aggregate of individuals. A genealogical generation is commonly
defined as the temporal distance between parent and offspring. This conception of
generations “indicates that descendants of a common ancestor take on average about
thirty years to marry and have children” (Jaeger 1985: 274). The concept therefore
specifies the temporal distance between individuals, who succeed each other biologically.
However, as stated above, any generation is a product of the intersection of stages in
individual life-cycles and the larger historical process. Despite the fact, therefore, that
biological reproduction is a necessary condition for the possibility of genealogical
generations, the temporal distance between two specific genealogical generations does
not depend on a biological relationship, but instead is a result of the fact that two
individuals experience a different set of historical events during the same stages of their
individual life-cycles. Put differently, I am a different generation than an old classmate of
my father, even though we are not biologically related and therefore do not constitute a
genealogical generation.

This example already indicates that the difference between genealogical and
social generations is not one of kind, but rather one of analytical perspective. The two
concepts tap into the same generational phenomenon, despite the fact that their analytical
foci emphasize different constitutive components of the genus generation. Whereas the
concept of genealogical generation concentrates analytically on individual life-histories
which are shaped to a great extent by the interaction with members of the previous
generation, the concept of social generations emphasizes the role of collective history in
creating generational differences. However, to say that, for example, mother and daughter constitute two different generations (genealogical generation) automatically implies that there exists an aggregate, a cohort of individuals (social generation), who occupy the same temporal locations as mother and daughter. Both, genealogical- and social generations, are purely analytical concepts which designate the location of either individuals or groups of individuals in time and identify the particular historical challenges and opportunities that objectively shape the life chances of a particular age cohort.

*Low Level of Abstraction: A Theory of Political Generations and Generational Change*

The low-level of abstraction, finally, is occupied by the concept of “political generations.” The key difference to other definitions of a generation is that political generations are not merely analytical concepts, which locate individuals or groups in time, but instead, they also refer to ontologically “real” collective entities which are comprised of individuals who consciously identify with one another as a generation. Political generations emerge amongst age-cohorts in their youth, who collectively undergo a series of formative events that challenge society and the prevalent political culture as a whole, such as revolution, wars, political assassinations, or even natural catastrophes (Edmunds and Turner 2002, 2005; Fogt 1982).

*A Theory of Political Generations and Generational Change*
I define a “Political Generation” as a cohort of individuals in their youth (18-25 years), who, in response to a set of formative events develop a sense of generational consciousness and develop their own distinct political culture based on the lessons that they draw from their formative experiences. Political generations can be understood as imagined communities (Anderson 1983) that share a generational consciousness, which means that individuals intuitively and explicitly identify themselves and others as being part of a distinct generation that has undergone a particular set of formative experiences and therefore shares a common location in history characterized by a particular set of challenges. Generational consciousness emerges when members of a social generation become consciously aware of their particular collective position in the historical process in response to public discourses that describe the event as traumatic and formative for a generation. Generational consciousness has an integrative effect on the individual members of a generation and it provides the basis for collective social learning and political action. (Fogt 1982: 9-23).

Generational consciousness stabilizes in the form of collective memories of the historical experiences that constitute it as a generation. Generation-specific collective memories translate into collective patterns of political orientation and in this sense every generation develops its own, relatively autonomous, political culture comprising a set of cognitive, normative, emotional, and symbolic elements (Fogt 1982: 74-105). Generational consciousness and collective memory are the constitutive elements of any

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31 On the concept of “collective memory” see Bell (2006) and Mueller (2002).
political generation and distinguish it from the concept of “cohort.” Whereas the concept of a cohort can help us account for similar reactions to a particular historical situation by an aggregate of individuals, a political generation constitutes a socially constructed collective entity that affects social life in ways not reducible to the actions of its individual members. Political generations are often based on collective myths which nevertheless make them just as real (Wohl 1979: 1-5).

Political generations can be either politically (a) traditional or (b) radical, depending on whether their formative experiences (a) confirm or (b) undermine their belief in the ability of the older generation in power and the existing political culture to confront the challenge successfully. If the new generation perceives that the older elites are incapable of addressing the crisis, it will become politically radical, in the sense that it will begin to challenge the existing political culture and attempt to replace it with a new culture, which is based on the formative experiences of its members.

However, since at the time of its emergence, the members of a new generation are still in the age of youth, their attempts to bring about political change will initially falter in light of the fact that the older generation occupies the positions of power in society (Jervis 1976; Feuer 1969). Yet, 15 to 25 years later, the members of the new political generation begin to occupy positions of power at the elite and mass level of society. During this time of ‘generational change’ the members of the new political generation will then replace the previously dominant political culture of the older generation with
their own political culture. Generational changes which bring to power a new radical political generation are therefore likely to result in structural changes in foreign policy and international politics.

Whereas radical political generations will attempt to replace the old political culture with their own, traditional political generations emerge when its members perceive that the old elites are successfully managing the crisis that is threatening society. Traditional political generations, therefore, emerge when events seem to confirm, rather than undermine, the legitimacy of the existing political culture. In contrast to radical political generations, traditional political generations will therefore reproduce the existing political culture and adapts its tenets to new environmental challenges, rather than to call for its complete replacement. Whereas radical political generations can therefore be considered mechanisms for political and social change, traditional political generations explain the persistence of political cultures and thereby political praxis across time. The general outline of the theory of political generations and generational change are illustrated in Figure 2.2.
Now that I have provided a general conceptualization of political generations and generational change, let me unpack this definition and clarify some key concepts. Political generations emerge when formative events are collectively experienced by social generations who are in their formative period of life; the age of youth. In order to clarify this argument I will shortly discuss the concept of political culture, the notion of youth as a distinct age group, and explain what I mean by formative events. Clarifying the role of these concepts constitutes a first step towards operationalizing the theory of
political generations and will help to define the “size” of a generation, i.e. who can be considered to be a member of any particular political generation.

Political Culture

Even though individuals who are born during the same calendar year(s) can be aggregated into an age-cohort they have to be socialized into the dominant political culture of their society in order to develop into a political generation. Events can only be perceived as a “crisis” or as a “challenge” to society against the background of an already established political culture that generates expectations which can be frustrated. I define “political culture” broadly as a system of meanings and practices “that shape a given society’s orientations toward politics” (Berger 1996: 325). Culture encompasses both common and collective knowledge, meaning that it comprises both the ideas held by an aggregate of individuals and a set of collectively shared discourses, norms, and symbols that are not reducible to individual beliefs (Wendt 1999: 157-165). Culture is instantiated through discourse and practices that draw on the system of meanings provided by culture and thereby reproduce it. Given that culture, understood as a “collective” representation, is multiple realizable it can often be difficult to change through intentional action. ³² However, this does not imply that a shared culture implies a shared agreement or consensus. Instead, culture, and political culture in particular, delineates the political

³² Multiple realizability means that culture can remain stable even if the individual beliefs of participants who share in it do not necessarily correspond to it exactly. See Wendt (1999: 162).
cleavages and oppositions of a given social system and constantly faces new challenges and contestations.

A crucial assumption underlying the theory of political generations is that the prevalent political culture of society is dominated only by particular segments of society. All modern societies are structured along a variety of general social categories, such as socio-economic class, gender, and, most importantly for our purposes, age. At any point in time, society is comprised of different age groups that are endowed with different resources and that face different sets of expectations. Whereas “youth,” is considered a time for rebellion, for “finding oneself,” and for these reasons perceived as a source of rejuvenation for society, youth also lacks the access to economic and political capital necessary to translate its utopias into political practice. Control over the shape and content of society’s political culture is predominantly in the hands of those cohorts who are in age of adulthood, or what I refer to as the age of “political maturity” (roughly 35-65 years), because in contrast to youth, those groups are in positions of economic and political power in both state and society.

Furthermore, we can assume that the political culture and social structure maintained by cohorts in positions of power will benefit their interests and status. Efforts to change the prevalent political culture will therefore usually engender resistance on behalf of cohorts in their adulthood. In sum, at the level of society we have two major age groups, youth and adulthood, that interact against the background of an established
political culture which instantiates and reproduces an underlying social structure and
which reflects society’s orientation towards domestic and foreign politics.

Age and Formative Period of Youth

In modern societies this shared cultural background is acquired during a life-long
process involving four “agents of socialization”: (1) the family; (2) school; (3) peer
groups; and (4) the mass media (Fogt 1982: 62-68). The family constitutes the primary
agent of socialization during early childhood and is often assumed to play a crucial role
in the reproduction of basic political orientations. The influence of parents, however, will
decrease as their children become older, enter the educational system, and increasingly
interact with their peers. School plays an important part in the process of political
socialization and generation formation for two reasons. First of all, school classes restrict
social interaction to homogenous age-groups thereby acting as “cohort-generators” (Fogt

Second, the fact that school curricula are nationally, or regionally, standardized
and rarely systematically altered means that members of these cohorts are socialized
relatively homogenously, which transforms the age-cohort into a generation location.
Lastly, the mass media plays an important role in the political socialization of age cohorts
since it provides the filter through which events can be perceived collectively. In
addition, members of age cohorts are exposed relatively homogenously to substantive information about politics provided in the form of news or commentaries (Fogt 1982: 67).

During the life-long process of socialization, the time of youth constitutes an especially formative age period, during which individuals acquire the ability to critically reflect on their social and political environment. It is also the period, however, during which individuals stabilize their political beliefs and attitudes to such a degree that they will not significantly change over the rest of the life-course. The concept of youth, however, can refer to either a stage in the biological, psychological and physiological developmental process of a single individual, or to a socially constructed category that is assigned to individuals depending on whether they have passed certain symbolic thresholds, such as high-school graduation or marriage. Understood in the latter sense, the notion of youth is associated with particular social roles and corresponding expectations. Following Fogt (1982: 57/58), I define “youth” as those individuals who are between the ages of 18 and 25 years. Though many would argue that the time of youth begins earlier, the age of eighteen seems to be a reasonable lower bound, assuming that few individuals develop complex political beliefs and attitudes at an earlier age.

Recent research in developmental psychology and the sociology of youth strongly suggest that the period of youth indeed constitutes an especially formative time period in the life-course of individuals. A number of empirical studies have found evidence to corroborate the proposition that the age of youth constitutes a “formative period” in the
individual life-cycle (Sears et al 2003: 83-84). In addition, several longitudinal studies support the “persistence hypothesis”, which states that political orientations established during the age of youth should only marginally change during adulthood, (Sears et al: 78-80). Research in sociology also confirms the idea that youth constitutes a special age during the life-span of individuals. From a sociological perspective, age and age differences are universal phenomena based on cultural definitions that refer “to the criteria according to which people occupy various social positions and roles” (Eisenstadt 2003: 369). In most societies around the world, the age of youth constitutes a liminal time period in the life-span of the individual marking the transition from being a child to becoming accepted by the community as an adult (Eisenstadt 2003: 371-374; Abrams 1982). However, as mentioned above, only in modern societies has the age of youth developed the potential for creating “very strong potentialities of social, political, or cultural protest” (Eisenstadt 2003: 377). According to Eisenstadt, this development is due to the fact that in modern societies the division of labor is not organized primarily along kinship lines, as in traditional or tribal societies. Instead “the major political, economic, social, and religious functions are performed […] by various specialized groups (political parties, occupational associations, etc.), which individuals may join irrespective of their family, kinship, or caste” (376). This has the effect that the family no longer constitutes the primary locus of socialization into adult roles. As a result, peer and youth groups have come to provide sources of identification and socialization for individuals who transit from childhood to adulthood.
Another reason for why youth has taken on a particular meaning and role in modernity can be found in the increasing tempo of historical change (Eisenstadt 2003: 379). As the tempo of change increases, young people who enter the social system are often confronted by radically different historical environments than their parents, which significantly increases the chance that youth perceives the political orientations of their parents to be incompatible with their own experience.

**Formative Events**

Most generation scholars agree that in order for political generations to emerge youth cohorts sharing a generation location “must coincide with major and palpable historical experiences in relation to which new meanings can be assembled” (Abrams 1983: 255; Edmunds and Turner 2002; Roseman 1995). As Wohl puts it, “[w]hat is essential to the formation of a generational consciousness is some common frame of reference that provides a sense of rupture with the past and that will later distinguish the members of the generation from those who follow them in time” (Wohl 1979: 210). Wars, economics crises, civil war, or natural disasters are some examples of events that are potentially formative because they affect a great number of people, represent a challenge to social life, and “supply the markers and signposts with which people impose order on their past and link their individual fates those of the communities in which they live” (Wohl 1979: 210). Formative events are experienced as ruptures of the daily routine.
of life by defying social expectations that emanated from the prevalent political culture. Events become formative when they are perceived as a challenge to state, society, and its political culture, and in this sense, these events “stand out” from other events which lack this formative impact. As I will explain later, how these events are perceived and interpreted determines whether or not a political generation develops a new political culture and therewith turns into an agent of political change.

However, first it needs to be clarified in what sense individuals have to “experience” an event. Obviously, there is a difference whether people experience an event directly or indirectly. First of all, direct experience will in most cases have a stronger impact on the individual than mediated experiences. Second, events that are experienced indirectly through some form of media, such as hear-say, newspapers, TV, etc., are already framed and given some initial meaning. At the same time, however, political generations emerge in response to events that are perceived as “crises”, challenges to the social order, and this perception of crisis does not require that individuals have experienced an event directly. In order to be part of a generation that has emerged in response to a formative event, such as a war, it is therefore only of secondary import whether someone has actively fought at the front or spend most of the war behind the front. This implies that a political generation can potentially include all youth cohorts that share a common cultural background and are exposed to a formative event through personal experience or the mass media (Fogt 1982; Edmunds and Turner 2005).
The Size of a Political Generation

The “size”, or membership, of a political generation can now be more clearly specified. I define the “core members” of a political generation as those individuals who are in their youth, and therefore roughly between the age of 18 and 25, over the course of the formative event in question. For example, the “Generation of 1914,” which emerged as a result of the experience of World War I, included the cohorts born between 1889 and 1900. However, the age between 18 and 25 is only a rough boundary and it is assumed that the membership of a generation often extends beyond these core members since older age groups might identify with the experience of the generation and the lessons drawn from it. According to Robert Wohl, a political generation is “like a magnetic field at the center of which lies an experience or a series of experiences. It is a system of references and identifications that gives priority to some kinds of experiences and devalues others—hence it is relatively independent of age” (Wohl 1979: 210). The spatial boundaries of core membership are determined by the geographic area in which the event is directly experienced, or covered in the mass media, and by the extent to which the people who inhabit these areas share a common cultural background. This means that political generations can be cross-national, and potentially, even global phenomena (Edmunds and Turner 2002; 2005).
Generational Change

Political generations emerge when their members are in the age of youth. As the members of the political generation age, their political beliefs and values stabilize since new experiences are incorporated into pre-existing cognitive frames established during the time of youth. However, since the members of a political generation are still in their youth during and immediately after the time of its emergence, they will occupy few, if any, positions of political power in society. Instead, those positions will still be occupied by members of an older generation that has been shaped by a different set of formative experiences.

For this reason, the strongest potential impact of political generations only occurs with a time-lag of about 15-25 years, when its members start to enter the age of “political maturity.” I define this period as the moment of generational change; the time when core members of a generation replace previous elites at the state level and constitute the majority of the politically attentive public at the level of society. Generational change is a potentially powerful mechanism for political change, since it replaces the main actors of the political system with members of a political generation who collectively experienced a set of formative events during their formative years. However, whether or not this potential for political change is actualized depends on whether the generation that comes to power is politically “traditional” or “radical.”
The impact of formative events depends on how they are experienced and interpreted against the background of the established political culture. Cognitive schemas and structures of shared knowledge, such as political discourses or cultures, into which individuals are socialized, are highly resilient to change. Cognitive frameworks are flexible enough to absorb a great deal of cognitive dissonance (Jervis 1976) and structures of knowledge are not only reproduced on a daily basis, but also multiple-realizable (Wendt 1999). Even large-scale events that severely disrupt the routines of daily life do therefore not necessarily result in significant changes in individual or collective worldviews, or put differently not all “exogenous shocks” are alike. As long as formative events do not fundamentally contradict shared social expectations they are unlikely to cause fundamental shifts in political culture and the motivation to pursue fundamental political change will be low.

To illustrate this argument with an example, one could argue that the end of the Cold War was a formative event for youth-cohorts in the United States and in the West more generally. However, the interpretation of the causes that resulted in the collapse of the Soviet Union did not contradict social expectations flowing from the political culture of the West. Quite the contrary, the events of 1989-1990 were experienced as a confirmation of Western political culture and ideology and they therefore strengthened the legitimacy of the West. After all, the end of the Cold War had “proven” that
liberalism was the only viable political and economic system in the 21st century and some even went so far as to declare not only the end of the Cold War, but the end of all of history (Fukuyama 1992).

Formative events that confirm social expectations will therefore result in what I call “traditional political generations.” Traditional generations are “political” generations in so far as their members share a set of collective memories and consciously identify themselves as part of a generation. However, since the formative experiences of traditional generations did not frustrate social expectations, they do not constitute a challenge to the political culture that was established by previous generations. Put differently, traditional political generations emerge when their members interpret the response of the old elite to the challenges posed by formative events as a success. The decision-making processes of its members will be strongly guided by analogies derived from their formative experiences. Yet, since these experiences confirmed the legitimacy of the ideas and values established by older generations, politically traditional generations will be oriented towards the past and politically traditional, rather than radical.

Traditional generations therefore might learn from their formative experiences, yet since they do not perceive a failure of the political culture as a whole, their learning experiences will be confined to adjusting the political culture and the policies of their predecessors to new environmental challenges. Traditional generation might produce limited change in the system; yet, they never produce a change of the system.
Nevertheless, the effects of traditional generations are still “political”; after all, there is nothing “non-political” about maintaining social order and the political status quo.

*Radical Political Generations*

Generational change only results in a change of the political system if it brings to power a politically radical generation. Radical political generations emerge when cohorts in their youth experience a series of formative events which consistently frustrate the social expectations that flow from the established political culture. Put differently, the members of a radical political generation believe that the political system is under severe threat and needs to be reformed in order to survive. Radical political generations perceive the efforts of the generation in power to address these threats as a failure and therefore call for generational change. Only formative events that are perceived as rendering traditional beliefs and values untenable will cause members of a political generation to reflect on the basic political orientations into which they have been socialized during childhood and youth and to perceive the need for political change. Put differently, “social actors must agree, even if tacitly, on the inadequacy of the old orthodoxy and the need to replace it” (Legro 2000: 263). Public representations that describe the response of old elites to formative events as a “failure,” “disappointing,” or as a “threat to political stability” will increase the awareness amongst the young that they share a common place in history and heighten their motivation to bring about political change. In other words, individuals in their youth begin to consciously identify themselves as members of a
radical political generation through a public discourse which frames the event as a sign for the inability of the old elites, and the political culture that they defend, to the challenges posed by formative events. In addition, such discourses will heighten the attentiveness to social and political issues amongst youth and increase the motivation to actively pursue social and political change. This will trigger a process of collective learning during which the political orientations of age groups in their youth undergo radical change.

*Generation Units*

The politically most active members of a radical political generation will form into “generation units” (Mannheim 1997 [1952]), which provide competing interpretations of the formative event and correspondingly antagonistic “historic lessons” about how society needs to be changed in light of these experiences. Mannheim describes generation units as the “polar forms of the intellectual and social response to a historical stimulus experienced by all in common” (Mannheim 1997 [1952]: 47). In contrast to the generation as a whole, generation units are characterized by a set of concrete shared political norms and values and the fact that they are significantly more structured than the political generation itself. Generation units are “observable” social collectives bound together by a set of shared narratives, ideologies, norms, and expectations. Its members identify with their political generation and exhibit a strong motivation for political action, which resolves collective action problems and explains why generation units are the
primary social agents that translate generation-specific learning processes into political practice (Fogt 1982: 94-102).

Through means of persuasion and political rhetoric, generation units will compete for public recognition of their narratives and attempt to mobilize their generation in order to translate the lessons drawn from their experiences into political practice. The generation units that provide narratives resonating most closely with the experiences of members of the politically radical generation as a whole will come to dominate the public discourse in society and develop into social movements, which push for political change. Most of these movements will initially fail to achieve their goal of radical change, since older generations are still in power and are likely to resist calls for political change. However, opposing generation units will continue to compete for domination of the discourse about their generation and attempt to enter the political system in order to change society from the top down.

Generational change that brings to power a politically radical generation will result in political change. With the new radical political generation a new political culture will come to dominate the political process. At the state level, old elites are replaced with new leaders who not only share radically different political orientations than their predecessors, but who are also strongly motivated to translate new preferences and interests into political action. The efforts of the new elite to institutionalize a new political culture will be facilitated by the fact that generational change also takes place at
the level of society. When the members of the radical political generation constitute the majority of the political attentive mass public, the political constraints on decision-makers will change in line with their preferences and interests. Generational change that brings to power radical political generations therefore accounts for the timing during which the efforts of “norm entrepreneurs” (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998) are most likely to be successful. Put differently, a theory of political generations and generational change not only explains why new ideas emerge at certain points in time, but also accounts for when and why those ideas are likely to have an effect and become translated into actual policy. After coming to power, the new political generation will formally institutionalize its political culture. Once this is accomplished, the political culture of the generation will constitute the new political “tradition” of society and thereby provide the basis for the emergence of the next political generation.

The Alternation of Radical and Traditional Generations

Finally, I argue that traditional and radical generations are causally related. Radical generations bring about political change, which produces structural change in political cultures in response to events which are perceived to threaten the legitimacy and political viability of the social order. Yet, the change in political culture and correspondingly political behavior occurs 15-25 years after the formative event, when the generation begins to occupy positions of power in society during the period of
generational change. Potentially formative events that occur during the time between
generational emergence and generational change will be interpreted as further
confirmation for the need to pursue political change and are therefore likely to result in
politically traditional generations. In addition, radical generations are politically utopian,
and highly motivated to pursue fundamental political change (Feuer 1969). For this
reason, politically radical generations tend to dominate the public discourse of society
during their life-cycle with calls for political change and debates about the direction that
it should take. Once the generation has come to power, however, it will attempt to
institutionalize its own political culture and therefore begin to emphasize the need for
stability. In addition, long periods of political activism and change are usually followed
by a general “exhaustion” from political action and a desire to return to the more stable
life of “daily routines” (Feuer 1969). New formative experiences will therefore most
likely not be interpreted as indicators for the necessity of further political change. For
these reasons, we can hypothesize that radical generations are usually followed by
traditional political generations, which lack a desire to pursue radical political change and
instead focus on other issue areas of their life, such as economic well-being.

The lack of political engagement by traditional generations in turn provides the
conditions for the emergence of the next radical generation, since it opens up political
space for new cohorts in their youth to become politically active. In addition, given that
traditional political generations interpret their formative events as confirmations of the
established political culture, they are less likely to pursue significant change in response
to further events that rupture social and political life. Over time, this political culture therefore becomes increasingly out of sync with changing environmental conditions and society is no longer well-adapted to its external environment. Under these circumstances, the dominant elites and the political culture that they reproduce are no longer perceived to be able to adequately respond to external challenges. In the words of Pierre Bourdieu:

\[\text{[P]ractices are always liable to incur negative sanctions when the environment in which they are actually confronted is too distant from that to which they are objectively fitted. This is why generation conflicts oppose not age-classes separated by natural properties, but habitus which have been produced by different modes of generation, that is, by conditions of existence which, in imposing different definitions of the impossible, the possible, and the probable cause one group to experience as natural or reasonable practices or aspirations which another group finds unthinkable or scandalous, and vice versa (Bourdieu 1977: 78)}\]

In sum, political generations emerge in response to formative events, yet those events are better understood as proximate causes and mostly instantiate and crystallize the fact that a society’s political culture is no longer adequately adapted to the external environment. Put differently, formative events signify a lack of fit between “world” and the existing political culture. As a result, the chance for the occurrence of formative events that consistently contradict expectation flowing from the established political culture will increase. Generational change then, constitutes a primary causal mechanism for adapting society’s political culture to a changing external environment. In sum, radical and traditional generations “cause” each other, and in this sense, a theory of political generations and generational change constitutes an endogenous theory of political and cultural change.
Research Design

Specification of Research Objective

Alexander George and Andrew Bennett have pointed out that it is crucial for a successful research design to carefully define and articulate the objectives of the research project, given that research designs can accomplish a variety of diverse goals, such as theory testing, theory development, heuristic purposes, etc. (George and Bennett 2005: 73-79). As already discussed in the introduction, the generation, defined as a unit of analysis that captures the location of individuals or groups in time, and the generational framework that is derived from it can be applied to a wide range of questions relevant to the study of international politics. However, not only is a full examination of all possible applications beyond the scope of this dissertation, but more importantly, the framework that I have suggested in the pages above is still in the stages of theory development and has not yet been tested empirically. In light of these constraints, the following research design and case studies to follow have three major objectives.

First, in order to further develop the theoretical framework suggested above, the research design will follow a “building block’ procedure” (George and Bennett 2005: 78) and focus on one sub-class of generational phenomena, namely the interaction between traditional and radical political generations. Second, the empirical case studies provide a plausibility probe of the theory, which will help to assess whether the theory of political generations and thereby the generational framework as a whole deserve further
development and study. Finally, the design also has the objective to serve a heuristic function and to develop new hypotheses to be tested by further empirical research.

Therefore, even though alternative explanations will be examined in each case study, the goal of the research design is not to provide a rigorous test, but rather to illustrate the potential of a theory of political generations to provide new and counter-intuitive answers to old, but important, questions in Foreign Policy and IR, to clarify the scope conditions of the theory, and to identify further relevant variables and mechanisms.

**Preliminary Specification of the Prime Hypotheses**

In order to illustrate the explanatory potential and broad applicability of the theory of political generations, the theory will be applied to the level of foreign policy and international politics, respectively. The first empirical chapter will investigate the following two general hypotheses, namely (1) that the birth of a radical political generation results in structural foreign policy changes with a time-lag of 15-25 years, whereas traditional political generations will result in structural foreign policy stability, and (2) that the alternation between radical and traditional generations across time accounts for the timing of shifts in foreign policy moods (Klingberg 1996). By “structural foreign policy” changes, I mean long-term shifts in (1) grand strategy, (2) the goals, or ends, of foreign policy, and/or (3) the justification for the use of military force. Put differently, structural foreign policy change occurs when the parameters in which foreign policy takes place, the boundaries of what is “thinkable” and “unthinkable,” shift
permanently. The second empirical chapter will serve a heuristic purpose and investigate the potential of trans-national political generations to bring about political change at the level of the international system and serve as a mechanism to account for increasing levels of political integration or isomorphism. The dependent variables will be further specified in the beginning of each chapter.

Methodological Approach

Before I discuss how I will test this framework in each case-study, let me briefly discuss the general methodological approach that will be adopted for this research design. Over the last couple years, scholars interested in generational effects have often adopted a quantitative approach in order to examine whether there exist significant differences between various cohorts on a set of particular questions (for example, Schuman and Rieger 1992; Holsti and Rosenau 1980). Those studies usually rely on data obtained through large-scale surveys. However, one problem that consistently complicates those studies is the problem of disentangling the effects of age, period, and cohort. For example, a survey might uncover that cohort A is more conservative than cohort B, whose members were born twenty years later. The problem is that the difference in the level of conservatism could be an effect of the fact (1) that the members of cohort A are twenty years older than the members of cohort B (age effect), (2) that recent events have resulted in a decreasing level of conservatism amongst the members of cohort B (period effect), or (3) the differences in conservatism might have been caused by the fact that the
members of cohort B have been generally less conservative than cohort A throughout their entire life-cycle (cohort effect). Only the last type of effect would be an indicator for generational differences. Disentangling these three, potentially confounding, causes requires longitudinal survey data that extend over the entire life-cycle of cohorts and ask the same people, the same questions at several points in time. The data requirements to test a generational account through quantitative analysis of survey data are correspondingly enormous. Very few data sets that satisfy those requirements exist and even those do not extend much further back than the 1960s, thereby making analysis of historical cases almost impossible.

In light of these difficulties, I have adopted a qualitative methodological approach, which can help to untangle the effects of age, period, and cohort. Most important in this respect will be the method of process tracing, which “attempts to identify the intervening causal process—the causal chain and mechanism—between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable” (George and Bennet 2005: 206). Process tracing is the ideal method for a generational approach since the emergence of political generations and generational change constitute temporal processes and thereby yield a set of indicators and empirically testable hypotheses at different points in time. Process tracing then allows us to examine each step of the causal chain and to use a wide range of empirical data, such as personal accounts, secondary historical research, but also quantitative data on economic or military performance, in order to test the hypothesis that structural changes in foreign policy are the result of
generational changes. In order for the hypothesis to be supported “all the intervening steps in a case must be as predicted by a hypothesis” (George and Bennet 2005: 207).

Research Strategy

For the sake of structuring the research process, each case study will be divided into the following four sections. The first step will be to determine the political culture that existed prior to the event in order to establish the background against which events can be perceived as challenges to the traditional order. As already stated above, I define “political culture” broadly as the set of shared beliefs, values, and norms “that shape a given society’s orientations toward politics” (Berger 1996, 325). Even though the concept of “political culture” is intentionally broadly defined, we are obviously mostly interested in those aspects which, directly or indirectly, relate to the conduct of foreign policy. The second section will describe the formative events themselves in order to determine whether they were perceived as a challenge to society by age cohorts in their youth. The more these events frustrate prior social expectations, the more likely it will be that they will have a formative impact on the worldviews of society’s youth.

The goal of the third section will be to determine whether the events led to the emergence of a new political generation and whether this new generation is traditional or radical. A political generation is constituted by a generational consciousness and shared collective memories of formative experiences, both of which find expression in a generational discourse. The emergence of a new political generation would be indicated
through personal and public statements by members of the generation which show that they interpret the formative events as being constitutive of a generation. Put differently, references to a new generation need to be made in the context of narratives about the historical event in question, and these narratives in turn have to describe the event as a “decisive”, “crucial,” or “formative” experience. This discourse is most likely to emerge during and immediately after the formative event. Empirical evidence to examine this hypothesis will be drawn from autobiographical and fictional accounts produced by the core members of the generation and historical research about the period under investigation. If we find sufficient evidence for the emergence of a new political generation, the question becomes whether this generation is radical or traditional.

*Radical Political Generation*

The hypothesis here is that generations turn radical if the response by the older generation to the challenges posed by formative events is perceived as inadequate. Such a negative generational discourse undermines the legitimacy of the generation in power and therewith the prevalent political order. The most important empirical indicator for such a negative generational discourse would be public statements that call for a “generational change.” Other indicators would include declarations that the political order is corrupt, flawed, or unable to solve political problems. However, calls for political change that originate only from within one part of the political spectrum do not qualify as evidence
for a negative *generational* discourse since such statements might reflect differences in opinion that are the effect of party ideology and not generational discontent.

Any radical political generation is further divided into two or more generation units, which provide conflicting representations of the event and therefore draw different historic lessons for the future. This hypothesis would be supported if we find two or more interpretations of the event within the overall discourse about the generation that constitute polar opposites. At the same time, however, these opposing interpretations still need to refer to one and the same event and they both need to refer to the event as a “generational experience.” Most importantly, however, we can only assert the presence of generational effects if the political culture propagated by generation units diverges significantly from the political orientations and beliefs of their intellectual precursors. Generations do not draw lessons out of “thin air” but are usually inspired by the ideas of what Mannheim called “intellectual forerunners,” members of the previous generation who provide new ideas that are ahead of their time. Generation units are expected to form along the lines of previously established political and ideological fault-lines. It will therefore often be possible to label competing generation units as, for example, “liberal” or “conservative.” However, the claim that political generations have an independent impact on politics can only be supported if it can be shown that its generation units significantly change the political beliefs and ideologies of the generation that preceded them in positions in power. The extent to which generation units innovate existing
political beliefs and orientations might in some cases be difficult to measure with precision, but again, the difference should significant.

There are two additional factors which help to distinguish traditional from radical political generations. First, in contrast to traditional political generations, the members of radical generations will attempt to bring about political change immediately after the formative events and form into social movements. However, since the older generation occupies the main positions of power in society and state, these attempts are most likely to fail. This means that the emergence of radical political generations should be followed by periods of youth protests and political violence. In addition, given that radical political generations emerged in response to a perceived failure of the older generation to properly address the challenge posed by their formative experiences, we would expect the presence of signs of generational conflict between the new generation and those in positions of power. Both of these indicators should be absent in the case of traditional political generations.

*Traditional Political Generation*

The competition between different generation units and the creation of social movements to bring about change are only characteristics of radical political generations and clearly distinguish them from traditional political generations, which do not split into clearly demarcated units and do not produce social movements. Traditional political
generations emerge in response to formative events and a positive generational discourse, which interprets the response of the older generation to those events as a success and thereby confirms the prevalent political culture. Traditional generations share collective memories about their formative experiences and develop a set of analogies that will guide them throughout the rest of their lives. Yet, they do not strive to revolutionize the existing political order, but instead want to preserve and reproduce it.

The fourth step of my research strategy will focus on the question of generational change and establish whether or not members of a radical or traditional political generation actually do take over positions of power in society during the time period predicted by my theoretical framework. The hypothesis in this case is that 15 – 25 years after the birth of a new political generation, generational change will replace the old foreign policy elite with members of the new generation. This hypothesis can be tested by matching the birth years of the key decision-makers that determine domestic and foreign policy with the range of birth years that include the core members of a political generation. In the case of radical generations, the members of generation units, such as the former leaders of social movements, are most likely to be represented in elite positions since they are the politically most active elements of the generation. Which generation unit comes to represent the generation as a whole at the state level will have to be determined empirically, though we would expect that the generation unit with the strongest ties to the old elite will prevail in this struggle.
If generational change brings to power a radical political generation, it will also be necessary to test the hypothesis that this generational shift results in a change of political culture. The underlying assumption is that generational change is an especially powerful mechanism of political change, since it implies that a new political generation comes to dominate not only elite positions but also constitute the majority of the politically attentive public, which will decrease the amount of potential resistance to wide-ranging political changes. The focus will obviously be on aspects of the new political culture which are relevant to the conduct of foreign policy. Systematic shifts in the public discourse about the aims and means of (foreign) policy, the nature of threats and opportunities, etc., would be considered empirical evidence in support of this hypothesis.

The claim that shifts in political culture are the effect of generational change, however, can only be supported if we find evidence that the political culture of a radical political generation taking over positions of power strongly resembles the political culture it developed during its inception. Much of the theory of political generations rests on the “persistence hypothesis,” which states that political beliefs and values developed during youth should stabilize during adulthood and only change marginally in response to further environmental stimuli. In order to test this hypothesis it will be necessary to match statements made by members of the radical generation at the time of its inception and the time of generational change. Only if we can trace the political worldviews and values of the political elite in power at the time of generational change to the political
culture of the generation at its inception can we be confident that we do not confuse generational change with regular personnel turnover.

In contrast to their radical counter-parts, traditional generations do not bring about significant changes in political culture. Instead, they will attempt to re-produce the political culture of the generation that was in power during their formative years. However, members of a traditional generation will often justify their political views or actions through analogies that refer back to the generation’s formative experiences. Statements of this sort therefore constitute indicators for the presence of a traditional political generation. Finally, I will determine the extent to which changes in the dependent variables have taken place during the time period predicted by the theory of generations and generational change. The substantive content of the dependent variables will be specific to each case study and defined at the outset of each study.

Process tracing will be used in order to show whether a political generation and generational change can explain variation at the dependent variables. Primary historical documents, secondary historical research, public opinion surveys, and in some cases personal interviews will be used in order to examine particular indicators or causal mechanisms. The more evidence we find to support each step in the process of generational emergence and change, the more confident we should be that foreign policy change is the product of generational change. In order to measure variation on the
dependent variable I will draw on counter-factual analysis, comparing the policies of the new generation with those of its predecessors.

The following two empirical chapters examine the theory of political generations in a total of six case-studies. Each one of these case-studies consists of a causal narrative (Büthe 2002) that traces the process from generational emergence to generational change through each of the four steps discussed above, examines the presence or absence of empirical indicators for each step, and determines the extent with which my framework can account for variation in the dependent variables. Each chapter, in turn, examines the effect of political generations on two dependent variables. Whereas chapter 3 focuses on (1) foreign policy change/stability, (2) alternations between extrovert and introvert foreign policy moods, chapter 4 examines the role of transnational political generations in causing (3) international system change/stability, and (4) political integration. This implies that despite its qualitative methodological approach, the research design and empirical analysis to follow actually generate a whole range of observation points and empirical indicators. As such, the empirical case-studies below should provide a strong plausibility probe for the theoretical framework developed above.
CHAPTER 3: GENERATIONAL CYCLES AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY, 1900-2008

The goal of this chapter is to apply the generational framework to the study of U.S. foreign policy. I will examine two major hypotheses. First, I argue that cycles between radical and traditional political generations cause periods of structural foreign policy change and stability, respectively. The second hypothesis that I intend to examine in this chapter is that the alternation between radical and traditional political generations accounts for cycles in foreign policy moods. With respect to foreign policy, which is the focus of the current chapter, Frank Klingberg (1952; 1996) has noted that American public opinion alternates in a cyclical fashion between “introvert” and “extrovert” moods. Whereas “introvert” foreign policy moods imply a lack of support for the use of military force abroad, an “extrovert” foreign policy mood implies that the public is supportive of foreign interventionism. While Klingberg makes a compelling case that these “mood cycles” actually exist, he did not provide a systematic argument as to why these cycles occur. Randall Schweller and Brian Pollins (1999) took a first and important step in that direction by examining the relationship between Goldstein’s Economic Theory of the Long Wave and three proximate, domestic level, causes that could explain the occurrence and timing of cycles between “introversion” and “extroversion.” Their initial analysis
strongly suggests that there is indeed a relationship between the economic long wave found at the systemic level and foreign policy moods. While ultimately, the goal of my research agenda is to examine this complex relationship between domestic and systemic cycles, in this chapter I want to examine the hypothesis that cycles in foreign policy mood are the result of generational cycles between radical and traditional political generations.

By “structural foreign policy” changes, I mean long-term shifts in (1) grand strategy, (2) the goals, or ends, of foreign policy, and/or (3) the justification for the use of military force. Put differently, structural foreign policy change occurs when the parameters in which foreign policy takes place, the boundaries of what is “thinkable” and “unthinkable,” shift permanently. The term “structural,” in addition, captures the notion that foreign policy changes brought about by generational changes are not reducible to changes in foreign policy which are the effect of different party ideologies. By “structural foreign policy stability,” on the other hand, I do not mean that foreign policy behavior does not change at all. Instead, this outcome describes a situation where foreign policies are adjusted and streamlined in order to achieve the same grand strategy, or pursue the same foreign policy goals that guided the preceding generation.

Foreign policy in this basic model is determined by an “international input” and a “domestic input.” The “international input” entails the foreign policy actions of other states, external events, such as international conflict or economic crises, and most
importantly, the balance of power. The “domestic input” consists of a public discourse about foreign policy, which expresses the underlying dominant political culture shared by elites and the general public. The combination of international and domestic inputs strongly conditions the possible options open to decision-makers. For example, the balance of power might indicate that it is necessary to balance against a new potential security threat. However, what strategies the state decides employ in order to balance against the new threat cannot be deduced from the balance of power alone. The domestic input, however, which is equivalent to the prevalent political culture, will in this case indicate the particular strategies that are deemed legitimate and appropriate by elites and the public. The underlying assumption is therefore that even though decision-makers always react to external challenges, how they react will depend on the political culture that is prevalent at the time.

Political culture both constrains and enables foreign policy decision-makers in the sense that it defines the boundaries of policies that are “conceivable” or “imaginable.” The hypothesis is therefore that generational changes which bring to power radical political generations will result in structural changes in foreign policy because the new generation not only replaces the old elites but also institutionalizes a new political culture at the level of society. In the case of radical generations, generational change not only brings to power a new set of decision-makers, whose political views differ significantly from their predecessors, but it will also change the domestic input that flows into the foreign policy decision-making process. Radical political generations thereby produce
lasting changes in foreign policy that cannot simply be reduced to changes in the international input, such as, for example, changes in the international balance of power. Even though such changes in the international environment might obviously still occur, the claim is that radical political generations will react to those new challenges in ways that differ significantly from the policies that would have been pursued by the generation before them.

In order to assess the extent to foreign policy has changed in a systematic manner I will compare the foreign policy decisions of the old foreign policy elite and the new generation of leaders. It will be necessary to show that the decisions of the new elite differ significantly from the decisions that their predecessors would have made in similar circumstances. Ideally, we would find evidence that the new elites try to explain and justify their policy decisions with respect to the formative experiences and lessons that defined their generation, in order to control for the fact that the new elite faces a different strategic environment than its predecessors.

_Explaining Shifts in American Foreign Policy Moods_

Aside from explaining structural shifts in U.S. foreign policy, this chapter also seeks to demonstrate that the theory of political generations can simultaneously explain the timing of shifts in American foreign policy moods. However, the causal logic is slightly different than for explaining foreign policy changes, so let me briefly outline the
logic to specify the hypothesis concerning foreign policy moods. Based on the theory of political generations, I derive the hypothesis that extrovert foreign policy moods are caused by the ascendance of radical political generations. The underlying logic is that radical generations intend to change the political culture and policies of their predecessors. This implies, that they are likely to attempt to externalize their values and ideas, which would explain a tendency to pursue a more extrovert foreign policy. Since traditional political generations are expected to adopt the policies and political culture of the preceding radical generation, the theory also suggests that traditional generations will adopt the extrovert foreign policy mood of its predecessors. Since over time, however, the political culture and foreign policy that was established by the initial radical generation will be “out of sync” with the external environment, the foreign policy of the traditional generation will result in a crisis that shifts American foreign policy mood back to introversion. New radical political generations are then likely to emerge during times of introversion and once they come to power, they will bring about a new shift to a more extrovert foreign policy. In short, the theory of political generations suggests two major hypotheses concerning the alternation of extrovert and introvert foreign policy moods, namely, (1) radical political generations emerge during times of introversion and shift the foreign policy mood to extroversion once they come to power, and (2) traditional political generations adopt the extrovert foreign policy of their radical predecessors but thereby generate a crisis that shifts the mood back to one of introversion.
The following three case-studies examine to what extent radical/traditional political generations can explain variation at the two main dependent variables (1) foreign policy change/stability and (2) periods of foreign policy extroversion/introversion. The case of the WWI Generation in the United States is probably the hardest case for my theoretical framework. The fact that the United States entered the war only in 1917 and suffered relatively few casualties compared to the European parties to the conflict, suggests that the formative impact of the First World War was less pronounced on American youth than on their European peers. For this reason, the WWI Generation will be discussed on more detail than the other case-studies.
Case-Study I: The Generation of World War I and the End of American Isolationism

No other nation has shaped the international system in the 20th and 21st century as much as the United States. Since the Second World War, American foreign policy has been guided by the principle of multilateralism and an attempt to create and maintain a set of international institutions that are designed to foster international cooperation and reduce the use of military violence for the sake of resolving conflicts of interest. The United States has been heavily committed to the security of East Asia, the Middle East, and especially Western Europe, and still maintains troops and nuclear weapons in these regions despite the fact that the Cold War has ended twenty years ago. However, this level of engagement in international affairs and the commitment to multilateralism have not always been characteristic of U.S. foreign policy.

Prior to World War II, the United States had remained aloof from political and military involvement in Europe and had largely rejected multilateral agreements in favor of bilateral treaties and a unilateral foreign policy. For a brief period of time, the entry of the United States into World War I and the policies of President Wilson led to domestic support for internationalism. Yet, political and military isolationism towards Europe returned shortly after the war and continued to dominate the American discourse on
foreign policy until the outbreak of World War II (Legro 2005: 54). As Jeffrey Legro has pointed out, the puzzle therefore concerns the question of why isolationism returned and why the United States did not permanently shift to a policy of internationalism and multilateralism immediately after World War I (Legro 2005: 49).

The timing of the shift in American foreign policy should be puzzling for neorealists. Based on its ever increasing material power, the United States had clearly entered the club of international great powers by the end of WWI. However, its foreign policy did not reflect this shift in material power. Put differently, the United States did possess the muscle, but not the will, to dominate international politics. Neorealists, such as Kenneth Waltz (1979), would argue that structural realism does not make predictions about foreign policy and that adjustments to shifts in relative power might lag behind actual events because of domestic reasons or because foreign policy makers suffer from misperceptions (Jervis 1976). However, given that the turn to internationalism and multilateralism constitutes maybe the most important foreign policy shift in the 20th century, such answers are obviously unsatisfying.

Several explanations for this consequential shift in U.S. foreign policy have been offered. One of the most convincing ones has been offered by Jeffrey Legro, who argues that the puzzle can be solved if one takes into consideration that the pre-war orthodoxy of isolationism created expectations that were largely confirmed by the way the American public interpreted World War I and its effects (Legro 2005: 49). Since the experience of
the war confirmed traditional beliefs, there was no pressure on the U.S. public or on policy makers to change their beliefs about the benefits of isolationism and the dangers of internationalism. The shift to internationalism that took place in the United States during World War II, on the other hand, can be explained, according to Legro, by the fact that adherence to a policy of no entanglement “met increasingly disappointing results, setting up an A4 ‘Do something!’ dynamic that undermined the no-entanglement position” (Legro 2005: 50).

In contrast to Legro, I argue that it was World War I which resulted in a change from isolationism to internationalism and multilateralism in the wake of World War II. Despite the fact that World War I did not produce a radical generation as in Germany or Italy, bound on completely over-throwing the prevalent political culture, the conflict and its consequences did shape the worldviews of an entire generation of American youths. Furthermore, and in contrast to the conventional wisdom surrounding the legacy of the First World War, many of the members of this generation did not interpret the experience of the Great War simply as a vindication of isolationism, but rather as its opposite, namely a sign that the United States had finally and fully entered the arena of international politics as a great power and therefore could no longer avoid getting involved in European affairs.

The fact that these lessons were not immediately incorporated into U.S. foreign policy can be explained by the fact that the generation that entered adulthood during the
Great War would only come to power fifteen to twenty years later, shortly after the
inauguration of the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. The curious reappearance of
isolationism to the public discourse about U.S. foreign policy after World War I can
therefore be explained by the fact that power was still in the hands of a generation for
which WWI did not constitute a formative experience. In contrast to the new generation
that grew up during the war, the older generation was so attached to the dogma of
isolationism that it was unable to change its political worldviews in light of the
experience of World War I. U.S. foreign policy in the inter-war years can therefore be
seen as the feeble attempt to apply an “outdated” mode of thinking about the role of the
United States in international politics. This explanation therefore not only offers a
different “cause” of the shift in U.S foreign policy, namely the experience of World War
I, than most conventional explanations, but it also provides an explanation for the odd
status of American isolationism during the interwar years.

*The Birth of Modern America and U.S. Foreign Policy in the 19th Century*

Throughout the 19th century, the United States was primarily concerned with
consolidating its territorial borders and with establishing its role as the regional hegemon
on the American continent. Policy makers mostly shunned involvement in international
affairs and some scholars even go so far as to argue that United States foreign policy did
essentially not exist until the Spanish-American War of 1898\textsuperscript{33}. Even though American policy makers in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century perceived international trade to be an essential ingredient for the growth and prosperity of the United States and used military force to support economic expansion in the Western hemisphere, they largely refrained from getting their country involved in the political and military affairs of European great powers that dominated international politics. This isolationism towards Europe had a long tradition in American thought. It originated in the thoughts of the Founding Fathers and became most clearly articulated in the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, which demanded an end to European interference in the Americans and in return promised U.S. non-intervention in Europe (Legro 2005: 55/56; also see Schmitz 2007: 12-14).

While the Monroe Doctrine was based on the conviction that a democratic United States should not get entangled in the affairs of autocratic European great powers, it also reflected the simple fact that until the first half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the United States did not possess the material power to seriously challenge even the smallest European great power. It is therefore questionable, whether we should characterize this period of U.S. history as one of “isolationism.” As Bear Braumoeller (2010) argues, isolationism cannot simply be defined as the lack of involvement in the security affairs of a particular region. For a policy to be isolationist, a state must have the capacity to become involved in a specific region in meaningful ways and then decide that it nevertheless refrains from using this capacity. Therefore, even though the United States explicitly stated its refusal

\textsuperscript{33} See for example, Schulzinger (2008) and Traxel (2006: 3).
to become involved in European power politics, this stance should not be characterized as isolationist, given that the United States lacked the capabilities for meaningful intervention in Europe.

However, the forces that would radically alter this material balance of power, and thereby challenge both Europeans and Americans to take United States foreign policy seriously, were well under way. The Industrial Revolution had reached the shores of the United States in the early 19th century, ushering in a period of tremendous economic development and growth (May 1961: 6/7). Given its vast natural resources and constant influx of European immigrants, American industrialization proceeded at an incredible speed. The relative distribution of power between the United States and European great powers therefore began to shift rather dramatically and by the end of the century, the United States had become the world’s most powerful economy.

Yet, despite the fact that by the end of the 19th century the United States had become one of the world’s great powers in terms of material prowess, isolationism with regard to Europe continued to be the guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy. Even by the turn of the century, therefore, the United States, despite being a “nominal” great power, still pursued a foreign policy that refused to accept its changing power position in the international system. Despite the fact that U.S. foreign policy was “extrovert” during this time-period, Americans across the political spectrum agreed that their interests and the interests of the world were best preserved by an explicit refusal to make political and
military commitments to the European continent (Klingberg 1996; Pollins and Schweller 1999).

Prior Political Culture: Progressivism

American political culture prior to World War I was dominated by the “Progressive” movement. Progressivism constituted a reaction to the rapid economic and social transformation that the country had undergone over the course of the 19th century and expressed the longing of many Americans to improve economic and social justice, to revitalize public and democratic life at home and abroad (Dawley 2003). Progressives were not opposed to the general principles of capitalism, but they seriously objected to an unregulated, laissez-faire capitalism, which was seen as a major cause for the deterioration of public life and politics was perceived to be corrupted by “big business” and infested with corruption.34

Despite the fact that progressives often disagreed on the appropriate response to these problems,35 most progressives envisioned a greater role of the federal government in addressing social and economic problems. William Leuchtenburg, for example, argues

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34 Despite the fact that nowadays progressivism is often associated with liberalism, progressivism in the beginning of the 20th century actually constituted a reaction against the excesses of liberalism and laissez-faire capitalism. As Alan Dawley, for example, has argued, the “key to understanding the political philosophy of American progressivism is to see it as a quarrel with liberalism” (2003: 4).

35 The movement drew support from public intellectuals on the left, such as John Dewey and Walter Lippman, Democrats, and Socialists, such as Eugene Debb. At the same time, one of the movement’s founders and presidential candidate for the Progressive Party in 1912 was former Republican president Theodore Roosevelt.
that “Progressives believed in the Hamiltonian concept of positive government, of a national government directing the destinies of the nation at home and abroad” (Leuchtenburg 1952: 500). Progressive efforts to balance free market capitalism and social justice therefore strongly resembled the policies of those who would later be called “Social Democrats” in Europe.

**Progressivism and U.S. Foreign Policy**

Most progressives agreed on the idea that the success of the progressive project abroad would require a stronger and more active commitment of the United States to ensuring international stability, peace and justice. Progressives externalized their belief in the positive role of the state in regulating social and political affairs to the realm of international politics. Most progressives consequently supported either Theodore Roosevelt’s call for greater interventionism or Woodrow Wilson’s vision of internationalism. Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson in many regards constituted the dominant protagonists of the first generation of progressives and their foreign policies were heavily infused with progressive ideals and principles. Both considered U.S. foreign policy to be not only a tool for the pursuit of America’s national interests, but also for the promotion of progressivism abroad. They both constantly invoked the moral responsibility of the United States to improve the conditions of people around the world, to promote democracy, international peace and cooperation. However, despite these similarities, the foreign policies of TR and Wilson differed in important respects.
Whereas TR’s “Big Stick” diplomacy has often been characterized as nationalist, imperialistic, or even racist (Schulzinger 2008; Dallek 1983), Wilson’s “Missionary Diplomacy” is often portrayed as a somewhat naïve and idealist belief in the possibility of internationalism, the idea of international cooperation through multilateral institutions. These two visions of how the United States should promote progressivism abroad obviously were in tension with one another and in this respect they constitute the two intellectual poles of progressive foreign policy.

Roosevelt and Wilson incorporated progressive themes and beliefs in their speeches on foreign policy, yet they did not significantly divert from the long-established tradition of isolationism towards Europe. Theodore Roosevelt’s involvement as arbiter in negotiating an end to the Moroccan crisis has been portrayed as an effort to end isolationism toward Europe. Yet, the American public perceived the negotiations as a “classic exercise in European power politics [and] the crisis aroused traditional isolationist sentiments in the United States” (Dallek 1983: 59). Yet, Wilson, too, was still closely attached to an isolationist policy towards Europe and his “few utterances that bear on America’s tradition of isolation confirm, if anything, a continued attachment to that tradition” (Tucker 2007: 55). At the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the United States, and the generation of progressive who were in positions of power, were therefore still committed to a foreign policy that rejected entanglement in Europe’s political and military affairs. Put differently, the United States, “with a population of one hundred million, an industrial plant rivaling all Europe’s, the third navy of the world, and a total
defense budget fourth among powers” (May 1966: 3), was unwilling to assume the position of an international great power. Now that I have provided the general outlines of the prevalent political culture and its relevance to questions of U.S. foreign policy, let me discuss the formative event that would severely challenge the tradition of isolationism.

The Great War and the Unsustainability of Isolationism

Despite the fact that World War I had been preceded by crises in Morocco and the Balkans, most Americans were taken by surprise by the outbreak of hostilities. The American media had given little attention to the growing crisis in Europe and the public was consequently unprepared when hostilities escalated into a general European war. In the words of Arthur Link, “[t]o say that the outbreak of the First World War in August, 1914, came as a shock to the American people would be to make an understatement of heroic proportions” (Link 1954: 145). Whereas the streets of European capitals were filled with excited crowds ready for what they thought would be a great adventure, the majority of Americans “simply felt astonishment and uncertainty, mingled with gratification that America was not involved” (May 1966: 34; also see James and Wells 1998).

Once the moment of surprise had passed, however, most Americans condemned the war in Europe. Progressives were obviously especially appalled by what they saw as a return to barbarism. The New York Times put it into especially eloquent terms when it
stated that “The European nations have reverted to the condition of savage tribes roaming in the forest and falling upon each other in a fury of carnage to achieve the ambitious designs of chieftains clad in skin and drunk on mead” (James and Wells 1998: 2). The war confirmed the worst fears of Americans about European balance-of-power politics and it consequently re-affirmed in their eyes the virtues of American isolationism towards Europe. In the summer of 1914, therefore, most Americans strongly supported President Wilson’s declaration of American neutrality. Neutrality was perceived as the only sensible course of action for the United States, not only because it seemed to express the moral principle of the United States to be impartial and interested in peace, but also because it seemed to safeguarded the tradition of American isolationism toward Europe. However, if anything, World War I showed that a policy of neutrality and isolationism was no longer sustainable for a great power such as the United States and, ultimately, the tensions between neutrality and isolationism would result in a policy dilemma that would draw the United States into the war.

*The Contradiction between Isolationism and Neutrality: America Enters the War*

Despite the fact that the policies of isolationism towards Europe and neutrality were intimately related, the two concepts, if strictly adhered to, also contradicted one another. In order to protect its status of neutrality and its right to trade freely with all belligerents during times of war, the United States needed to be willing to defend these
rights, if necessary, with military force, thereby giving up isolationism. On the other hand, a strict policy of isolationism made it impossible to defend rights to neutrality in cases where American neutrality was violated by one of the belligerent parties. Wilson himself, as a committed progressive, exacerbated the problem by making the issue of neutrality not simply one of international law or realist prudence, but, one of morality and American prestige. He claimed that neutrality signified the moral superiority of the United States, which remained aloof from the barbaric massacres committed by backward European powers (Tucker 2007: 55; also see, Hofstadter 1961: 274). By committing the prestige and moral standing of the United States on the defense of rights of neutrality, however, Wilson put himself into the dilemma that in the case of a violation of neutrality by one of the belligerents the United States would have to either back down and lose face, or enforce its rights with military force, which would amount to the end of the policy of isolationism. Ironically, therefore, given the fact that the war in Europe quickly took on a global dimension, Wilson’s strong insistence on neutrality put the country on a path that would ultimately lead it into the war.

Throughout the years 1914-1917, Wilson tried to maintain both, American neutrality and military isolationism towards Europe, but to no avail. Britain’s success in the war depended to a large extent on its ability to maintain a naval blockade around the British Isles and the German military leadership considered submarine warfare the only effective measure to break the blockade. As a consequence, American ships were frequently attacked and the policy of neutrality came increasingly under pressure. On
April 6, 1917, the United States declared war against Germany and thus, neutrality and isolationism towards Europe came to an end.

The first troops of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) arrived in Europe in the fall of 1917 and by early summer 1918, “300,000 American troops were arriving in France each month” (James and Wells 1998: 42). The entry of the United States quickly turned the tide against the Central Powers. Both, the allies, as well as Germany and Austria-Hungary, were at the brink of collapse by the beginning of 1918 and the additional resources and manpower provided by the United States, as well as the efforts of the American navy, made the decisive difference. On November 11, 1918, fighting on the Western Front ceased at 11 a.m. The war had proven to be a “Great War” indeed; “over 65 million military personnel were engaged, with 8 million killed in combat and more than 21 million wounded” (James and Wells 1998: 6). The end of the war also brought an end to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and the monarchy in Russia. Large parts of Europe were completely destroyed, revolutionary struggles were raging in Germany, Eastern Europe, and Russia, and Bolshevism became the nightmare of many liberals in the West. It was therefore clear that a new post-war order was needed and it would fall to the leader of the country which had previously prided itself on not becoming engaged in the military and political affairs of Europe to provide the initial blueprint for such an order.
The End of the War to End All Wars and Wilson’s League

Most progressives, such as Wilson, had first abhorred the war and wanted to stay out. Yet, once the United States entered the conflict, Wilson and his progressive supporters became more determined than ever to make this the “last war” on earth. Going far beyond the actual reason that had propelled the United States into the war, namely the violation of neutrality, Wilson now outlined a progressive vision for a future world order and announced that America had to fight because “The world must be made safe for democracy”.36 The document that would articulate the basis for the negotiations over a post-war order and a peace agreement was Wilson’s speech on his famous “Fourteen Points.” Partly drafted by one of the leading progressive thinkers of his day, Walter Lippmann, the speech included essentially all of the major themes and ideas about international politics that progressives had advocated since the beginning of their movement. The first five points, for example, advocate (1) free and open covenants between nations, (2) freedom of the seas, (3) the elimination of barriers to free trade, (4) a reduction of national armaments, and (5) the right to self-determination for the inhabitants of colonial territories. Especially the final point, however, which called for the establishment of a League of Nations to provide for collective security and ensure the rights of smaller nations, encapsulated the progressive belief in the positive influence of law, both domestically and internationally. Wilson, and with him the progressive

movement, had therefore undergone a remarkable change. Whereas previously, progressive principles and ideals had served as a justification for remaining isolated from European politics and military affairs, now, in 1918, progressivism served as the intellectual foundation for a strong military and political engagement of the United States in Europe. Despite the fact that Wilson had advocated the League as a “disentangling alliance,” it was clear that a peace along the lines suggested by Wilson would require a strong American engagement in European affairs.

Wilson’s speech on the Fourteen Points was greeted with wild enthusiasm in the United States and around the world. However, despite the fact that Wilson’s speech received significant public support the Allied powers were opposed to a “peace without victory.” Britain and France had suffered horrendous casualties during the war and they demanded that Germany accept the responsibility for the war, pay reparations, return the occupied territories of Alsace and Lorraine to France, and reduce its army to 100,000 troops. When Wilson therefore traveled to Paris in 1919 in order to attend the peace conference, he was quickly and thoroughly disappointed by the fact that the Allies would not agree to the terms he had proposed. Despite Wilson’s best efforts, the Treaty of Versailles, which emerged out of the peace negotiations in Paris, had little resemblance with his Fourteen Points.

When Wilson returned to the United States, a group of Republicans and Democrats had formed around Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, who had strong reservations about the stipulations of the Treaty of Versailles and the creation of a League of Nations. Under article X of the Covenant of the League of Nations, the League would be authorized to call on its members to provide military support in cases of international conflict. In the eyes of Lodge and his followers, article X severely constrained the sovereign rights of the United States. In addition, they requested that the treaty recognize American rights in the Western Hemisphere and guarantee the principles of the Monroe Doctrine.  

Yet, Wilson was not willing to compromise on the terms of the treaty. On March 19, 1919, the treaty was defeated in the U.S. senate by a margin of seven votes and many scholars argue that this defeat also constituted the end of Progressivism as a significant force in American domestic and foreign policy. As I will argue below, however, the contrary was actually the case. The American experience during WWI, the progressive visions for a greater role of the United States in international politics outlined by Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, but also the mistakes made by the old progressive elites would provide the formative learning experience for a new generation of American leaders and citizens.

38 Schulzinger (2008: 84/85).
The Formative Impact of World War I

The first question that needs to be addressed in this section is whether or not World War I qualifies as a formative event. In contrast to Europe, where the experience of World War I resulted in the emergence of a radical political generation, the Great War certainly had a lesser impact on the political orientations of youth who grew up during the same time in the United States. Partly, this was due to the fact that the United States entered the war in its final stages in 1917 and suffered far less from the effects of the war than most European nations that were involved. None of the fighting took place on U.S. territory and its casualties were significantly lower than the enormous losses of, for example, France or Germany. Nevertheless, World War I was a watershed event in American history and it had a strong influence on the generation of American youth that grew up during this time. As Robert Tucker observes, “[t]he experience of World War I had left a permanent mark” (Tucker 2007: 57) on the worldviews of many Americans. It is safe to assume that it left an ever greater mark on those Americans who were in their most formative years. For the first time in their nation’s history American soldiers were fighting on European soil and especially young men were obviously affected by the introduction of conscription. Over two million “Doughboys” had landed in France alone and more than half of those served actively on the front.40

A Radical Political Generation

Even though World War I qualifies as a formative event in so far as it affected the majority of Americans who were in the age of youth at the time, this does not necessarily imply that it resulted in the emergence of a new political generation. What distinguishes a cohort from a political generation is that the members of the latter display a sense of generational consciousness, i.e. those who experienced the event during their time of youth need to identify themselves and one another as members of a generation, who were shaped by the purported formative event. Unfortunately, no public opinion data for the time period exists, which makes it impossible to determine in straightforward fashion whether the experience of World War I created a sense of generational consciousness amongst the majority of American youths. However, there is evidence that at least at the level of future elites, a sense of generational consciousness existed. For example, “George Kennan, who served as a young diplomat under Bullitt in Moscow in the early 1930s, once wrote: ‘I see Bullitt, in retrospect, as a member of that remarkable group of young Americans, born just before the turn of the century [it included such people as Cole Porter, Ernest Hemingway, John Reed, and Jim Forrestal—many of them his friends] for whom the First World War was the great electrifying experience of life.’” (Fromkin 1995: 290).

Another indicator for the emergence of a new political generation is a generational discourse, which expresses a sense of generational consciousness through a narrative that
portrays the event as formative for a generation. The generational discourse which gave
the World War I Generation in America a sense of cohesion was provided by intellectuals
and writers, such as Ernest Hemmingway and Gertrud Stein, who would term this the
“Lost Generation.”

Even though it is difficult given the lack of appropriate data to determine with
certainty to what extent the experience of World War I resulted in the emergence of a
new political generation, the presence of a generational discourse, which was widely
adopted to identify this particular cohort, and the anecdotal evidence that members of this
cohort identified one another as members of a distinct generation formed by the
experience of World War I, does render it plausible to argue that the experience of the
war had clearly left a mark on the worldviews and beliefs of young Americans.

The Lessons of the War and the Death of Isolationism

What were the lessons that this new generation learned from its experience of
World War I? Clearly, the outcome of the war had resulted in wide-spread
disillusionment among the American public by 1920. The conventional wisdom about
this time period asserts that the failure of Wilson’s vision for an internationalist post-war
order resulted in the perception that entering the war had been a mistake and that it
confirmed the virtues of the tradition of isolationism in the eyes of the American public.

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41 See Pound (1964).
As a result, so the argument goes, American foreign policy from 1919 until 1940 turned introvert (Klingberg in Pollins and Schweller 1999: 435) and isolationism regained its traditional hold on public opinion, which it continued to dominate until 1938 (Legro 2005: 54).

What the conventional wisdom about this period in U.S. history overlooks, however, is the importance of generational differences. The worldviews of the generation that was in control of public opinion and foreign policy during the 1920s and 1930s had been formed by events prior to World War I. For the generation of TR and Wilson, “isolationism towards Europe” had still constituted a venerable tradition of U.S. foreign policy and most of its members did indeed perceive the outcome of WWI as a confirmation of the virtues of isolationism. In contrast, however, members of the World War I Generation were in their most formative period life during a time when the policy of isolationism towards Europe had clearly failed. If anything, “[t]he war had shown the inadequacies, even the risks, of persisting in a policy of isolation” (Tucker 2007: 183).

For the new generation, the World War I Generation that came of age during the Great War the lessons of this time were therefore quite different from the lessons that were learned by the old generation in power at the time. Contrary to conventional wisdom, which maintains that World War I and its aftermath had reaffirmed the tradition of isolationism, I argue that the young Americans who constituted the World War I Generation in the United States, learned three major lessons, namely, (1) that isolationism
towards Europe had failed and no longer constituted a sustainable foreign policy for the United States, (2) that Wilson’s progressive and internationalist vision for a more stable and just international system constituted a “socially viable alternative” (Legro 2005) to isolationism, and (3) that Wilson, in contrast to Theodore Roosevelt, had failed to succeed in his mission because he lacked an appreciation for international and domestic power realities. These three lessons constituted the basis for the beliefs and ideas about the proper goals and conduct of United States foreign policy of a new generation of Americans who would eventually come to power in the late 1930s and hammer the last nails into the coffin of American isolationism.

Many young Americans interpreted the war as a clear sign that a policy of isolationism was no longer sustainable for the United States. The United States had simply become too powerful over the course of the 19th century in order to isolate itself from the political turmoil of Europe. Its newly won status implied that the United States had an interest in global stability and peace, not just in regional order. However, this would require the United States to engage with the other power centers of the world, most of which were still located in Europe. The first lesson that the WWI Generation learned during and after the war was therefore that a policy of isolationism was no longer reconcilable with the growing power and ever expanding interests of the United States.

The second lesson that the young generation drew from the experience of World War I and its aftermath was that progressivism, and especially Wilson’s program as
outlined in the Fourteen Points and his other speeches, provided the basis for a new foreign policy, which would be able to replace the traditional isolationist approach to Europe. Most young Americans had enthusiastically greeted his blueprint for an international system based on international institutions to promote peace and cooperation and backed by United States foreign policy. What made Wilson’s vision especially appealing was that it seemed to reconcile a defense of American interest with a concern for the promotion of progressive values. When Wilson had returned from his trip to Paris to negotiate a peace settlement, he had been greeted by more than 200,000 people in Boston (Dallek 1983) and for many young Americans “Wilson was a prophet” (Fromkin 1995: 214). And even after the treaty failed to pass the Senate, the American public was in support of the treaty and continued to support the idea even after 1920 (Dawley 2003).

Ironically, the greatest disillusionment for the World War I Generation was Wilson himself. Despite the fact that he had developed a new vision for America’s role in the world, he had been unable to translate this vision into reality. When it became clear that the France and Britain would not adopt Wilson’s proposals, members of the WWI Generation, such as FDR, William Bullit, and Walter Lippman, “who left idolizing TR in order to rally to Wilson had therefore begun to reproach the President for having articulated a political program without having thought through how it could be achieved” (Fromkin 1995: 213). Wilson’s failure to convince Britain and France to adopt a more lenient peace agreement at the end of World War I had shown young Americans that in order to have a say in any future conflict over the contours of a post-war international
order, “Wilson should have gotten the Allies to agree to America’s terms early in the war, at a time when they needed help desperately” (Fromkin 1995: 213). In addition, Wilson’s failure to convince Congress of the need to ratify the treaty establishing the League of Nations, despite the fact that the majority of Americans had been in favor of ratification, had shown the costs of ignoring domestic power realities. The third lesson that the Generation of World War I had taken away from their formative years was therefore, that in order to pursue progressive ideals and values through U.S. foreign policy required a sensibility for the relevance of power in determining outcomes.

Based on these three lessons, the WWI Generation would develop a new vision of the role of the United States in the world, which I call “progressive realism,” the doctrine that the pursuit of a progressive international order needs to be based on a proper realization of existing power realities. Progressive realism therefore combined Wilson’s vision of a progressive foreign policy with the political realism that characterized the progressive approach to foreign policy of Theodore Roosevelt. Since the progressive foreign policies of TR and Wilson, however, had differed significantly with respect to whether or not the United States should pursue progressive goals through a unilateral (TR) or through a multilateral (Wilson) foreign policy, Progressive Realism still left a lot of room for disagreement. Nevertheless, all proponents of a progressive U.S. foreign policy agreed upon the need to end isolationism and engage the United States more deeply in world affairs through support for international institutions and the promotion of democracy.
The Generation of WWI therefore interpreted the experience of World War I as a sign that the old generation in power, including Woodrow Wilson, was no longer capable of addressing the challenges that the United States was facing as an international great power or at home. Many doughboys returned from the war, only to find themselves without a job or significant help from the federal government and widespread discontent expressed itself in a series of riots and political protests, which ushered in the “Red Scare” of the 1920s. The lessons drawn by young Americans and the increase in social discontent and protests after the war suggests that the WWI Generation was a “radical” generation, whose members were bent on developing a new political culture and a new foreign policy for the United States.

Generational Change

United States foreign policy during the interwar years exemplifies the fact that the older generation, which was fully committed to a policy of isolationism, was still dominating the discourse and practice of U.S. foreign policy. Yet, at the same time, this generation was also slowly losing positions of power in society and thereby made room for a new generation to take their place and to permanently eliminate isolationism as a significant determinant of United States foreign policy. The core members of the World War I Generation in the United States were approximately born between 1889 and 1902. During World War I and its aftermath, members of this generation were between the ages
of 18 and 25 years old. Reaching early adulthood during the inter-war years, the World War I Generation entered the age of “political maturity”\(^{42}\) around 1935 and began to occupy positions of power at the elite level and at the level of mass society.

*Foreign Policy Change: Progressive Realism in U.S. Foreign Policy*

The World War I Generation was in positions of power during the administrations of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Dwight D. Eisenhower. The generational change that brought this generation to power in the late 1930s ushered in a period of extrovert foreign policy and resulted in the most dramatic reorientation of U.S. foreign policy since the country’s founding. Based on the lessons learned during World War I and its aftermath, this generation rejected isolationism towards Europe and instead promoted a foreign policy based on the principles of progressive realism, a doctrine that merged the progressive foreign policies of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. Woodrow Wilson’s vision for an international order based on institutions that promote self-government, democracy, economic stability, and peace had left a permanent mark on the worldviews of this generation and the foreign policy of the United States during the 1940s and after the end of World War II clearly reflected the formative impact of Wilson’s ideas.

\(^{42}\) The age of „political maturity“ refers to the time when individuals start to occupy high level positions in public office and when the members of the generation start to constitute the majority of the politically attentive public. The age boundaries are approximately 35-65 years of age. As usual, these age boundaries are approximations based on ideal types and might therefore not always correspond neatly to the actual case.
The structural reorientation of U.S. foreign policy under the WWI Generation manifested itself in the increasing reliance on multilateral diplomacy during World War II, but especially in the creation of a wide range of multilateral institutions, such as the UN, NATO, or the Bretton Woods agreement, which created the International Monetary Fund, as well as, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, nowadays known as the World Bank (Bagby 1999: 111). These institutions were clearly based on progressive principles and designed to provide the political and economic foundations for a stable post-war order. One of the most important and successful efforts in this regards was the administration of the Marshall Plan, an economic aid package of unprecedented proportions, which was supposed to help nations destroyed by the war to finance their recovery. Underlying the idea of the Marshall Plan was the progressive conviction that economic stability fosters democracy and peace. Instead of retreating back to its shores in 1945, the United States made an enormous commitment to the military security and political stability of Western Europe, clearly indicating the end of its policy of isolationism towards Europe.

At the same time, the WWI Generation had learned from Wilson’s mistake of not taking the role of material power seriously enough. This time, the United States would not simply be a neutral arbiter, who had nothing to bargain with but her sense of moral superiority. American involvement in World War II dwarfed the commitment that Wilson and his generation had been willing to make in order to bring the war in Europe to an end and now it provided the United States with a legitimate and a very powerful position at
the table of the great powers that would determine the future of the world. And this time,
it would not make the same mistakes. For example, the UN was emulated along the lines
suggested by Wilson’s earlier League of Nations, but the special rule for the five veto
powers guaranteed that none of the actions of the UN would be able to constrain U.S.
sovereignty. Despite the fact that the veto rule is often portrayed as reducing the UN to a
great power club, it provided the FDR with the necessary arguments to convince the
American public and the other Allies to support and join the new organization.

The structural foreign policy change that had been brought about by the WWI
Generation also expressed itself in American foreign policy towards the USSR during
and after the Second World War. Both Roosevelt and Truman had initially hoped that the
Soviet Union could be integrated into a stable post-war order based on progressive
principles, such as multilateral diplomacy and collective security. But already during the
final years of the war, it became clear that Stalin was not interested in promoting
progressive values, such as the right to self-determination, in his sphere of influence.

The response of the United States came in the form of the policy of containment.
The primary intellectual architect of the doctrine was George F. Kennan. Born in 1904,
Kennan was almost too young to be a member of the WWI Generation, but his views on
how to deal with the Soviet Union clearly reflected the outlook of this generation.
Kennan argued that cooperation with the Soviet Union would likely be impossible and
that the United States should therefore contain Soviet expansion wherever possible (“X”
1947). In pursuit of this goal, the United States should use its economic might and rebuild
centers of power in Europe and Asia, such as West Germany and Japan in order to balance against the increasing power of the Soviet regime and its sphere of influence. This realist appreciation for power, however, was combined with an emphasis on the need to win the psychological battle against the ideological threat of communism and to show the superiority of the progressive values cherished by the United States. The foreign policy tools that were employed in the initial phase of the Cold War, such as for example the Marshall Plan, the Truman Doctrine and the re-construction of Western Germany and Japan, clearly reflect the attempt to not only create a favorable balance of power for the United States, but also to promote progressive values wherever possible. In a fundamental reversal of foreign policy, America had turned away from isolationism and over “the span of one decade, 1945-1955, the United States committed itself to the defense of more than seventy nations” (Roskin 2005 [1974]: 316).

Based on the principles of progressive realism, the World War I Generation had therefore fundamentally changed the course of U.S. foreign policy in order to align it with the growth in American power capabilities and thereby established the United States as the leading great power of the international system.

*Alternative Explanations*

Four major alternative explanations exist for the change in U.S. foreign policy during the 1940s and the end of isolationism. First, one might point out that both FDR and Truman had been Democrats and that the change in U.S. foreign policy was caused
by differences in party ideology, rather than a product of generational change. The problem with this argument is that the policies of FDR and Truman were essentially adopted and continued by Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was Republican, yet another member of the World War I Generation. Despite certain policy specific differences “Eisenhower had supported each of the [Truman] administration’s major diplomatic and strategic initiatives” (Gaddis [1982] 2005: 125; also see Schulzinger 2008: 192). Even more importantly, Eisenhower had run for president in order to avoid the nomination of “Robert A. Taft, who Eisenhower regarded as an isolationist” (Gaddis [1982] 2005: 125), which gives credence to the argument that Eisenhower essentially shared the convictions of FDR and Truman to keep the United States politically and militarily engaged in the world.

The second and third alternative explanations share the idea that the change in U.S. foreign policy was caused by a reaction to external events. On the one hand are those who argue that the change in U.S. foreign policy was caused by the attack on Pearl Harbor and that it was Pearl Harbor, which had shown that isolationism was no longer viable (Roskin 2005 [1974]). The famous quote in defense of this argument stems from Senator Arthur H. Vandenburg, a strong supporter of isolationism, who remarked that the attack on Pearl Harbor had “ended isolationism for any realist” (quoted in Roskin 2005 [1974]: 315). On the other hand, realist would argue that the change in U.S. foreign policy was a reaction to changes in the international balance of power, most prominently, the growth of the Soviet Union.
However, neither argument is convincing, since the change away from isolationism towards Europe and towards support for a more internationalist U.S. foreign policy had taken place already before the attack on Pearl Harbor, or the beginning of serious tensions with the Soviet Union (Legro 2002).

After the Germany’s invasion of Poland in 1939, “63 percent of Americans saw a German victory in Europe eventually leading to an attack on the United States,” and already after the fall of France in 1940, “53 percent of American believed it to be more important to help Britain defeat Hitler than to stay out of the war” (Dallek 1983: 129). The change in public opinion from largely favoring American neutrality to American intervention was largely completed by 1940, “nearly a year and a half before Pearl Harbor” (Braumoeller 2010: 363). By March 1941, the United States had effectively ended its policy of neutrality through passage of the “Lend-Lease” bill, which gave the president the authority to ship goods and weapons without charge to any country that seemed to be of vital concern to the U.S. According to a Gallup, the large majority of Americans supported Lend-Lease and six months before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States was on its path to war (Bagby 1999: 94).

The neorealist argument that the change in U.S. foreign policy was merely a response to a change in the balance of power caused by the defeat of Nazi Germany and the rising power of the Soviet Union is not satisfying, in so far as structural realism cannot account for the way that U.S. policy makers responded to these changes in material power. Only by including ideational factors, such as perceptions or ideology...
(Walt 1987), can realist theories explain when and how policy makers respond to changes in the balance of power. However, this always raises the question of “where do these ideas come from,” and this is where my theory of political generations makes its contribution. The theory of political generations therefore does not stand in competition with realist accounts, but rather contributes to their explanatory power.

Jeffrey Legro finally argues that this shift in public opinion was the result of the fact that the American public became increasingly convinced by the escalation of the crisis in Europe that isolationism was no longer viable (Legro 2002; 2005).

However, the logic of this argument seems questionable. After all, Legro argues that WWI had confirmed the tenets of isolationism. According to this logic, news of another great power war in Europe should have further confirmed isolationism, rather than to undermine it. To argue therefore that the shift in public attitudes away from isolationism in the early 1940s was caused by the escalating crisis in Europe seems problematic. However, a generational perspective alerts us to the fact that generational change had replaced an isolationist generation with members of the World War I Generation, who had learned that isolationism was no longer an option for the United States. This generational change explains why the American public reacted to the crisis in Europe by shifting its attitudes away from isolationism towards a stronger American engagement in Europe.
Discussion

The conventional wisdom surrounding the American experience in World War I claims that the United States fell back to a position of isolationism towards Europe in the interwar years. The change to a more internationalist and multilateral U.S. foreign policy was, according to the standard narrative, a result of the outbreak of World War II and America’s reaction to it. However, I have argued in the pages above that the conventional wisdom about the change in U.S. foreign policy is questionable and that the lessons which informed this shift towards a more internationalist role of the United States had already been learned during World War I and its aftermath, which constituted the formative experience for a generation of Americans that would come to power during the late 1930s and early 1940s. This generation of Americans would reject isolationism towards Europe, promote a foreign policy based on the principles of progressive realism, and thereby finally adapt U.S. foreign policy to the change in material power, which had made the country a nominal great power already by the end of the 19th century. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, World War I therefore constituted the beginning of the end of isolationism, one of the longest and most trenchantly defended traditions in American thought.
Case-Study II: Explaining the Long Peace: The Generation of World War II and U.S. Foreign Policy Stability

Almost as surprising as the change in U.S. foreign policy that occurred during the 1940s is the fact that the new foreign policy course that had been established by the WWI Generation continued to dominate American foreign policy for the next forty years (Roskin 2005 [1974]: 316). American foreign policy from John F. Kennedy until George H.W. Bush was characterized by structural stability, rather than significant change. The period of Détente, certainly constituted a certain departure from this foreign policy course, but it was only a temporary divergence from the general policy of containment. The reliance on multilateralism and support for international institutions for the sake of creating international order and stability became a hall-mark of U.S. foreign policy and constituted one of its major foreign policy tools to contain and undermine the Soviet Union. At the same time, these foreign policy tools were designed to maintain a favorable balance of power between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. American foreign policy throughout the Cold War therefore continued the policy of progressive realism, which combined the pursuit of progressive values and balance of power strategies.
The primary explanation offered by realists for the stability of U.S. foreign policy is the bi-polar distribution of power that prevailed over the course of the Cold War.\textsuperscript{43} According to this line of argument, U.S. foreign policy was strongly determined by systemic pressures to balance against the Soviet Union and America pursued this goal with a foreign policy of containment, which only changed with the disappearance of the Soviet threat in the late 1980s.

Yet, even when it comes to explaining stability at the system level during this time period, which came to be known as “The Long Peace” (Gaddis 2001), realists usually feel compelled to include variables that are exogenous to structural realism, such as the presence of nuclear weapons, or the importance of reconnaissance technology.\textsuperscript{44} As John L. Gaddis himself admits, “Stability in international systems is only partly a function of structure […] it depends as well upon the conscious behavior of the nations that make them up” (Gaddis 2001: 22). The role of domestic factors in determining change and stability in foreign policy should correspondingly be even more significant. Put differently, even though the bi-polar structure of the international system can tell us that there exist strong external pressures that constrain the conduct of foreign policy, the balance of power alone cannot provide a full explanation for U.S. foreign policy from the 1960s until the late 1980s. Indeed, the fact that Eisenhower felt compelled to enter the race for the Republican presidential nomination against the isolationist Robert Taft shows  

\textsuperscript{43} See, for example, Mearsheimer (1990).  
\textsuperscript{44} Gaddis (2001: 22-34).
that there certainly existed alternative approaches to foreign policy, which could have replaced the internationalist foreign policy of the WWI Generation.

I argue in the pages to follow that one important causal factor that explains stability in U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War and the continuation of a policy of progressive realism is the World War II Generation, which came to power with the administration of John F. Kennedy and which dominated U.S. foreign policy until George H. W. Bush, who left office in 1992. In contrast to the World War I Generation, the World War II Generation, made famous as the “Greatest Generation” by the work of Tom Brokaw (1998; 1999; 2001), constituted a traditional political generation. Their experiences during World War II, including the aggressive expansion of Nazi Germany and the attack on Pearl Harbor, confirmed in their eyes the lesson that isolationism was no longer a viable foreign policy for the United States and that aggression needed to be stopped overseas before it could affect America’s national security.

In addition, in contrast to the case of WWI, military intervention by the United States in World War II was largely seen as a success. Despite the onset of the Cold War, the United States had been in a much stronger position to determine the contours of the post-war order and many initiatives, such as the U.N., Bretton Woods, and the Marshall Plan had been successful in accomplishing U.S. interests. The members of this generation therefore approved of the new foreign policy course adopted by FDR, Truman, and
Eisenhower, the leaders of the World War I Generation, and consequently continued the policies of their predecessors once they came to power with the election of JFK in 1960.

Admittedly, given the fact that bi-polarity and nuclear deterrence created strong systemic pressures towards stability, the causal weight of the Generation of World War II is difficult to establish. However, the case offers significant support for the generational hypothesis and for the argument that radical and traditional generations alternate across time. The World War II Generation reproduced the political culture and foreign policy of the WWI Generation, yet it also created the foreign policy crisis, the intervention in Vietnam, that would constitute the formative experience for the next radical political generation, the "Sixties Generation." Precisely because the weight of the lessons learned during the Second World War was so great, the World War II Generation was rigid in its belief in the importance of reputation and the need to fight communism wherever it emerged.

The intervention in Vietnam exemplified this fear of falling dominoes and it resulted in a deep crisis of U.S. foreign policy because it seemed to contradict the claim that America was balancing against aggression from abroad for the sake of supporting progressive principles, such as human rights and national self-determination. The foreign policy course of the World War II Generation therefore precipitated a period of introversion, which also witnessed the emergence of a new radical political generation. The case of the World War II Generation therefore seems to confirm (1) the hypothesis
that traditional political generations create the conditions for the birth of a new radical
generation because the former are unable to adjust their political culture and foreign
policy to changing environmental conditions and (2) it increases confidence in the notion
that the alternation between radical and traditional political generations can account for
cycles of extroversion and introversion in U.S. foreign policy.

The Formative Experiences of the World War II Generation

The core members of the World War II Generation were born between 1914 and
1927 and include every U.S. president from John F. Kennedy until George H.W. Bush.\textsuperscript{45} This generation spent its childhood during the Great Depression which certainly had a
formative impact on the outlook of the World War II Generation. However, the social
discontent which resulted from the depression manifested itself mostly along class lines
and most of the members of the WWII Generation were too young at the time to have
their political worldviews be significantly shaped by these experiences. The experience of
the Great Depression did, however, result in a very early identification of many members
of the WWII Generation with the personality and the policies of Franklin D. Roosevelt.
After the unsuccessful attempts of the Hoover administration to fight the effects of the
Great Depression, Roosevelt’s New Deal programs and his fireside chats seemed to
install a sense of hope that the economic crisis could be overcome and many members of

\textsuperscript{45} Lyndon B. Johnson was born in 1908, though again, the age boundaries are primarily ‘ideal types.’
the WWII Generation seem to identify strongly with Roosevelt and his policies. Edwards Phillips, for example, who describes himself as one of the members of “the generation, who […] survived the Great Depression, World War II, and the time since,” argues that the members of “this whole generation were appropriately called ‘Roosevelt’s Children.’” (Phillips 1998:1).

However, the most formative period of life for the political worldviews of this generation was clearly the Second World War. Members of the World War II Generation started to enter the age of youth in the late 1930s when Japanese expansionism in Asia and the policies of Adolf Hitler in Germany had resulted in a general climate of international crisis. Most important in this respect was the Munich conference in 1938, where the France and Britain had ceded to Hitler’s demands for the integration of the Sudetenland into the German Reich in order to appease his appetite for further military expansion. After the invasion of Poland in the fall of 1939, U.S. public opinion started to shift increasingly towards supporting the Allied cause and the attack on Pearl Harbor finally pulled the country into the war in December of 1940. In contrast to WWI, American involvement in the Second World War was much more substantial and resulted in three times the number of casualties. Over the course of the war, 16 million Americans would serve in the military and about 1 million would see actual combat.46 It was clear that the experience of war would have a strong effect on young Americans:

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46 Rose (2008: 45).
At a time in their lives when their days and nights should have been filled with innocent adventure, love, and the lessons of the workday world, they were fighting, often hand to hand, in the most primitive conditions possible, across the bloodied landscape of France, Belgium, Italy, Austria. They fought their way up a necklace of South Pacific islands few had ever heard of before and made them a fixed part of American history—islands with names like Iwo Jima, Guadalcanal, Okinawa. They were in the air every day, in skied filled with terror, and they went to sea on hostile waters far removed from the shores of their homeland (Brokaw 1999: xix).

However, even those who did not actively fight considered the war to be the most formative period of their lives. Based on a Survey of WWII Veterans, Suzanne Mettler shows that “[p]resented with a list that included ‘growing up during the Depression,’ ‘military service in World War II,’ ‘education,’ ‘job or career-related events or opportunities,’ and other options, 95 percent of the respondents checked military service as a turning point, for more than the proportion checking any other response” (Mettler 2005: 33).

_A Traditional Political Generation_

The war therefore clearly affected those cohorts who were in the age of youth during its course and a variety of sources provide evidence to suggest that it resulted in a sense of generational consciousness and belonging. Most interesting in this regard is the work of Tomas Brokaw on _The Greatest Generation_ (1998). Brokaw conducted personal interviews with a wide range of everyday citizens and prominent public figures, such as George H.W. Bush, Bob Dole, George Schultz, and Arthur Schlesinger, who were in the
age of youth during the 1930s and 1940s. Brokaw’s work on the Greatest Generation became a huge success and generated a flood of letters from senior citizens who wanted to share their own experiences and who felt that they too belonged to the Greatest Generation. The vast majority of those who provided testimony discuss their personal involvement during the war as a formative period in their lives and identify with the idea that they were part of a distinct generation. At several points, Brokaw himself drops the evaluative term “Greatest Generation” and instead resorts to the more neutral “World War II Generation,” indicating that he too believes the Second World War constituted the primary formative experience for this generation.

However, there are obvious reasons for why we should be somewhat skeptical about the “data” provided by Brokaw’s work on the Greatest Generation. Most importantly, Brokaw is obviously not interested in providing an academic study on the WWII Generation, but instead seems to perceive his work as a tribute to the members of this generation. In addition, Brokaw not only argues that the WWII Generation was a distinct political generation in American history, but he also makes a very strong normative claim when he proclaims that it was “the greatest generation any society has produced” (Brokaw 1998: xxx). The normative agenda inherent in Brokaw’s work, however, creates the methodological problem that his own discourse and the normative connotation that it entailed have helped to “create” generational consciousness. This is

48 For example, see Brokaw (1998: vii).
not necessarily a problem, since the generational discourse provided by authors such as Brokaw is a condition for the emergence of a political generation. But given that he conducted his interviews in the 1990s suggests the possibility that his interviewees might have never considered themselves to be part of a “generation,” before they were contacted for an interview about their experiences as a member of the Greatest Generation. Nevertheless, the success of Brokaw’s work suggests that his argument about a distinct WWII Generation was persuading many Americans.

Fortunately, Brokaw’s work is not the only source of evidence for the presence of a new generation and a generational discourse. Almost any U.S. president who was a member of this generation at some point or another identified with the WWII Generation or acknowledged its existence. The most prominent and famous articulation of this generational consciousness is obviously John F. Kennedy’s opening statement for his inaugural address, which opens the introduction of this dissertation: “Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans – born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace.” Especially significant about this phrase is that Kennedy clearly does not express a sense of generational conflict, but instead the notion that “the torch has been passed to a new generation” emphasizes the continuity between Kennedy’s own generation and its predecessor, the WWI Generation. This statement therefore supports the idea that the WWII Generation was a traditional political generation that perceived the political culture and policies of its predecessors as successful.
However, maybe the most explicit identification with the WWII Generation by a U.S. president were the remarks by Ronald Reagan at a White House conference on aging, on December 1, 1981, and it is worth quoting the President at some length.

Now, you know a speaker usually tries to establish in his own mind some relationship between himself and his audience or, put another way, why he or she is addressing a particular group. Well, I could say it is traditional for the President to address the White House Conference on Aging, but there's in my case a better answer. We're of the same generation. And we have met to counsel together on matters of mutual interest.

You know, when we were much younger, we defined a generation in a rather narrow sense. We perceived it as almost limited to our classmates. And then, as the number of candles on the birthday cakes increased, so did the breadth of our generation. As long-time adults, we now perceive our generation, as we call it, as including all those within several years on either side of our own age. And that is as it should be, for as adults, we've worked together to achieve common goals in our work, in our communities, and in our nation.

[…]

Only a few times in history is a single generation called upon to preside over a great period of transition, and our generation, yours and mine, had been one of those rare generations […] We've known four wars and a great worldwide depression in our lifetime.49

Reagan’s statement is remarkable for several reasons. First, he argues that he himself and his audience do not simply constitute the same cohort, i.e. individuals born in the same year, but instead represent members of a distinct generation, who share a common bond in virtue of the fact that they have undergone the same formative experiences and worked towards “common goals.” Second, Reagan made his remarks almost twenty years before Brokaw published his Greatest Generation in 1998,

indicating that generational consciousness already existed prior to Brokaw’s work on the WWII Generation. Lastly, the fact that both John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan identify with the WWII Generation shows that generational consciousness amongst members of the WWII Generation certainly transcended party lines.

However, not only future elites identified with the idea that they were part of a distinct political generation. Edwards Phillips (1998), for example, cited above, worked in construction and never held any significant position in politics. Yet, in his autobiographical account of his formative years, he explicitly identifies himself and his friends “Jack, Jerry, Bill, Young Bill, Mr. Pike, Mr. Baker, and Mr. Featherstone” (Phillipis 1998: 4), as representative members of the WWII Generation, though he labels this generation as Roosevelt’s Children. Brokaw’s work, as mentioned above, also includes numerous examples of every-day American citizens who grew up during the Depression and World War II strongly identify with the WWII Generation.

Finally, based on a telephone survey, which was conducted in 1985 and which included a sample of 1,410 Americans, Howard Schuman and Jacqueline Scott (1989) show that there seems to be a significant correlation between age and the event that respondents cite when asked what events have been especially important since 1930.50 The two events that were predominantly mentioned by all respondents were World War II and the Vietnam War. Importantly, their results show that:

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50 See Schuman and Scott (1989: 362). Respondents were not provided with a list of possible options. For the full question, see footnote to Table 1, p. 363.
“nominations of World War II as especially important are relatively high and sharply
demarcated among those in their 50s and 60s in 1985. Nominations of the Vietnam War
are high among those 18 to about 44, and especially among those in their 30s and early
40s, but decline rapidly at later ages” (Schuman and Scott (1989: 365/366).

Their results therefore strongly suggest that World War II was indeed a formative
experience for cohorts who were in the age of their youth during the war. A generational
discourse that provides an interpretation of the formative experiences is an additional
indicator for the presence of a political generation. Whether or not that discourse is
positive or negative, meaning whether it interprets the response of the old elites as a
success or failure, determines whether the generation will take on a political radical or
traditional character. The WWII Generation has been accompanied by a generational
discourse, the beginnings of which can be traced to the inauguration of JFK and which
still continues to dominate the public mind today. What is astonishing about this
discourse is the fact that it has not changed much since the early 1960s and that it is
widely accepted among Democrats and Republicans alike.

Essentially all accounts of the WWII Generation describe it as a generation,
which grew up under conditions of hard-ship, faced a set of formidable obstacles in the
form of fascist and communist aggression, and finally overcame both, economic and
political challenges, thereby saving American prosperity and democracy. Bill Clinton
reproduced this discourse in 1995, three years before Brokaw’s Greatest Generation, at
the opening ceremony of the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., where he
stated that “the World War II generation emerged from the darkness of global war to

51 See for example the quote by Ronald Reagan above.
strengthen our economy, to enlighten our society, and to lead our world to greater heights.”52 The personal stories of members of the WWII Generation also emphasize the overcoming of obstacles and challenges. Phillips, for example, states “I am typical of many of my generation in having had a youth with unusual handicaps and hardships” (Phillips 1998: 25).

The generational discourse surrounding the WWII Generation therefore depicted the Depression and the Second World War as major formative challenges, yet, in stark contrast to the discourse of the “Lost Generation” that accompanied the WWI Generation and which portrayed American participation in the Great War as a mistake and failure, the discourse about the WWII Generation depicts the decision to enter the war against the Axis powers in 1944 as a good, almost inevitable decision, which ultimately brought prosperity and security to America and the world. The discourse about the WWII Generation was therefore “positive” because even though it often fails to acknowledge the fact that it was the generation of FDR, Truman, and Eisenhower, who made the political decisions during the Depression, WWII, and the beginning of the Cold War, it certainly endorses those policies and therefore portrays the response of the WWI Generation to these events as a success story. Phillips is most explicit in giving praise to the WWI Generation for the way they handled the Great Depression and the war, when

he states that “my generation’s economic father, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, brought us out of the depths of despair” (Phillips 1998: 3).

The fact that the positive discourse that was adopted by both commentators and pundits on the political left and right supports the argument that the WWII Generation was a traditional political generation. Traditional political generations perceive the response of old elites to their formative experiences as successful, which removes the likelihood of generational conflict and intra-generational conflict over how to change the status-quo.

What were the lessons with respect to the conduct of U.S. foreign policy that the WWII Generation had learned during their formative experiences and that were implicitly and explicitly articulated in this generational discourse? The most important, and widely shared, lesson for the WWII Generation was that aggressive foreign regimes, such as Nazi Germany or Imperial Japan, could not be appeased, or negotiated with, but needed to be confronted before they could pose a threat to U.S. national security. The failure of Britain and France to balance against Nazi Germany in 1938 was widely perceived as a major cause of the war and John F. Kennedy even wrote his thesis at Harvard on the question of “Why England Slept.” Furthermore, the attack on Pearl Harbor had clearly shown that the security of the United States could be jeopardized by a failure to aggressively oppose and balance against such regimes. The formative experience of the

Second World War had therefore supported the lessons that had already been drawn by FDR, Truman, Eisenhower and the rest of the WWI Generation, namely, that isolationism was no longer a viable foreign policy for the United States and that America needed to take an active role in shaping the international system. As Philips argues, for example, “[i]solation from the world has been proven impossible” (Phillips 1998: 22).

The WWII Generation therefore supported the general outlines of the foreign policy of “progressive realism,” which had been established by the WWI Generation and which had dominated the American approach to re-building the international order and containing the threat of Russian expansion until the late 1950s. However, the WWII Generation did adjust its foreign policy beliefs in response to the experiences of the Second World War by emphasizing the “realist” side of progressive realism. The memory of Munich 1938 and Pearl Harbor weighed heavily on the minds of this generation and for that reason Michael Roskin has aptly described the foreign policy views of the WWII Generation as the “Pearl Harbor Paradigm” (Roskin 2005 [1974]). The lesson that this generation had learned was that aggressors needed to be opposed with military force and before they developed into an actual threat. This generation would therefore emphasize power politics over the progressive principles which founded the legitimacy and ideological basis of U.S. foreign policy at the time.
Generational Change and Foreign Policy Stability

The members of the WWII Generation started to enter positions of political power between 1949 and 1962 and the transition at the elite level took place with the inauguration of John F. Kennedy and his new administration, which declared itself immediately as the leaders of a new generation. As Gaddis points out, the election had raised a “‘generational’ imperative, symbolized vividly in the transfer of power from the oldest elected president to the youngest: there was somehow the feeling that the promise—indeed the legitimacy—of a new generation of national leadership would be called into question if its programs were not made to differ visibly and substantially from what had gone before” (Gaddis [1982] 2005:197)\textsuperscript{54}.

However, somewhat ironically, the generational change that brought \textit{John F. Kennedy and a New Generation} (Burner 2005) to power did not result in significant foreign policy changes, but rather in foreign policy stability. The Kennedy administration’s “vision of the kind of world in which American institutions could survive and prosper differed from that of his predecessors only in the greater clarity and candor with which he expressed it” (Gaddis [1982] 2005: 200). Kennedy pursued the policies of his predecessor Eisenhower, as evident in the continuation of American involvement in Vietnam and the decision to

\textsuperscript{54} Also See Schulzinger (2008).
approve the invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs, an operation which had been planned by
the CIA during the Eisenhower presidency.55

Kennedy emphasized that the primary goal of his foreign policy was to maintain a
favorable balance of power that would prevent the emergence of regional hegemons in
Europe and Asia. During an address in Salt Lake City in 1963, Kennedy declared that
American interests were “best served by preserving and protecting a world of diversity in
which no one power or no one combination of powers can threaten the security of the
United States,” and that the “one simple central theme of American foreign policy […] is
to support the independence of nations so that one bloc cannot gain sufficient power to
finally overcome us” (cited in Gaddis [1982] 2005: 200). This emphasis on maintaining a
balance of power and preventing the rise of foreign threats before they became too
powerful to affect U.S. security reflects the formative experiences of the WWII
Generation and the lessons that they drew from this experience. Kennedy himself said
that “‘[t]he 1930s taught us a clear lesson: aggressive conduct, if allowed to go
unchecked and unchallenged, ultimately leads to war’” (cited in Roskin 2005 [1974]:
319).

Despite the fact that JFK and the WWII Generation continued the foreign policy of
the WWI Generation, the emphasis now shifted to the “realist” side of progressive
realism, meaning power considerations would trump the pursuit of idealistic goals. In the

55 Schulzinger (2008: 20-22); Gaddis (2005 [1982])
eyes of the Kennedy administration, and in the eyes of all subsequent administrations that were staffed by members of the WWII Generation, “the American interest was not to remake the world, but to balance power within it” (Gaddis [1982] 2005: 200). Every administration from JFK to George H.W. Bush emphasized balance of power politics over the pursuit of idealist goals, such as human rights or self-determination. Again, this does not mean that those goals did not matter to the members of this generation, but based on their formative experiences, the pursuit of the values required one to first balance against ideological and material threats. For example, covert operations, which would often depose democratically elected leaders with military dictators and which had been started by Truman and Eisenhower, would be one of the favorite tools of the WWII Generation for re-adjusting the balance of power in America’s favor.

However, the fact that the WWII Generation at the same time claimed that U.S. foreign policy was guided by progressive principles, while conducting policies that obviously contradicted those goals created a contradiction between the public discourse that legitimated U.S. foreign policy and the those policies themselves. That contradiction became most “apparent” during the intervention in Vietnam, which would precipitate a fundamental crisis in U.S. foreign policy and thereby create the necessary conditions for the rise of a new radical political generation, the “Vietnam Generation” which is the subject of the final case-study in this chapter.

*Vietnam and the Lessons of World War II*
John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, yet with regards to foreign policy the “basic assumptions of the Kennedy strategy remained in place after Lyndon B. Johnson became President, despite the new chief executive’s dramatically different personal style” (Gaddis [1982] 2005: 199). The WWII Generation therefore continued the foreign policy of the WWI Generation with an emphasis on the importance of maintaining a favorable balance of power and probably the strongest evidence for the claim that this foreign policy stability was the result of the formative experiences of and the lessons learned during the Second World War consists of the U.S. intervention in Vietnam and how it was justified by foreign policy elites at the time.

U.S. involvement in Vietnam dated back to the Eisenhower administration, which had supported the French, and later the South Vietnamese government of Ngo Dinh Diem, with financial aid and military advisors in their fight against the communist Vietminh, who took control of North Vietnam after the Geneva Conference in 1954. Relations between North and South Vietnam did not improve significantly and by 1959 the country was embroiled in another civil war. During this time, the military presence of the United States in South Vietnam continued to increase until “by the middle of 1963, the United States had more than 10,000 troops stationed in Vietnam and the fiction that they were engaged only in ‘advising’ no longer carried weight” (Schulzinger 2008: 229). Even though Kennedy was unwilling to commit ground troops to support South Vietnam he

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56 Also, see Schulzinger (2008: 233).
never seriously contemplated to withdraw from the U.S. commitment to South Vietnam. Johnson inherited the situation in South Vietnam and despite his own initial reservations about U.S. involvement in the region, the conflict with North Vietnam soon escalated.

After the Gulf of Tonkin incidence in 1964, the administration ordered air strikes against North Vietnam and acquired the legal basis for military intervention in Vietnam through the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which “passed the House without a single no vote, without hearings, and with only one hour of debate” (Schulzinger 2008: 234). The public initially supported Johnson’s policy and the administration would quickly escalate American intervention in the region, which was evident in the fact that “the number of American troops in Vietnam grew from 50,000 in early 1965 to 535,000 in early 1968 […] while American planes dropped 3 million tons of bombs on North and South Vietnam” (Schulzinger 2008: 237). However, the national consensus on foreign policy and the support for the foreign policy evaporated between 1965 and 1968 and public opinion became increasingly critical of the U.S. intervention in Vietnam.

What had gone wrong? I concur with Michael Roskin, who argues that the major cause for the crisis that beset U.S. foreign policy in the 60s was the fact that there existed an increasing “‘dysfunction’ […] between policy and reality. On the one hand, we have a foreign orientation essentially frozen since the 1940s, and on the other hand, a world which defied pigeonholing into the compartments of the 1940s” (Roskin 2005 [1974]:

320). Put differently, the foreign policy course of the WWII Generation, which had reproduced and adjusted the policies of the preceding generation in response to their formative experiences during the 1940s, was increasingly perceived as incapable of addressing the external challenges of the 1960s. Roskin furthermore suggests that especially the tendency of members of the WWII Generation to perceive the communist threat as monolithic was especially damaging in this regard.58 U.S. policy makers perceived the need to “win” Vietnam because otherwise the dominoes would fall and the Asia would be lost. I would add to this, however, that this tendency to exaggerate the threat of a communist Vietnam became especially problematic because in order to “balance” against communism in Vietnam the United States enacted a military policy which in the eyes of many Americans seemed to directly contradicted the principles that the United States was fighting for in the Cold War. What made this clash between principles and policy so “apparent” in the case of Vietnam was the development and spread of mass media, and most importantly, of television. Vietnam was the first American conflict that was “televised” in a significant way and the American public was able to see rather directly the human costs of military intervention in Vietnam.

**Introversion and Détente**

In response to the debacle in Vietnam, United States foreign policy entered a period of introversion, which lasted from 1967 until 1987,\(^5^9\) which is exactly what the theory of political generations would lead us to expect. According to the theory, radical political generations are followed by traditional political generations that reproduce the foreign policy of their predecessors until this policy clashes with reality. The resulting crisis and lack of public support then results in a period of introversion which lasts until the next radical political generation comes to power.

In addition, however, the Nixon administration adopted the policy of Détente, which many commentators have interpreted as a significant shift from past foreign policy. Yet, the policy of Détente did not reflect a fundamental change in the course of U.S. foreign policy. Aside from Vietnam, the major reason for Détente was the increasing rift between the Soviet Union and Communist China. Nixon’s accommodation with China certainly resulted in a period of decreasing tension, but the policy still reflected the consensus on foreign policy established by the WWI Generation and reproduced by the WWII Generation; the United States needed to provide an effective balance against foreign threats and maintaining that balance sometimes required the forging of alliances or increased cooperation with former adversaries, such as China.

\(^5^9\) Pollins and Schweller (1999: 439).

The World War II Generation controlled the conduct of U.S. foreign policy from the early 1960s until the end of the Cold War, a period during which U.S. foreign policy remained mostly stable and did not undergo fundamental change. Starting in the late 1980s, however, but especially beginning with the Clinton administration, which came to power in 1992, we see a change from an introverted to an extroverted U.S. foreign policy, accompanied by a significant shift away from the realist, balance of power approach of the WWII Generation to a more idealist foreign policy that used economic and military power for the sake of promoting progressive and liberal principles around the world. During a recent public presentation, John Mearsheimer has called this grand strategy, which has been adopted by the administrations of both Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, a strategy of “global domination.” A strategy of global domination essentially attempts to socialize the rest of the international system into Western, or more precisely American, values, and Mearsheimer convincingly argues that this general objective

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60 Pollins and Schweller (1999: 430).  
61 Mearsheimer, John “Grand Strategic Folly.” Presentation at the Mershon Center for International Security at the Ohio State University, 4/13/2011.
characterized the foreign policy outlook of both Democrats and Republicans since the end of the Cold War.

Where the administrations of Clinton and W. Bush obviously differed was in the choice of means to accomplish this goal. Whereas the Clinton administration favored the use of economic means, of peace-keeping missions, the promotion of international institutions, and multilateral diplomacy, the W. Bush administration adopted an approach that emphasized the use of America’s awe-inspiring military capabilities and which put a prerogative on the sovereign right to use force unilaterally. However, despite the obvious differences between the choice of means, both Clinton and Bush attempted to not only to defend U.S. principles against foreign threats, but instead to promoted them actively around the world through the use of the economic and military tools available to U.S. policy makers.

What explains this change towards extroversion and towards a more idealist U.S. foreign policy in the 1990s? Many scholars in IR would argue that the answer to this question is rather obvious. Social uprisings in Eastern Europe, the fall of the wall in Berlin and the dissolution of the Soviet Union shortly thereafter seemed to indicate a clear shift in the balance of power, the victory of Western liberalism and capitalism over communism, and to some even suggested that we had reached “The End of History” (Fukuyama 1992) altogether. The change of U.S. foreign policy in the 1990s and early 2000s towards an idealist policy of actively supporting and promoting progressive and
liberal principles, such as human rights, international institutions, and national self-determination across the world then hardly seems surprising. After all, U.S. foreign policy had always been guided by liberal principles; the change in the international balance of power created the permissive conditions for these principles to be actively promoted through U.S. foreign policy since no one was able to balance effectively against the global hegemon.

However, this explanation is problematic. Even though the shift in the balance of power that occurred through the demise of the Soviet Union certainly resulted in a changing “international input” into the foreign policy decision-making process, i.e. it altered the international constraints under which U.S. foreign policy makers had to operate. Yet, this does not at all imply that U.S. policy makers would adopt an idealist grand strategy of global domination. As the debate over U.S. grand strategy towards the end of the Cold War demonstrates the changing circumstances of the post-Cold War world opened up a variety of possible paths for American foreign policy to pursue.

I argue that in order to fully explain and understand the change in U.S. foreign policy away from the “realist” side of progressive realism towards a much more “idealist” definition, that took place in the 1990s and was continued under the W. Bush administration, requires us to take into account the role of the “Sixties Generation,” a radical political generation, which emerged during the 1960s in response to domestic turmoil and the foreign policy crisis over the intervention in Vietnam.
Maybe one of the most explicit examples of a radical political generation, the Sixties Generation perceived the foreign policy of the WWII Generation in Vietnam as a failure. However, in stark contrast to the traditional World War II Generation, members of the Sixties Generation were greatly divided over the correct interpretation of why the United States had failed and of the mistakes that the old generation of elites had made during its intervention in Vietnam. As discussed in the theory chapter, especially radical political generations are usually internally divided into several generation units, which offer conflicting interpretations of the formative events and the response of old elites to those challenges. In this sense, the Sixties Generation certainly constitutes almost an ideal case of a radical political generation since the interpretations that were offered by generation units on the left and members of the generation on the political right could hardly have been more opposed.

Specifically, the American intervention in Vietnam seemed to clearly contradict the public discourse that had legitimated U.S. policy during the early years of the Cold War, a discourse which claimed that the United States and the Western world were fighting in the name of liberal principles, such as freedom, equality, and self-determination. This discourse clashed violently with the reality of the intervention in Vietnam, where it became apparent that the United States and its allies were often disregarding and violating human rights in the name of opposing communism. What made this clash of principles and policies so apparent was the fact that Vietnam was one of the first wars which was televised to a broad American and international audience.
(Carpini 1986). News media reporters and photographers documented the increasing human costs that the conflict caused among American soldiers and civilians in Vietnam and these reports and pictures seemed to contradict the claim that the United States was fighting in Vietnam in order to defend progressive principles and human rights against Communist aggression. On the political right, however, members of the Sixties Generation perceived the opposition to the war itself as a major cause of the failure of U.S. foreign policy in Vietnam. Despite these contrary interpretations of the war, members of the Sixties Generation would come to share the belief that United States foreign policy needed to shift to a more active promotion of the progressive principles on the basis of which it legitimated itself.

*Prior Political Culture*

The World War II Generation had continued the foreign policy course of their predecessors, which resulted in a period of U.S. foreign policy stability. However, the political consensus during the early Cold War on opposing the communist threat had also resulted in a time where the pressures for social conformity were especially strong.62 World War II had ended the Great Depression and resulted in a period of economic growth and increasing material affluence for a large segment of the American public. As Paul Lyons argues, “[t]his middle-class life-style, available to a significant proportion of the unionized working class, was the great carrot to the ideological conformity that

\[62\] See for example, Schulzinger (2008: 212/213).
characterized the 1950s” (Lyons 1996: 40). This lack of political activism, however, made room for a new political generation of American youth that would revolt against conformity and against a discourse that portrayed the United States as a flawless instantiation of liberal and progressive principles.

**Formative Events: The Sixties**

The 1960s was the period that would precipitate the emergence of this new political generation and included both domestic and international events\(^{63}\) that were formative for its members. The starting point of the “Sixties” understood as a distinct cultural era in U.S history is usually defined to be 1963 the year John F. Kennedy was assassinated, whereas the endpoint of the period is marked by the slow withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam under Richard Nixon and the Watergate scandal in the early 1970s.

However, the beginnings of political protest and early signs of the fault lines of generational conflict became already apparent in the late 1950s with the growing importance of the civil rights movement, which demanded an end to racial segregation. By 1961, large-scale protests, sit-ins, the Freedom Rides, as well as the often violent response of segregationists, had propelled the civil rights movement to the national stage. Similar to the feminist movement, the civil rights movement was motivated by “the great

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\(^{63}\) The importance of both domestic and international events in forming the worldview of this generation, explains why I decided to adopt the label of the “Sixties Generation,” instead of the more definite “Vietnam Generation.” Nevertheless, Vietnam was clearly the most formative experience for this generation.
gap between national myth and promise on the one hand and reality on the other” (Steigerwald 1995: 38). Whereas dominant public discourse portrayed the United States as a beacon of liberal principles, such as equality and justice for all, the political reality in 1950s America had clearly betrayed these ideals. The perception of a growing gap between discourse and reality became even more pronounced through the assassination of John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963. Especially many young Americans had looked up to JFK as a new role model who was able to re-instantiate their belief in an exceptional America and seemed to promise a generational change in U.S. politics. Even more traumatic was therefore the news of his violent death, since it seemed to show that society was composed of elements who opposed any political reforms.

However, the “event” that would be most formative for the foreign policy beliefs of this generation was obviously Vietnam and like no other political issue during the 1960s, Vietnam exposed the contradiction between professed American principles and political reality. As David Steigerwald points out, “Vietnam, even more than civil rights was the defining event of the sixties” (Steigerwald 1995: 95). After the Gulf of Tonkin resolution of 1964, which had given Kennedy’s successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, the legal right to use military forces in Vietnam, the United States began a continuous bombing campaign during the first months of 1965. By the end of 1965, the United States had introduced 200,000 ground troops to Vietnam and General Westmoreland began a war of attrition against the Vietcong, sending U.S. troops on search-and-destroy missions with the goal of wearing down the enemy’s strength, while keeping U.S. casualties minimal.
The success of this strategy was rather mixed, however. The Vietcong certainly suffered higher casualties and often had to retreat in the face of superior American fire-power. Yet, the Vietcong quickly adapted to the American strategy and avoided head-on confrontations with U.S. troops, preferring instead hit-and-run attacks, which soon would take an ever-increasing toll on U.S. troops. In addition, search and destroy missions required U.S. troops to engage the enemy in rural villages and given the tendency of the Vietcong to recruit local villages for its cause, American troops often did not distinguish between active enemies and the larger civilian population. The killing of innocent noncombatants and the number of atrocities committed by U.S. troops correspondingly increased throughout the war and culminated in the massacre of My Lai in 1968, during which more than 200 civilians, including women and children were murdered by American troops. The massacre of My Lai and the trial of the American unit commander in 1971 would cause a public uproar and strengthened the increasing opposition to the war that had built up from 1965 until 1968.

The Tet Offensive, launched by the Vietcong on January 30, 1968, is widely considered a turning point in the war. The Vietcong had staged a surprise attack on most major cities in Vietnam in order to start a national uprising and had even attacked the U.S. embassy in Saigon. However, communist losses were a staggering “32,000 against only slightly more than 3,000 combined ARVN and American deaths” (Steigerwald

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1995: 88). However, Tet had shown that the war was turning into a stalemate and turned a large segment of the American public, who had been previously undecided on the virtues of the conflict, into opposing the war. A new request for an additional 200,000 troops by General Westmoreland was rejected by Congress and the president himself and Johnson declared his intention not to seek re-election shortly thereafter.

In the eyes of many commentators, the election of Richard Nixon in 1968 “marked the beginning of the end for the U.S. presence in Vietnam” (Steigerwald 1995: 90). Over the course of the next five years, the Nixon administration with the advice of Henry Kissinger, began to withdraw American troops from Vietnam in order to reduce the strain of the conflict on American resources and to appease public protests against the war.66

The U.S. public had initially supported the deployment of U.S. ground troops to Vietnam, but already in the early 1960s, opposition against the war began to develop into an anti-war movement, which would reach its climax in 1967. The movement was composed of a variety of diverse groups, such as traditional pacifists, moderates from the antinuclear movement, campus radicals, such as members of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), communists and hippies, and their motivations for opposing the war correspondingly varied.67 The movement gained steam in 1965, the year when U.S. combat troops were introduced into Vietnam. Organized opposition against the war

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primarily took the form of protest marches and draft resistance, though there were eight cases, where Americans had burned themselves in protests against U.S. military actions in Vietnam. The anti-war movement reached its climax in 1967 with the “Stop-the-Draft Week,” during which anti-war protesters had clashed with the police in Oakland in their attempts to shut down the induction center, and the Pentagon march, which had attracted over 100,000 protesters (Steigerwald 1995: 107-111). Despite the fact that, compared to the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement was certainly far less successful in achieving tangible political goals, its impact on the war in Vietnam and on public opinion was certainly substantial and it therefore constitutes a formative event of the 1960s.

The war in Vietnam clearly had a formative impact on American youths. According to Paul Lyons, “[t]wenty-seven million men became eligible for the draft in the period between the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution of August 1964 and the withdrawal of the last military forces from Indochina in March 1973’ (Lyons 1996: 74). More than 8 Million U.S. service men and women had served in the military during the Vietnam conflict, out of which more than 2 Million had been assigned directly to Vietnam.

One major factor which explains why Vietnam elicited such a strong public response and why it had an especially formative impact as compared to previous conflicts, most notably Korea, was the increasing role of news media coverage. Several factors accounts for the important role that media coverage took on in Vietnam. First of all, government censoring of the press was prevented during the conflict in Vietnam due
to the fact that it had not been declared a “war.” In addition, media corporations had grown in influence since WWII and the spread of television increased the exposure of the American public to news from the battlefields of Vietnam. Lastly, journalists increasingly perceived themselves as a source of objective and critically detached information, which supported an important democratic function (Steigerwald 1995: 95-97). In contrast to previous military conflicts, the “media had the power, the opportunity, the legal freedom, and the temperament to involve itself in Vietnam in an unprecedented way” (Steigerwald 1995: 96).

Extensive media coverage of the war in Vietnam began in 1965 and especially the heavy reliance on television coverage made “Vietnam […] the first ‘living-room war,’ the first to be broadcast into homes on a regular basis” (Steigerwald 1995: 98; also see Carpini 1986). Television coverage of GIs walking through the jungle in Vietnam on the search for Vietcong fighters became a regular staple of the American experience of the 1960s and it oftentimes seems to have put enormous pressure on U.S. policy-makers. For example, in 1965 CBS aired a report about combat operations in Vietnam, which showed American soldiers burn down the village of Cam Ne. In response, President Johnson “called CBS News president and personal friend, Frank Stanton, and complained that CBS was ‘fucking me’” (Steigerwald 1995: 99). The fact that U.S. foreign policy was perceived as failing by the end of the 1960s, the presence of a significant anti-war movement, and the increasing role of the mass media in bringing the war into American
‘living-rooms,’ explains why Vietnam constituted the most formative event of the 1960s and explains why it resulted in a new radical political generation.

A Radical Political Generation

The evidence for the claim that the events of the 1960s resulted in the emergence of a new, self-conscious, political generation is almost overwhelming. As a matter of fact, the Sixties Generation almost constitutes an ideal case of a radical political generation. It emerged in response to a perceived failure of the established political culture and the rule of dominant elites; it developed a strong sense of generational consciousness; and finally, it was internally divided into distinct generation units that provided conflicting interpretations of the failure of political elites in responding to the challenges of the time.

There are numerous indicators for the presence of generational consciousness among those who were in the age of youth during the 1960s and the extensive primary and secondary literature on this time period bursts with references to the “Sixties Generation,” or the “Vietnam Generation.” In Touched with Fire: The Future of the Vietnam Generation (1984), for example, John Wheeler recounts the experiences of himself and his comrades during Vietnam and throughout the book he explicitly frames his account as the story of ‘his’ generation:

Bonded by the heritage of World War II and the electronic media and profoundly shaped and divided in freedom rides, the Peace Corps, the women’s movement, and the Vietnam War, the sixty million American who came of age in the 1960s are healing their divisions through remembrance and dialogue. This work is vital, since we will be the leaders of our national institutions in the year 2000 (Wheeler 1984: 7).
Wheeler’s account is especially significant because he did not belong to the group of anti-war protesters, but instead had attended West Point, fought in Vietnam, and clearly belonged to the conservative political spectrum (see Lyson 1996). Other conservatives who have been identified by themselves or others as members of the 1960s Generation include Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, and William Kristol (Lyons 1996).

On the political left, the “New Left” emerged as a movement composed of civil rights advocates, feminists, anti-war protesters, and various other left-wing student organizations, organized around the SDS under the intellectual leadership of Thomas Hayden. The New Left was a self-consciously generational movement. As Steigerwald points out, “[w]hen the radicals of the sixties proclaimed themselves the New Left, they did so in order to distance themselves from the radicals of the previous generation” (Steigerwald 1996: 121). This generational consciousness was explicitly stated in what is widely considered the founding document of the New Left, the Port Huron Statement of 1962. The goal of the document, which was authored primarily by Thomas Hayden, was to provide the intellectual basis for the student movement and to develop a critique of the existing political culture and the policies of the old generation. The opening sentence of the introduction, which is entitled “Agenda for a Generation,” states: “We are people of

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this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortable to the world we inherit”.71

The Sixties Generation was a politically radical generation, which means that its members perceived the response of established elites to the problems facing the nation as unsuccessful and inadequate. What created the generational consciousness among American youths during the time was the feeling that the old liberal and progressive political culture, which had been established by the WWI Generation and then been reproduced by the WWII Generation, was no longer viable. The dominant public discourse of the post-WWII era that celebrated the superiority of American liberalism and progressivism had clashed violently with the political reality of race riots, the continuing discrimination of women, and the pictures of bloodied American GIs and burning villages in Vietnam.

The dominant theme of the generational discourse of and about the Sixties Generation was therefore that the prevalent political culture was in a state of crisis and was in need of fundamental reform. This perception of a crisis of the political order, which was prevalent among both the political left and right (see Lyons 1996: 5) also created a renewed sense of idealism in the members of the Sixties Generation which would characterize their political thought and action until the rest of their lives. The hope was to reconcile political discourse and reality in order to materialize the American

promise. On the political right, John Wheeler, for example, recalls what held his
generation together: “We believed John Kennedy. We wanted to give to our country […]”
This is fundamental American idealism. Matured by two decades of strife, that idealism
is still our common strength as a generation” (Wheeler 1984: 6). Theda Skocpol,
expressed the same simultaneous sense of political crisis and idealism from the viewpoint
of the political left:

> What most of the generation came to share, I think, was an acute sense that existing
relations of power in state, economy, and society could be very unjust, and that
authorities in all institutional spheres were not necessarily honest or automatically worthy
of trust. At the same time, we gained a sense that protests and rebellions could make a
difference: after mass demonstrations and the deaths of three young civil rights workers,
the federal government finally enforced desegregation in the South; campus authorities
did often back down in the face of student sit-ins; and in the bitter end, the United States
withdrew from Vietnam (Skocpol 1988: 5).

**The Lessons of the Sixties: Between the New Left and the New Right**

As discussed in the theory chapter, radical political generations are internally
divided into several generation units, which provide conflicting narratives about their
formative experiences. The Sixties Generation certainly fits this picture of a generation
that is bound by common experiences and a shared sense of crisis, yet, whose members,
at the same time disagree deeply about the causes of political crisis and the lessons to be
taken away from their experience. Despite the shared sense of idealism and the feeling
that the existing political culture was in need of reform, the Sixties Generation was
internally split into several generation units, which disagreed vehemently over the causes
of the political crisis that they were experiencing and which advocated different lessons to be take away from their formative experiences.

The major fault line that would come to divide the 1960s Generation was the line between the political “Left” and the “Right” and no issue better reflects the polarization of the Sixties Generation than the debate between members of the New Left and the New Right over the intervention in Vietnam.

After 1968, the intervention in Vietnam increasingly came to be perceived as a failure among members of the Sixties Generation. However, at the same time, the interpretations of why U.S. foreign policy had failed in Vietnam varied greatly among members of the generation. The two main interpretations of American failure in Vietnam were provided by the political left, composed of anti-war protesters, draft dodgers, veterans and members of the New Left, and the political right, which included conservative student organizations, veterans, and many of the silent majority of Americans who did not openly take sides in the debate.

On the political left, the war in Vietnam was interpreted as exposing a clear disconnect between political discourse and reality. Vietnam was “a liberal war fought in an age of high liberal expectations, and yet to its critics it signaled the persistence of imperialism, racism, and arrogance among leaders who were otherwise enlightened people (Steigerwald 1995: 95). This interpretation of the intervention in Vietnam, however, was not only shared among the more radical elements of the left wing of this
generation, but also by moderates such as Hillary Clinton. As Clinton notes in her memoirs, “Vietnam tested the intellect and conscience of many in my generation, because it seemed contrary to America’s national interests and values, not in furtherance of them.” From the perspective of the political left, therefore, the war in Vietnam was fought for the wrong reasons. Instead of fighting a monolithic communist block determined to dominate the world, the pictures from Vietnam showed U.S. troops fighting the civilian population of Vietnam, thereby defying the very principles that the United States professed to stand for.

Members of the Sixties Generation on the political right, which was composed mostly of the “New Right,” a group of young conservatives including Dick Cheney and William Kristol, also considered Vietnam a failure, but for very different reasons than those on the left. According to the political right, Vietnam was fought for the right reasons, namely to contain communism. What explained the failure of U.S. foreign policy in Vietnam and the fact that the United States had to withdraw its forces from the country in the early 1970s, thereby admitting defeat, in the eyes of the political right was the presence of domestic opposition to the war in the United States. Put differently, the right claimed that the United States was unable to succeed in Vietnam because anti-war protests and public pressure had weakened the resolve of the United States and strengthened the resistance of the Vietcong.
The political right agreed with the left therefore in so far as Vietnam was perceived as an event that indicated a significant discrepancy between American promise and values on the one hand and political reality, on the other. In contrast to the Left, however, the Right charged that the reason for this failure was the excessive and unpatriotic public opposition to the war, which had sapped the resolve of policy makers and encouraged the Vietcong to preserve. The interpretation of Vietnam therefore mirrored the general critique of the dominant liberal culture that was marshaled by the political left and the right, respectively. Whereas the left perceived that the principles of liberalism were no longer enacted by a political elite that had been obsessed with the threat of communism, the political right perceived the outbreak of social unrest and protests during the 1960s as an indicator for the corrosive effects of an excessive liberalism gone awry.

While the New Left and the New Right both disagreed strongly over the causes of failure in Vietnam, for both of them the main problem in Vietnam was that U.S. foreign policy was not living up to its promise in promoting liberal and progressive principles. As stated above, this perception of a discrepancy between political rhetoric and reality was an important cause of the idealism that would characterize the members of the Sixties Generation on both the political left and right and it would come to dominate the foreign policy course of this generation once it came to power in the early 1990s.
Generational Change

Members of the Sixties Generation were born between 1945 and 1956 and started to enter positions of power during the late 1980s and early 1990s. During this time of generational change, the Sixties Generation introduced a new political culture, which was characterized by a strong commitment to American idealism and at the same time divided along the political fault lines established during their formative years. This change in the political culture would also have wide-ranging effects on the foreign policy course of the Sixties Generation and result in a shift to a policy of “global domination.”

Foreign Policy Change

The generational change that brought the Sixties Generation to power coincided with the end of a period of foreign policy introversion and the beginning of a new period of extroversion. In addition, the foreign policies of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, both members of the Sixties Generation, clearly reflected a turn away from the balance of power realism that had been a hallmark of the WWII Generation. Instead, both the Clinton and W. Bush administrations pursued highly idealistic foreign policy goals. Despite the fact that in their choice of means the two administrations certainly differed, they both attempted to use American foreign policy in the service of spreading liberal and progressive values throughout the world.

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72 See Pollins and Schweller (1999).
The new foreign policy course of the Sixties Generation became apparent soon after Bill Clinton was elected to the presidency in 1992. Clinton charged that his predecessors George H.W. Bush had lacked the necessary diplomatic skills to navigate the uncertain waters of the post-Cold War world and insisted that under his leadership U.S. foreign policy would be “based on ‘the moral principles most Americans share’” (Schulzinger 2008: 319). Moreover, not only would U.S. foreign policy be closer in line with the pursuit of American ideals and values, but the grand strategy of the Clinton administration was explicitly focused on actively promoting the spread of these values across the globe. The “United State would (1) stay fully engaged in the world, for its overwhelming power had made it the ‘indispensable’ nation; (2) guarantee that engagement by sustaining a steadily growing, low inflation, and solvent domestic economy, and (3) pursue policies that would gradually enlarge the ‘zone of the democratic peace’ by allowing the process of globalization to function freely” (Melanson 2005: 256). In short, the goal of United States foreign policy during the Clinton administration was to establish American global hegemony.

The turn to an idealist U.S. foreign policy that was motivated by the goal of spreading American values abroad became further apparent in the attempts of the Clinton administration to spread international free trade through support for international monetary institutions, such as the WTO, the IMF, and free-trade agreements, such as NAFTA. However, the most significant departure from the foreign policies of the WWII Generation and the most significant indicator of a shift towards a more idealist foreign
policy came in the strong support of the Clinton administration for military human rights interventions. As Schulzinger points out, “they advocated the expansion of democratic values and human rights abroad” (Schulzinger 2008: 320). Despite a rhetorical commitment to the pursuit of human rights throughout the Cold War, the WWII Generation had largely refused to use military force in order to protect human rights. George H.W. Bush had commanded U.S. troops to provide humanitarian relief to the Kurds in Iraq during Operation Comfort and to Somalia, which was facing a humanitarian crisis and political anarchy, during Operation Restore Hope in 1992 (see DiPrizio 2002). However, the Clinton administration, which inherited the U.S. commitment to Somalia, significantly increased the use of military force for the protection of human rights and expanded the range of scenarios that could legitimate a military response by the United States. At the same time, the formative impact of Vietnam often also constrained the Clinton administration in its foreign policy options. The members of Sixties Generation remembered Vietnam as a “quagmire” (Schuman and Rieger 1992) and often adopted this analogy when considering the option of military interventions for humanitarian purposes.

The policy of global domination, i.e. the attempt to spread American values and ideas across the globe, continued under the administration of George W. Bush. Even though the administration came to power with a rather modest foreign policy agenda, the events of September 11, 2001, obviously constituted a huge shock to the American public and elites alike and resulted in a radical re-orientation of U.S. foreign policy. However,
even though the attacks on 9/11 certainly constitute another instance where the constraints on U.S. foreign policy changed rather dramatically the event alone cannot explain the reaction of the Bush administration given that there existed a wide range of options on how to respond to a terrorist attack. More specifically, even though the NATO-led invasion of Afghanistan seemed to constitute an almost obvious course of action in the wake of 9/11, it seems highly questionable that the decision to invade Iraq, the turn away from a policy of multilateralism towards unilateralism, and the doctrine of preemption would have been adopted by George W. Bush’s father, or any other member of the WWII Generation.

Conclusion

This chapter has tried to illustrate the explanatory value of a generational approach for the study of foreign policy. The empirical analysis in the three case-studies has supported the general hypothesis that radical and traditional political generations alternate across time and can explain periods of foreign policy change and stability respectively. In addition, the alternation of radical and traditional political generations correlates with periods of foreign policy extroversion and introversion as stipulated by my theoretical framework. Even though more evidence will need to be considered and despite the fact that not every single step in the causal chain from generational emergence until generational could be supported in all cases, the evidence nevertheless strongly suggests that there is indeed a significant relationship between the alternation of political
generations and foreign policy outcomes. The results of the three case-studies are summarized and depicted in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1: Generational Cycles and U.S. Foreign Policy, 1900-2008**

In chapter 3 I have shown that generational cycles can account for periods of change and stability in American political culture and consequently explain major shifts in U.S. foreign policy behavior throughout the 20th century. In context of my larger research agenda, the chapter allowed me to test the theory of political generations in the context of a single country over time. The dependent variable in chapter 3, foreign policy behavior, was located at the meso-level of analysis. The next step in my research agenda is to examine the role of political generations in a transnational setting in order to determine their potential effects at the level of the international system.

Various scholars working on the problem of generations have suggested, and in some cases empirically examined, the possibility that political generations and generational change can constitute transnational, if not global, phenomena. Robert Wohl (1979), for example, has argued that World War I was formative for an entire European cohort of youth, even though he also notes that the various generational movements that arose during this time strongly differed along national lines. Possibly most famous within political science is the work of Abramson and Inglehart (1987; 1992; Inglehart 1977),
who adopted a cohort approach and showed that due to increasing material prosperity most Western societies have undergone a value shift towards, what they call, “post-materialist” values (Abramson and Inglehart 1987; 1992; Inglehart 1977). Building on the work of Inglehart and employing data from the World Value Survey, Jon Carlson further corroborates the hypothesis that “intergenerational value change is quite real and measurable, and works in conjunction with sociocultural differences to shape group attitudes” and that those value changes occur across national boundaries (Carlson 2012: 223). Despite the fact that the results of both Inglehart and Carlson strongly suggest that generational change can take place across national boundaries, both scholars adopt a cohort approach, rather than examine the role of political generations characterized by a sense of generational consciousness.

The most explicit argument concerning the possibility of transnational and even global political generations has been made by June Edmunds and Bryan Turner (2005). Arguing that the spread and development of modern communications technology, such as print media, the telephone, radio, television, and finally, the internet, allow traumatic events to be experienced by an ever increasing number of people around the world, they claim that there are “reasons to suppose that globally experienced traumatic events may facilitate the development of global generations” (Edmunds and Turner 2005: 564). The authors then move on to claim that the Sixties generation was the “first example of a global generation and the 9/11 generation may be emerging as a dynamic global generation” (Edmunds and Turner 2005: 564). June and Edmunds provide us with a first
stab at the problem of transnational, and potentially global, political generations. Yet, their model of transnational generational change remains unspecified and the evidence to support their claims concerning the 1960s and 9/11 generation is (to some extent necessarily) anecdotal. In the following pages, I will build on the work of Inglehart, Carlson, June and Edmunds in order to assess the claim that political generations can constitute transnational, and potentially global, social actors and to examine what effects transnational political generations have on the international system.

My argument in the following chapter is twofold. First, I intend to show that political generations have indeed become increasingly transnational phenomena over the course of the 20th century. By “transnational,” I mean political generations that emerge in response to international events and whose generation units, i.e. different interpretations of formative events, cut across, instead of being divided by, national boundaries. The opposite of transnational political generations are “international political generations,” generations that emerge in response to internationally perceived formative events, but whose generation units distribute along national boundaries. Both “transnational” and “international” political generations constitute ideal-types on a continuum, meaning that most political generations will constitute mixed types that are to a greater, or lesser extent, transnational or international.

73 In addition, the authors’ theory of political generations differs in important respect from the model that I develop above. Most importantly for the case of transnational generations, the authors neglect that political generations only emerge against the background of a shared political and cultural background.
Second, I argue that transnational political generations have two major effects at the level of the international system. First, transnational political generations constitute an important mechanism to explain the political integration of nationally bounded social systems into larger regional systems. Inter/trans-national political generations emerge in response to formative events that are experienced across national boundaries. These formative experiences, even if they might not necessarily result in cooperation, create shared collective memories and consequently a sense of shared history or common fate. Even though national differences in political culture continue to exist, these shared collective memories provide the basis for shared political cultures that in turn constitute the background for the emergence of subsequent political generations that are even more transnational in character since they experience formative events against a more similar cultural background than previous political generations. Political generations constitute “carriers” of collective memories (Mueller 2002) and collective norm entrepreneurs (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998) that attempt to diffuse their political culture throughout the system. In short, I hypothesize a positive feedback loop between the increasing transnationalism of political generations and the level of political integration of regional political systems.\footnote{\textsuperscript{74} As I will discuss in the concluding chapter, this process also hold the possibility of global political generations and the construction of a global political culture.} Furthermore, I argue that traditional transnational political generations in particular will be important collective agents of diffusion and political integration since they aim to reproduce the political culture of their predecessors.
The second main hypothesis that I examine in this chapter is that transnational radical political generations constitute collective agents of political change that have the potential to bring about important political transformations not only at the regional level, but by extension at the level of the international system more generally. The second dependent variable that I will examine in this chapter is what I refer to as “international system change.” By international system change or “system change” I am referring to the emergence of new relevant actors or political entities that produce changes in how the international system is governed. The term systems change, thus defined, combines what Robert Gilpin discusses separately as “systems change” and “systemic change” (Gilpin 1981: 41/42).

There seems wide-spread agreement that system change usually occurs after great power wars that re-shuffle the balance of power. However, while systemic war certainly constitutes a necessary condition for change at the system level it is not sufficient to explain its occurrence; it merely creates the opportunity for change. In order to explain how change occurs, we must not only understand the conditions under which change becomes possible, but also determine where the ideas come from that provide the basis for political change.

The two hypotheses concerning political integration and system change will be examined in an analysis of cycles of generational change and stability in North America and Western Europe. I show that within this geographic region, increasingly transnational
generations have had two major effects. First, they socially constructed and reproduced the cultural formation nowadays known as the “West,” centered on the ideology of political liberalism. While the “West” is a social construction that lacks an essentialist basis, the term and the sense of political identification it has generated amongst those who consider themselves part of the West have had important effects on international politics (Jackson 2006). First of all, to states and societies within Northern America and Western Europe it has been a symbolic term of political identification that provided not only an important bulwark against the ideological threat of communism during the Cold War but also provided a sense of collective identity that was crucial for the establishment of the Western security community (Adler and Barnett 1998). What is especially remarkable about the construction of the West is that many of the community’s core member states, such as the United States, Germany, France, or Italy, used to be mortal enemies during WWI and WWII. The social construction and development of the West therefore constitutes one of the most significant and far-reaching instances of political integration in modern history and in the pages to follow I intend to show the increasingly transnational political generations played a crucial role in this process.

As Patrick Jackson (2006) rightly points out, we should be aware not to confuse the “West” with some essentialist, “primordial” entity. Yet, at the same time the term is most commonly associated with the states and societies comprising Northern America and Western Europe, which will therefore constitute the geographic scope conditions for my analysis. The level of political integration of the United State and Western Europe
into the West will be measured qualitatively in terms of “more” or “less” integration. Important indicators for increasing political integration are (1) shared regime type, (2) shared political culture, and most importantly, (3) a shared discourse about the “West” that creates a sense of collective identity.

Second, I examine the hypothesis that transnational political generations have constituted a mechanism to adapt Western political culture to changing external and internal challenges. I argue that since the international system has been largely dominated by the West during the 20th and 21st century, those changes in Western political culture have resulted in changes at the level of the international system, as well. More specifically, I argue that two radical transnational political generations have brought about two major changes in the institutional structure of the international system during this time period. The first change, which was still largely driven by the United States, was the creation of a set of interconnected multilateral international organizations, designed to eliminate the threat of modern industrialized warfare, which had traumatized the WWI Generation. The second major change of the political culture and institutional structure of the international system began in the 1970s, but reached its height during the early 1990s in the form of an increasingly dense network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social networks of individuals and advocacy groups who not only try to supplement services across national boundaries that states fail to supply, but who also provide a “bottom-up” check to hold state power accountable in international politics. The emergence of this global civil society constituted a change in the international system in
so far as it created a range of new actors who have since then come to play an increasingly important role in international politics and because it change the interaction of actors in the system, moving it increasingly from international politics, conducted primarily by states, to global governance, conducted by a range of state and non-state actors, located at various levels of analysis. I argue that this new institutional component of the international system was brought about by members of the Sixties Generation, who tried to develop a “bottom-up” check on state power, both domestically and internationally, in response to a number of formative events during the 1960s which seemed to signal the democratic deficiencies of Western liberalism. Both IOs and non-governmental organizations operating across national boundaries existed before the 1940s and 1990s, respectively. However, the role of IOs and NGOs underwent a qualitative and quantitative change during the two time periods that it seems plausible to argue that these two periods qualify as instances of system change.

The West obviously constitutes a most likely case for examining the hypothesis that transnational generations constitute collective agents that bring about change at the international system level, precisely it because the international system has been a “Western” system. However, this also means that the West constitutes a “crucial case” for the theory, i.e. one would have to discard the theory if it does not pass this test. In addition, international system change is certainly a more severe challenge for my theory than to explain generational shifts in the domestic context and given that the main purpose of this dissertation is theory development it seems justified to test the plausibility
of my framework at the system level in a set of more likely case-studies before proceeding with harder cases.

Importantly, in this chapter I will adopt a “transnational perspective,” (Horn and Kenney 2004; Owen 2010 ) which means that I will focus on similarities amongst political generations in the U.S. and Western Europe rather than on their national differences. In addition, since I have discussed the case of the United States in some detail in chapter 3, I will focus on the European “dimensions” of the generations under consideration. Special attention will be given to the case of Germany, which not only caused the outbreak of the First and Second World War, but which also played a crucial role in the construction of the “West.”

Most of the evidence employed in this chapter stems from secondary historical accounts, scholarly research on generations, public statements by members of the generations under consideration. In addition, I also draw on the three personal interviews with members of Germany’s foreign policy elite: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, federal minister of foreign affairs and deputy federal chancellor ret., who was a member of the generation that came of age during the Second World War; Dr. Christoph Zöpel, and Dr. Ludger Volmer, who both considered the Sixties to be the most formative period of their lives. Hans-Dietrich Genscher, born in 1927, is probably the most prominent member of the Free Democratic Party (FDP). He served as minister of the interior in the cabinet of Willy Brandt from 1969 until 1974 and was both vice chancellor and foreign minister from 1974 until 1992. Christoph Zöpel, born in 1943, is member of the Social
Democratic Party (SPD) and occupied the positions of spokesperson on matters of foreign policy for the SPD (1998-1999) and “Staatsminister,” whose primary responsibility is to serve as a liaison between the foreign ministry and the German parliament, from 1999 until 2002 in the cabinet of Gerhard Schroeder. Dr. Ludger Volmer, born in 1952, was one of the founding members of the Green Party in Germany and also served as Staatsminister alongside Dr. Zöpel during the administration of Gerhard Schroeder. The interviews were conducted in Germany over the course of 2010 and each interview lasted for about two hours. Given space limitations, I was obviously not able to include all of the information obtained through these interviews. However, as will be become clear throughout the chapter, they provide a valuable source of evidence to support the theory of political generations.

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75 I interviewed Dr. Volmer on October 25, 2010 in Berlin and Dr. Zöpel on October 28, 2010 in Bochum. The interview with Mr. Genscher took place on December 13, 2010 in Bonn. All translations are mine.
Case-Study I: The WWI Generation, the Outbreak of World War II, and the Creation of the “West”

World War I probably constitutes one of the first formative events that resulted in the emergence of self-conscious political generation that transcended national boundaries and which can be considered, at least to some extent, a transnational phenomenon. As Robert Wohl has shown in his excellent analysis of what he calls the” Generation of 1914,” World War I “internationalized the generational idea by giving rise to an experience shared by millions of young Europeans” (Wohl 1979: 222) and, as I would add, shared by millions of young Americans, as well. Obviously, the formative impact of World War I had been much stronger on the worldviews of young people in Europe than on youth cohorts in the United States. Raised and socialized into a political culture that had praised war as a heroic enterprise undertaken for the sake of one’s nation, World War I fundamentally challenged this culture through the incredible destruction of industrial warfare. In addition, the majority of European youth came to interpret the catastrophe of WWI as a failure of the established political culture and the old generation in power. The WWI Generation therefore clearly emerged as a radical political generation in Western Europe and its members tried to revolutionize the existing political order and with it the conduct of international politics.
Three main generation units evolved out the WWI Generation and formed into social movements that spread across all of Western Europe and to some extent the United States. These movements reformed and articulated three transnational political ideologies, which had existed prior to the war: political liberalism, fascism, and communism. Even though all three of these ideologies had intellectual roots that reached back the French Revolution, it was the advent of WWI which resulted in fascism becoming a transnational social movement that would attract millions of youth across Europe and even in the United States. WWI was equally crucial for the emergence of communism as a serious political force in European and international politics, most importantly signified obviously by the Bolshevik revolution and the coming to power of Lenin. Finally, as shown to some extent already in chapter 3, liberalism was also fundamentally transformed by the First World War. Each one of these generation units was represented in most Western European countries and the U.S., which justifies the proposition that this was one of the first, at least partially, transnational political generation in the West. However, at the same time, the fact that there was a significant discrepancy between the strength of those generation units in different Western nations shows that the WWI Generation was in many respects still an international political generation.

There were three major interpretations of WWI and three different sets of lessons that were adopted by these three generation units to varying degrees with respect to the

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76 On the concept of transnational political ideologies, see Owen (2010).
problem of modern warfare. First, as already discussed in the previous chapter, a large part of this generation in the United States, but also in Western Europe, came to believe in Wilson’s vision for an international order based on a set of progressive and liberal values. The second interpretation was more dominant in Europe, though it existed in the form of continued support for isolationism in the U.S., and basically concluded that war should be avoided at all cost. The resulting policy of appeasement, which was most dominant in the United Kingdom, but also featured prominently in post-WWI France, was one of the necessary conditions for the outbreak of WWII. While the first two interpretations of the war and the lessons they implied were primarily adopted by the liberal generation unit of WWI, the third, and final, interpretation of the formative experience of the war was shared amongst both fascists and communists. Even though those ideologies obviously differed in important respects, they both were based on a worldview in which conflict and war are constant features.

While the shift in the balance of power that resulted in the material growth of Germany in the late 19th and early 20th century certainly constitutes a long-term cause for the outbreak of the Second World War, the proximate cause for the war therefore seems to be the coming to power of the WWI Generation. While appeasement on part of the U.K. and France and aggression on behalf of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy each only constitute necessary conditions for the outbreak of war, taken together, they constitute a proximate cause of the war. The Second World War can therefore be considered an
“intra-generational” conflict between the different generation units that comprised the WWI Generation.

At the same time, the re-organization of the international system on the basis of a set of political, military, and economic international institutions and organizations led by the United States would probably not have succeeded on such scale if it would not have been for members of the WWI Generation in Western Europe that identified with the liberal and progressive visions provided by Woodrow Wilson and later FDR.

Part of the explanation for why the defeated Axis powers, and especially Germany, became liberal democracies after WWII is certainly merely due to the fact that the Allies were able to impose their regime type, social institutions, and political culture on the defeated nations. However, the Allies had a range of alternative options for how to deal with the Axis powers after WWII and the mere fact that they tried to impose their system of governance on the former Axis powers cannot explain why political liberalism and the political culture of the Allies actually came to be accepted and institutionalized in those countries. In short, we have to account not only for why the Allies were so bent on re-structuring Western Europe in their own image, but also for why the “audience” in the defeated Axis powers accepted and embraced these efforts. I intend to show that we can explain this outcome if we take into consideration the transnational nature of the WWI Generation, which shows that liberal generation units in Western Europe had adopted similar lessons as members of the Lost Generation in the United States. The liberal unit
of the WWI Generation, which extended across Western Europe and the United States, played a crucial role in the construction of the social discourse that would socially construct Western Europe and the United States as part of a larger “West” (Jackson 2006). In sum, the WWI Generation not only created the necessary condition for international system change in the form of the Second World War, but it also provided the sufficient conditions for change in form of the ideas for how to re-structure the system thereafter.

*European political culture prior to WWI*

Prior to WWI, there had been little political integration between the United States and Western Europe and there were significant differences in political culture that expressed themselves clearly in the starkly contrasting responses on both sides of the Atlantic to the news of the beginning of the First World War. Indeed, nothing probably better reflects the political culture that prevailed in Europe before WWI than the massive wave of enthusiasm that broke out across all over the continent in response to the news of the outbreak of war in 1914, “the excited crowds filling the boulevards of every major European city, the British volunteers flocking to the recruiting booths so as to get to France before the fun was over, the French at St. Cyriens marching into battle in their passing-out uniforms complete with white gloves and pompons, the German reservists, university students the previous summer, going singing with linked arms to meet their deaths at the hands of British machine-gunners at Langemarck, the sense almost of
ecstasy which emanates from the literature of that time” (Howard 2001: 111). While American elites and the U.S. public were appalled by what they considered a descent into barbarism, many Europeans seemed enthused by the prospect of war. As Scott Denham points out, more than an astonishing “1.5 Million war poems were written in Germany in August 1914 alone, and the number continued to grow rapidly throughout the following months” (Denham 1992: 45). One adolescent at the time later noted that “Even today I am not ashamed to say that, overpowered by stormy enthusiasm, I fell down on my knees and thanked Heaven from an overflowing heart for granting me the good fortune of being permitted to live at this time” (Hitler 1999: 161).

The in hindsight absurd excitement with which millions of young Europeans marched into their deaths can be explained with reference to three central beliefs that characterized European political culture before 1914. First of all, most Europeans prior to WWI believed that war constituted a natural and effective instrument of foreign policy. More than that, however, war was perceived and valued as a heroic enterprise in which young soldiers could prove their manliness and become one with their nation. Even though an anti-war movement had taken root across Europe and America\(^{77}\), it proved largely ineffective\(^{78}\), and Europe remained, in Keegan’s characterization, ‘a warrior society’ or, in the words of Thomas Jefferson, an ‘arena of gladiators,’ in which ‘war seems to be the natural state of man’” (cited in Mueller 2004: 35). In Britain this image of

\(^{77}\) For the case of Britain, see Mueller (2004: 32-35).
\(^{78}\) See Mann (1999: 529).
war was equally powerful as in Germany and seems to have cast an especially strong spell on the students of Britain’s elite universities, Oxford and Cambridge, who volunteered in large numbers during the first years of the war. As Dennis Winter points out, in Britain “few men doubted that war was a fully acceptable job socially. The accepted image of war was even an honourable one” (Winter 1979: 31).

A second reason for the public wave of enthusiasm in 1914 was the generally shared expectation that the war would be over quickly. “Nearly everyone involved – leaders, soldiers, and ordinary citizens – presumed that the war would be brief and decisive, like the Franco-Prussian conflict of 1870” (Winks and Adams: 84). Most of the young people who volunteered in 1914 were “convinced they would be home, victorious, ‘before the leaves fall’” (Keegan 1999: 9). Those who believed that war would be over quickly pointed to Ivan Bloch’s *War of the Future* (1847) and Norman Angell’s *The Great Illusion* (1910). Both authors argued “that there could be no economic winners in modern war” (Tucker 1998: 80), but many Europeans misinterpreted this argument at the time and concluded that war could not last long because its negative effects on national economies would prevent prolonged conflict.

Finally, the war enthusiasm that swept through Europe in 1914 reflected the intense nationalism that dominated the political culture of all European powers at the time. The outbreak of the war could not be explained absent nationalism. Even the trigger

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that started the war was literally pulled by a radical Serbian nationalist on June 28th, 1914 when he assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir-apparent to the Habsburg throne of Austria-Hungary and his wife during their visit to Sarajevo, the capital of Serbia (Chickering 1998: 10; Tucker 2002: 79). More importantly, however, nationalism and war were intrinsically linked in the public mind. War was not primarily perceived as a means for obtaining material goods or territory but rather as a way of creating, maintaining, and reforming the general will of the nation. Nationalism, on the other hand, provided meaning to war and thereby provided the motivation and resolve for elites and the general public to perceive it as an activity that created national unity through the sacrifice of the people (Mosse 1982: 29). In sum, elites and mass publics across Europe entered WWI with the expectation that they would fight a quick and heroic war. There are probably few cases in history where such wide-spread expectations came to be frustrated as profoundly as in WWI.

*World War I: The formative event par excellence*

With respect to Western Europe, WWI probably constitutes the example of a formative event. The war defied social expectations to a much greater extent than in the United States, where most people observed the outbreak of war in Europe with discomfort from the very beginning. The difference in political culture and corresponding social expectations explains why the First World War was much more formative for European youth. Instead of being home by fall, the war had lasted four years. Over its
course “[m]ore than 68 million men had been mobilized”, most of them during their time of youth, and “of these at least 10 million had died (8 million from combat and the remainder from disease and malnutrition). Another 21 million were wounded and nearly 8 million had been taken prisoner or declared missing, and at least 6.6 million civilians perished” (Tucker 1998: 103). Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire no longer existed at the end of the war, the Russian monarchy was replaced by the communist vanguard, and the Middle East witnessed the birth of Arab nationalism.

The fact that the war imposed incredible human suffering and material costs alone, however, fails to explain why WWI was such a formative event for European youth. As John Mueller points out “World War I was not terribly unusual in its duration, destructiveness, grimness, political pointlessness, economic consequences or breadth” (Mueller 2004: 40). What made WWI so formative for a generation of European youth was that it had completely crushed all prior social expectations about the course of the war. In short, WWI was a formative event because it was preceded by raging enthusiasm for war amongst elites and the general public.

During the first year of the war, social expectations that the war would be over quickly seemed to be confirmed. The German General Staff dispatched seven armies, which totaled 1,600,000 soldiers, towards the West in order to invade France according to the infamous Schlieffen Plan. Initially, the German troops encountered little resistance and swept through Belgium and the Netherlands within days. As their advance
progressed, however, supply lines became overextended, tactical decisions drew necessary reinforcements away from the Northern sector of the front, and the Russian army had mobilized faster than anticipated, causing General Moltke to move troops to the eastern theater. In late August, the German General Staff basically abandoned the Schlieffen Plan in order to pursue French and British forces on their retreat. After the battle of Ypres in October and November of 1914, the opposing armies dug themselves into the trench system that would come to be known as the Western Front. For the next three years, both sides engaged in a war of attrition that imposed unprecedented human and material costs, yet which failed to provide to produce little, if any, territorial gains. The introduction of new weapons, such as the machine gun, in combination with the ability of the major powers to mass-produce military equipment and supplies on an unprecedented scale accounts for the industrialization and mechanization of warfare, which characterized this period. For example, the British bombardment of German positions, which marks the beginning of the Battle of the Somme in July, 1916, “had taken the efforts of 50,000 gunners (almost the number of Wellington’s army at Waterloo), working for seven days” (Keegan 1976: 238) to fire about 1,500,000 shells. However, the bombardment failed to eliminate the deep dug-outs of the German army. The British, confident of the destructive power of their artillery, left their trenches and moved across no-man’s land in long lines; only to be mowed down by German machine-gunners who had left their dug-outs and reached their positions. The first days of the Battle of the Somme proved to become the worst in British military history, and they
exemplify how the reality of war came to challenge the idea of war as a heroic battle between “warriors”. The industrialization of the war to a large extent explains why “The war was in fact hideously prolonged and infinitely more destructive than virtually all had dared imagined. Men died at the appalling rate of more than 6000 a day” (Tucker 1998: 80).

Radical Political Generation

Did WWI bring about a political generation? The evidence seems almost overwhelming that it did. First of all, one would expect that the deaths of millions of young soldiers would create the perception that young people as a distinct age group were collectively undergoing some formative experiences, especially given that their actual experience of the war diverged so radically from prior expectations. As Wohl puts it, “the war did fortify and diffuse the consciousness of a new generation and gave plausibility to the idea of its unity by creating an overwhelming sense of rupture with the past” (Wohl 1979: 222). Discussing the effects of WWI on British youth, Siegmund Neumann argues that “this generation had lost all beliefs and values of prewar times” (Neumann 1946: 112).

Not only did youth cohorts in Western Europe develop into a conscious political generation that identified with the collective trauma of the First World War, but this generation was also clearly politically radical. Similar to the United States, yet for different reasons, most young people in Western Europe considered the policies and
political culture of the old elites in power during WWI as a clear failure. In the United Kingdom, the discourse of a “lost generation” expressed outrage over the fact that British leaders had led thousands of young Britons into their certain deaths, often with little preparation and the French army had been pushed to the brink of collapse during the war.

Across much of Europe, the First World War was followed by a wave of political radicalism and the emergence of new social movements in Western Europe which attempted to bring about political change in the aftermath of the war. Communism had been established in Russia during the war and communist movements were gaining in strength across Western Europe during the inter-war period. The clearest example of a new social and political movement that emerged from WWI and clearly understood itself as a generational movement was fascism, which quickly spread across most European countries, including Italy, Germany, France, Austria, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Romania, Latvia (Payne 1995: 15), and even to some limited extent to the United Kingdom (Springhall 1986 :159). Political liberalism, communism, and fascism therefore constituted the units of the WWI Generation in Western Europe and to some a limited extent even in the United States.

The discourse which defined and represented the experience of the WWI Generation began to emerge in the years immediately after WWI. Within this discourse, three basic interpretations of the war and its lessons were expressed by the generation units that together comprised the generation as a whole. These generation units
interpreted the war radically different and consequently developed radically different visions and expectations for how to address the challenge of industrial warfare. While the first two interpretations reflected different responses by the liberal generation unit towards the problem of modern warfare, the third interpretation was essentially shared by both fascists and communists.\(^80\)

*The Lost Generation*

The generation unit that came to dominate much of post-war Britain, France, and, to a lesser degree, the United States, referred to their generation as the “Lost Generation.” The Lost Generation expressed the idea that the WWI had eliminated the best and brightest young members of society, resulting in a loss of cultural and political leadership. As discussed in chapter 3, the “Lost Generation” was a literary invention and to a large extent based on popular myths. In his discussion of the experiences of Kitchener’s volunteer army, Dennis Winter notes that, “Looking at themselves and at the men who had stayed behind, they would have been surprised to hear themselves later considered as the best men of their generation. If they had known how many would called upon to die, they would have equally have had little to do with any melancholy over a ‘lost generation’” (Winter 1979: 36). At the same time, however, the “Lost Generation” reflected the very real fact that age cohorts in their youth had been decimated by more than 25% in France, Britain, and Germany over the course of the war. Even though the

\(^{80}\) Obviously, this account overlooks a number of important differences within those interpretations for the sake of uncovering what these interpretations and discourses shared in common.
Lost Generation became most prominent in Britain, it nevertheless constituted a European-wide response to WWI. In Germany, Erich Maria Remarque’s bestseller *All Quiet on the Western Front* tells the story of “a generation of men who, even though they may have escaped the shells, were destroyed by the war” (quoted in Winter 2000: 141).

For this generation unit, therefore WWI provided the lessons that war was not some heroic battle between manly contestants, but meaningless, destructive, and ultimately self-destructive. However, as was the case in the United States, there were two different responses to how prevent international conflict, war, and its destruction in the future. On one side were those who believed in the vision that Woodrow Wilson had provided in his speech on the 14 Points while on his trip to Europe. Wilson had been greeted with wild enthusiasm in Europe (Wohl 1979: 223) and his proposal received strong support. Just like in the United States, the frustration was therefore great that the Treaty of Versailles bore little resemblance to Wilson’s original proposals. However, despite the fascist take-over in countries, such as Italy, Germany, and Austria, the Wilsonian vision, which was later reformed into progressive realism by FDR and the WWI Generation, continued to hold appeal amongst liberals across Western Europe.

The second liberal response to the problem of modern warfare was to avoid war at all cost. In some sense, the continued presence of isolationism in the United States after WWI constituted one particular expression of this mode of thought. However, in contrast to the United States, where the proponents of isolationism would eventually be losing out
against progressive realism, in Europe the advocates of pacifism clearly dominated the liberal unit that was part of the WWI Generation. Especially in Britain and France the memory of the Lost Generation greatly empowered the anti-war movement (Mueller 2004), and “‘Never Again’ was the religious resolve of the millions who had recognized in the misery of war the great scourge of man” (Neumann 1946: 113). Instead of perceiving war as an honorable, or even heroic, activity, which brought the nation together against common enemies, “the real threat and the true enemy had become war itself and the preservation of international peace became a prime national interest goal” (Mueller 2004: 51). In short, “the cult of the fallen in England and France included a reminder never to go to war again” (Mosse 1982: 38).

The Generation of 1914

However, across Europe a second major set of interpretations of the war and its meaning for the future of international politics emerged. In contrast to the lessons learned by most liberals, that war had to be avoided at all cost, fascist and communist units of the WWI Generation drew the same conclusion, albeit different underlying logics, namely that war was a constant and, in some sense even positive, feature of political life. Radicals on both the extreme right and left responded to the trauma of WWI by re-casting political life itself as a condition of constant warfare.

On the political right, members of the WWI Generation represented themselves as a generation of warriors who was essentially “re-born” during the experience of WWI.
The most important representative of this generation unit was, of course, Ernst Jünger. In *Storm of Steel* (1929), he described his experiences in the following way: “Hardened as scarcely another generation ever was in fire and flame, we could go into life as tough as the anvil; into friendship, love, politics, professions, into all that destiny had in store. It is not every generation that is so favoured” (Jünger 1929: 316). For Jünger, WWI had not destroyed the heroic image of war. Quite contrary, for him a soldier “fights, above all, for the joy he finds in fighting”, and Jünger’s greatest accomplishment probably consisted in being able to adapt “the ‘heroic’ interpretation of combat against single opponents for a higher cause […] to the new realities of modern trench warfare” (Denham 1992: 119).

Despite the fact that “Jünger disdained National Socialism after the war”, his representation of war and “the image that he helped evoke of a self annihilated and re-created in violence, hatred, and desire rather than in reason and generosity” (Smith 2000: 143) provided the intellectual stimulus and rhetorical vocabulary for the fascist youth movement, and the paramilitary Freikorps, which emerged in Germany in the aftermath of WWI.

However, fascism was not the only generation unit that essentially adopted the idea that WWI signaled that war and conflict were the “normal” state of affairs in international politics. Despite significant differences in their political ideologies, communism shared many beliefs and ideas with fascism, though often for different reasons. Most importantly however with respect to the challenge of modern warfare,
communists also adapted a worldview in which international politics was characterized by constant conflict. The key text in this regard is obviously Lenin’s (1939) *Imperialism*, originally written in 1916:

The tens of millions of dead and maimed left by the war—a war for the purpose of deciding whether the British or German group of financial marauders is to receive the lion’s share—and the two “peace treaties,” mentioned above, open the eyes of the millions and tens of millions of people who are downtrodden, oppressed, deceived and duped by the bourgeoisie with unprecedented rapidity. Thus, out of the universal ruin caused by the war a world-wide revolutionary crisis is arising, which in spite of the protracted and difficult stages it may have to pass, cannot in any other way than in a proletarian revolution and its victory (Lenin 1939: 11).

The prevalence of the idea of constant warfare explains why Modris Eksteins, for example, states that “[f]or many who experienced the war but especially for that generation that came to maturity during it or immediately after, the war did not end in November 1918” (Eksteins 2000: 341).

*Generational Change, World War II, and the Construction of the “West”*

According to my theoretical framework, the core members of the WWI Generation comprised those age cohorts who were in their years of youth (18-25) over the course of the First World War. Furthermore, I have defined the age of political maturity to be between 35 and 65 years. In the case of the generation of 1914, the earliest date at which core members reached the age of political maturity was 1924. By 1941, the last core members passed that threshold. Generational change should have therefore taken place between 1929 and 1941, though one would expect that the bulk of this generation entered political maturity between 1933 and 1937.
The country where generational change was most apparent was clearly Germany. Indeed, if the WWI Generation in the United States constitutes the hardest case for my theory, then the case of Germany certainly constitutes the easiest case for the theory of political generations. Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party, which had grown out of the fascist movement that had developed in Germany after WWI, came to power in Germany in 1933. Virtually all Nazis who replaced the traditional elite from key positions in Germany at the time had experienced WWI during their formative years, as can be discerned from their birth years: Hitler (1889-1945), Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945), Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945), Rudolf Heß (1894-1987), Hermann Göring (1893-1945), Joachim von Ribbentrop (1893-1946), Baldur von Schirach (1907-1974). A comparison of the composition of the German Reichstag between 1924 and 1938 shows that

The average Nazi leader belonged to the generation which was born at the turn of the century. He was twenty at some time during the First World War, was still in his twenties when the Nazi struggle for power began, and was in his thirties when he reached the highest steps on the political ladder. Less than 10 per cent in the group were over fifty years of age when the party came into power, and two-thirds were under forty. The Nazi appeal to youth and the ‘war generation’ against the petrification of public life under the ‘system’ was reflected in the youthfulness of its leading members” (Doblin and Pohly 1945:42)

Once Mussolini and Hitler had had taken over power in Italy in 1925 and Germany in 1933, respectively, the fascist movement began to institutionalize a political culture that had directly developed out of the experiences of the First World War. The institutionalization of fascist political culture, which was based on the belief that violence
and war constitute fundamental aspects of social and political life, explains why German and Italian foreign policy changed towards aggressive expansionism. Through the generational change that brought to power the WWI Generation in Western Europe, “the radical right moved from the periphery to the centre of the political arena”, and the fact the fascist “community ideal was activated but without significant modification” (Mosse 1982: 38) supports the persistence hypothesis that the political orientations of the WWI Generation had indeed stabilized during the time of its inception.

While the fascist units of the WWI Generation came to dominate Germany and Italy, the liberal unit of the WWI Generation came to dominate the United States (see Chapter 3), the United Kingdom, and France. The image of war in British and French society changed dramatically during the 1920s and 1930s, and decision-makers faced strong societal constraints against any policies that would prepare the country for another war (Mueller 2004). While the liberal generation unit of the WWI Generation in Western Europe contained supporters of Wilson’s vision for an international order based on progressive principles, such as Anthony Eden, who had actively fought during the Great War but urged rearmament against the rising threat of Nazi Germany, it was clearly dominated by those who urged to avoid war at all costs. The generation unit that came to power in France and Britain shared an almost radical conviction that they should never again be involved in a continental war in Europe.
The dominance of appeasement explains why Britain gave up its traditional role of great power balancer in the interwar years, why it was militarily unprepared for another war with Germany, and why it took so long for Britain to react to German expansionism. John Mearsheimer argues that in Britain “a substantial portion of the electorate believed by the late 1920s that World War I had been a tragic mistake and that those who argued for the necessity of thinking seriously about and preparing for another war would ultimately bring one about” (Mearsheimer 1988: 20). Increases in “military spending [was] extremely unpopular among the general public and, therefore, politically unfeasible” (Schweller 2006: 71). Even after Nazi regime began to tighten its grip on power and rearm Germany’s military, British attitudes towards war did not change.

According to Randy Schweller, “prior to Nazi Germany’s remilitarization of the Rhineland on March 7, 1936, British elite fragmentation was surprisingly accompanied by an overwhelming consensus among those same elites and the public for appeasement” (Schweller 2006: 72).

As Elizabeth Kier (1996) has shown, French military doctrine also shifted during the interwar years from being offensive in the 1920s to defensive in the 1930s, despite the fact that this left the country badly prepared for the assault by Nazi Germany. She argues that the shift in military doctrine can be explained with reference to the French military’s culture which constrained decision-making on doctrinal choices. In Kier’s account, the formative experiences of World War I were merely used ex post facto to legitimate those doctrinal choices: “Once this defensive orientation had been chosen, history began to be
read and used in a particular way to justify or bolster the chosen policy or institution” (Kier 1996: 200). In contrast to Kier, however, I argue that the causal arrow points the other way. Instead of retro-fashioning history in order to legitimate a defensive policy, French policy actually did shift because of the lessons that had been learned by the members of the WWI Generation in France. And even if the success of a defensive strategy in the 1930s was partly the result of using French collective memories of the Great War as a rhetorical tool to persuade the French public, the fact that it worked suggests that these memories resonated strongly with French policy makers and the general public, once the WWI Generation had started to occupy positions of power in the 1930s. The generational change that brought the WWI Generation to power would also explain why “the lessons of World War I took on heroic proportions” and why “it became increasingly difficult to remember that the Great War’s defence lessons were not the only ones available or supported” (Kier 1996: 199) during the early 1930s.

In contrast to Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, the foreign policies of Britain and France therefore turned almost radically “dovish”, which constituted a clear break especially with Britain’s past practices. As Randy Schweller notes, “Britain’s policy of appeasement (accompanied by its commitment to ‘peaceful change,’ ‘limited liability,’ diplomacy, disarmament, and unilateral arms limitation under the aegis of the Ten Years’ Rule of 1919) prior to World War II is all the more puzzling because it was so distinctly different from the balance-of-power doctrine Britain had adhered to prior to 1914” (Schweller 2006: 70). Britain tried to avoid another military involvement in continental
Europe almost at any price. Consequently, obvious signs that Hitler was bent on aggression were ignored and “Hitler was portrayed as a mere pan-German who could be satisfied by negotiated settlements that put Germans living in other countries back in Germany” (Schweller 2006, 74). Thus, despite the fact that the consensus among British elites and the public had fractured after the Rhineland crisis, appeasement became Britain’s primary foreign policy strategy with respect to Nazi Germany until the invasion of Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1939.

From a generational perspective, the outbreak of the Second World War can therefore be explained as a result of the coming to power of the WWI Generation and the formative experiences and lessons its members had taken away from their youth. As Wohl points out, “the fact remains that both the policy of appeasement supported by the Left in England and the policy of aggressive expansion adopted by Fascist Germany and Italy were expressions, in their own ways, of the generation of 1914” (Wohl 1979: 234). And Paul Fussel, in his seminal *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), even goes one step further and argues that the formative experiences of the WWI Generation explain *how* the war was fought and what kind of military doctrines and tactics were adopted as a result, which had significant, and sometimes terrible, repercussions for the course and outcome of the war:

The conduct of the Second War on “the Western Front” was influenced everywhere by memories of the deadly frontal assaulting of the Great War, and it could be said that the cautious use of infantry only after elaborate air and artillery bombardments and reliance ironically, permitted behind the German border the murder of about a million more Jews. On the other hand, Hitler’s suspicion of maneuver and distrust of tactical innovations
have been traced to the “trench perspective” he picked up a quarter-century earlier, the view that where you found yourself emplaced, there you had to stay. When Hitler did determine on bold maneuver, as in the Ardennes counterattack of December, 1944, he liked to imitate successful Germany tactics of the Great War, in this case the attack of March, 1918, an offensive aimed at Amiens and at the junction between the British and the French; the Ardennes offensive was aimed at Antwerp and the junction between British and Americans. As Jacques Nobecourt has said, “Even the Gotha raids on Paris and the firing of ‘Big Bertha’ were reproduced in the form of the VI and V2 attacks on Antwerp, London, and Brussels.” One of Hitler’s generals confirms Nobecourt’s point. “When the documents of the this period are carefully studied,” says Blumentritt, “it seems likely that Hitler will be seen to have been thinking in terms of the great March offensive of 1918 in the First World War.” (Fussel 1975: 317).

In short, it seems clear that the coming to power of the WWI Generation, and the conflict amongst the different generation units that composed it, explains the constellation of an aggressive Fascist coalition and the unpreparedness of Europe’s two liberal great powers, Britain and France and, by extension, the outbreak of World War II. It is for this reason that some have suggested the WWI and WWII actually constituted the two parts of “a single continuing Great War running through the whole middle of the twentieth century” (Fussel 1975: 317).

*The Construction of the “West” and the Birth of “Transatlantica”*

Even though the members of the WWI Generation ended up going to war against one another, the formative experience of WWI nevertheless provided them with a shared formative experience and consequently a shared, even though conflict-prone, political culture. One somewhat amusing example of how this shared history could overcome differences, even between soon-to-be mortal enemies, is the account of the time “when
Eden dined with Hitler just before the Second World War and both men discovered that they had been on opposite sides in the same section of front at Vieller Bretonneux, axis of the 1918 actions. There followed a conversation and exchange of trench sketch maps on the back of menus which Eden valued to his death” (Winter 1979: 21).

More importantly, however, despite the fact that large parts of Western Europe came to be dominated by fascism and communism from the early 1930s until the end of World War II, liberal members of the WWI Generation at the same time laid the foundations for what would eventually turn into the transatlantic security community, and what we nowadays call the “West,” the notion that the states and societies of Western Europe and North America constitute part of a larger political culture based on liberal and progressive values. Liberal members of the WWI Generation in Western Germany were crucial in creating a discourse about the “West” that incorporated Western Germany and therefore provided the basis for cooperation and for further political integration of Western Europe and the United States into a transatlantic security community.

As Patrick Jackson has shown, it is difficult to explain the particular reconstruction policies of the Allied powers after 1945, nor its success in incorporating Western Germany into a stable post-war order without reference to the discursive efforts of American and German intellectuals and elites to portray the United States and Western Europe, including Germany, as part of a larger “Western civilization” (Jackson 2006).

81 As Jackson (2006) has shown, the notions of the “West” or “Western Civilization” obviously reach much further back in history.
German elites played a crucial role in establishing a discourse that constructed Western Germany as part of “Western Civilization” and thereby created the basis for Allied reconstruction efforts, French-German cooperation, and an international post-war order (Jackson 2006). As Jackson correctly points out, realists cannot explain why this course of action, rather than other possible paths to cooperation were taken (Jackson 2006: 14).

Essentially all of the main “protagonists” in Jackson’s accounts of the post-war period were members of the WWI Generation. While Adenauer (1876-1967) was certainly too old to be considered one of the “core members” of the WWI Generation, it nevertheless seems clear that the war constituted a formative experience for him and shaped his political worldview for the remainder of his life. Kurt Schumacher (1895-1952), Adenauer’s main competitor from the SPD was 19 years old in 1914 and Jacob Kaiser (1888-1961), who unsuccessfully opposed Adenauer’s policy of “Westbindung” and instead proposed a neutral, but unified Germany, was 26 years old when WWI broke out. With respect to France, Jean Monnet (1888-1979) and Robert Schuman (1886-1963), by many considered to be two of the prime architects and champions of European integration, were clearly members of the WWI Generation and Andre Francois-Poncet (1887-1978), who served as the high commissioner to Western Germany after from 1949-1955, not only served actively during the Great War but also was the French ambassador to the Weimar Republic and a delegate to the League of Nations.

82 Since I have already discussed the WWI Generation in the United States in detail in chapter 3, I focus here on the European leaders discussed in Jackson’s account.
While the WWI Generation in the United States was therefore the main driving force behind the construction of an international system based on progressive principles inspired by Wilson and reformed by FDR, Truman, and Eisenhower (see chapter 3), it nevertheless seems doubtful that their efforts at creating a stable post-war order and to balance against the perceived Soviet threat would have been successful without the support of their liberal peers in Western Europe. The founding of the Council of Europe and the creation of NATO in 1949, as well as, the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, constitute further evidence to support the hypothesis that the WWI Generation played a crucial role in the establishment of Western international system in which cooperation and coordination problems could be solved through a set of international institutions and organizations based on liberal, progressive principles. Adenauer’s efforts to include the BRD in the alliance paid off in 1955, when Western Germany joined NATO and thereby completed an alliance based on the principle of collective security that would provide the basis for further political and military integration of the West.
Case-Study II: The Second World War and a Silent Generation in the West

In terms of material destruction, number of casualties, and geographical area affected, the Second World War made World War I look like a minor conflagration. Russia alone suffered more than 20 Million casualties. American losses were significantly higher than during World War I. The war in Asia was fought with savage brutality on both sides and ended with the dropping of two nuclear weapons on Japan. Finally, the Holocaust and the attempted destruction of Jews on hands of the Nazi regime made the Second World War not only the biggest military conflict in history but also a time of genocide. If the emergence of political generations would solely depend on the level of physical destruction that “events” bring about, then the Second World War should have clearly resulted in the emergence of a political generation with a strong sense of generational consciousness.

However, while the worldviews of cohorts in their youth during WWII were certainly formed by their experience of global war and economic hardship during the Great Depression, the World War II Generation did not develop into a radical political generation and even though its members seemed to have shared a sense of generational consciousness, it was often not publicly articulated. The World War II Generation in the West was clearly a traditional political generation.
I want to suggest three main reasons for why the WWII Generation did not turn politically radical. First, members of this generation who belonged to one of the Allied nations, such as the United States, the U.K., and the Soviet Union perceived the response of their elites to be largely successful. The war had resulted in terrible human suffering, yet in contrast to WWI, the perception was that the war had been worth it. It had been a total war, but this time around it had also resulted in a total defeat of expansionist Germany, something that made the Second World War fundamentally different from the First.

Based on the logic of this argument, one would assume that members of the WWII Generation who belonged to the Axis powers would have interpreted the actions of their elites and old generation as failures and therefore develop into a radical political generation. This should have been especially the case in Germany where disillusionment with the war had begun to increase dramatically after 1941. However, the occupation of Germany by the Allied forces and the policies of de-nazification pre-empted this generational conflict and the emergence of a more radical WWII generation in Germany. The political culture of the Nazi regime and the WWI Generation was removed by external force and replaced with liberal members of the WWI Generation.

The third reason for why the WWII Generation in the West did not turn into a radical political generation can be found in the dynamics between radical and traditional political generations. As stated in the theory chapter, radical and traditional political
generations are assumed to alternate across time. Radical generations are usually followed by traditional generations, since radical generations satisfy the “demand” for political change and their radicalism creates exhaustion from political action in the next political generation. This seems to have been the most important factor in explaining why the generation of WWII turned out to be a traditional, rather than radical, political generation and it seemed to have been at work in all Western nations during and after WWII. No matter if one looks at Germany, France, Italy, or the U.K., young people were tired of political radicalism and its consequences. Instead most members of this generation focused their efforts on economic reconstruction.

Despite the fact that it did not turn politically radical, the WWII Generation in the U.S. and Western Europe reproduced the civilizational identity of the “West” which resulted in a deeper integration of the political cultures of the United States and Western Europe. WWII had confirmed the policies of progressive realism implemented by FDR, Truman, and later Eisenhower, and the members of the WWII Generation in Western Europe would come to embrace and further reproduce progressive liberalism as the central political ideology of the West.

**Prior Political Culture**

In stark contrast to the First World War, the outbreak of WWII did not come as a large surprise to anyone on either side of the Atlantic. Tensions had been rising in Europe throughout the 1930s and after the Nazi take-over of power in Germany in 1933 it
quickly became apparent that Hitler was intending to change the balance of power in Europe and therefore the international system more generally. Even though some hoped that Hitler could be appeased in Munich in 1938 these hopes quickly turned out to be illusionary. Communism had been firmly established in Russia by the late 1930s and found many supporters across Europe and even in the United States.

Youth cohorts who were to undergo their formative years during the Second World War, consequently grew up in a time when the political culture of Western Europe and, to a lesser degree the United States, was characterized by the competition between liberalism, fascism, and communism; three political ideologies that constituted the generational units comprising the WWI Generation. Social expectations across the Atlantic were therefore that conflict was an almost permanent feature of international and domestic politics and that another great power war was not only possible, but likely. In addition, the First World War had shown the destructive potential of industrialized warfare and therefore destroyed the illusion that modern great power wars could be fought quickly and without significant material and human losses.

As I have argued in the theory chapter, the extent with which events come to be formative for cohorts in their youth depends partly on the degree with which those events defy prior social expectations emanating from the prevalent political culture. Given the political culture and social expectations about the likelihood and potential destructiveness of great power war, the outbreak of WWII in 1939 was certainly much less surprising and
shocking than the outbreak of WWI. We would therefore expect that WWII had less of a formative impact on European and American youth than WWI. The generational consciousness of these cohorts should therefore be less pronounced than for the preceding WWI Generation. Before I examine these hypotheses in more detail, let me quickly discuss World War II as a formative event.

*Formative Event: World War II*

Despite the fact that World War II did not defy social expectations with the same intensity as World War I, it seems hardly questionable that the conflict that began to envelop much of the globe in 1939 had formative impact on youth cohorts in Europe and the United States. The destruction caused by the war by far exceeded the losses of WWI. While a lot of the fighting during World War I remained relatively confined to the trenches of the Western front, the Second World War was characterized by the rapid movement of large mechanized forces and large-scale aerial bombing raids. More important than the geographical areas affected directly by the war, however, was the fact that during WWII the civilian populations of most states involved in the conflict were more fully mobilized for supporting the war effort than ever before. As a result, civilian population centers became military targets, which became most apparent, for example, in the siege of Leningrad or the bombing raids on Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, which caused enormous numbers of casualties among the civilian population and resulted in unprecedented material destruction of urban infrastructure. The most appalling civilian
losses, however, clearly took place at the Eastern front, where German troops pursued a scorched earth policy during their advance through Russia. The Red Army, in turn, dispelled millions of Eastern Europeans and Germans from their former homes on their march to Berlin. Even though, the political culture of Western Europe prior to World War II had already generated social expectations that war and conflict were likely to dominate European politics for some the time, the nature of “total war,” the sheer scale of physical destruction and human suffering clearly suggest that the Second World War directly affected the lives of most youth in the United States and Western Europe.

Just like in the case of the WWI Generation, the formative impact of the Second World War depended crucially on how the war ended. Whereas the failure of Wilson’s League of Nations and the harsh nature of the Treaty of Versailles created a the impression amongst youth cohorts that the Allied Powers had “won the war, but lost the peace” (Wohl 1979: 234), the total defeat of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, coupled with the sustained efforts of the Allies, most importantly the United States, to re-construct a stable international postwar order after 1945 on the basis of progressive realism had the effect that the Second World War was interpreted differently than WWI.

* A Traditional Political Generation

It seems clear that the experience of WWII shaped the worldviews of youth cohorts and resulted in the emergence of a political generation, whose members were conscious of the fact that they occupied a particular and significant place in history, in
both the United States and Western Europe. The core members of this generation were
18-25 years old during the period 1939-1945 and therefore born between 1914 and 1927.
While this generation comprised all U.S. president from JFK until George H.W. Bush, in
Western Europe, prominent members of this generation included, for example, Margaret
Thatcher, Helmut Kohl, Helmut Schmidt, Willy Brandt, Juergen Habermas, Michel
Foucault, Valery Giscard d’Estaing, and Francois Mitterand. Even though the evidence is
clearly not as strong as in the case of the WWI Generation or the Sixties Generation that
would follow them, there are nevertheless indicators for the presence of a sense of
generational consciousness that suggest that the WWII Generation was indeed a political
generation.

During our interview, Mr. Genscher confirmed that the experience of the war and
the defeat of Nazi Germany had created a sense of generational belonging for himself and
for his peers. Mr. Genscher refused to label himself as a member of the “WWII
Generation” and preferred to identify himself with the “Luftwaffenhelfer Generation.”
The “Luftwaffenhelfer Generation” consisted of young Germans who were called up for
duty during the final years of the war, oftentimes to assist in the operation of anti-aircraft
guns trying to defend German cities against Allied bombing raids. The term
“Luftwaffenhelfer Generation” therefore identifies German cohorts who had been too
young to be fully socialized by the Nazis and who, due to their young age, were not
considered culpable for the crimes committed under the regime of Adolf Hitler. The term
that is most often used to contrast these cohorts with even younger cohorts that comprised
the WWII Generation is the label “Hitler Jugend Generation” (Hitler Youth Generation). The Hitler Youth Generation comprised those cohorts who had been old enough to be potentially active members of the Nazi Party’s youth organization and who had therefore not only been fully socialized under Nazi rule, but who had also been old enough to be held fully responsible.

Besides Mr. Genscher, other prominent members of the “Luftwaffenhelfer Generation” in Germany were Juergen Habermas, Niklas Luhmann, Pope Benedict XVI, and the Nobel laureate in literature Guenther Grass. Most importantly, for present purposes is that Mr. Genscher clearly expressed signs of generational consciousness and that he connected this sense of generational belonging to his formative years during World War II. In addition, Mr. Genscher also associated the label of “Luftwaffenhelfer Generation” with a set formative memories lessons, namely that the total defeat of Germany during the Second World War and that Germany should never go to war again. His statements therefore confirm the hypothesis that World War II did create a sense of generational consciousness and that the experience of the war had a formative impact on the worldview of German youth cohorts.

Despite the fact that the Second World War certainly had a formative impact on the worldviews of a generation of young people in Western Europe and the United State, the evidence strongly suggests that these cohorts constituted a traditional political
generation, which was not interested in changing the political culture that had been put in place by the World War I Generation. While the Second World War did result in the emergence of a generational consciousness, this sense of generational belonging was certainly not as strong as for the case of the WWI Generation and no clear public generational discourse emerged after the war, which would constitute an indicator for the emergence of a radical political generation. Richard Vinen (2007: 38), for example, argues that the “World War did not produce a single clear expression of generational belonging in France.” The only exception to this trend was the United States. As already discussed in Chapter 3, the generation of youths growing up during the Second World War certainly exhibited a sense of generational consciousness, as evidenced most clearly in John F. Kennedy’s inaugural speech of 1961 and most systematically elaborated by Thomas Brokaw in his work on the “Greatest Generation.” Yet, even the public discourse about the “Greatest Generation” would only fully emerge almost fifty years after the end of World War II.

In addition, in most Western states after World War II there is little evidence, if any, of the emergence of new youth movements or large-scale protests by young people, which constitutes another important indicator for the emergence of a radical political generation. Quite the contrary, many scholarly works on the post-war period describe a lack of political activism in most Western states that was bordering on apathy. In the United State and across Western Europe most young people who had experienced the deprivations of WWII were focused primarily on economic and material matters;
rebuilding their destroyed homes, going to college on the G.I. bill, raising families
(Lyons 1996:37-41). They were seemingly fed up with and exhausted from the political
and ideological struggles that had preceded and caused the war. A British youngster, in
London’s East End in the 1950s describes his level of political interest and activism as
follows:

It was just everybody working at the Penal Colony down the road, coming home, up the
pub for a quick pint, and the home to watch the telly. Trade unionism and politics were
never talked about. It was the 60-year-olds, the grandparents, who used to try and talk
socialism to us. So I grew up with the idea that socialism was a lot of old people going on
about the past. It had nothing to do with us youngster (Cohen 1986:254)

Seen from a transnational perspective, the Generation of WWII was therefore
clearly a traditional political generation, which supports my hypothesis that radical
political generations are usually followed by more traditional generations that re-produce,
rather than fundamentally challenge the political culture established by the preceding
generation. As stated in the theory chapter, my hypothesis concerning the alternation
between radical and traditional generations is based on the idea that political generations
that follow radical generations will be less likely to be motivated to push for political
change since they grew up while their radical predecessors were implementing their own
political culture to change the political order, thereby making a push for political change
appear to be unnecessary.

The WWII Generation seems to fit this hypothesis almost perfectly. Its members
were born during WWI, they spend their childhood in the tumultuous inter-war years
which were marked by economic crisis, as well as, the rise and competition of radical social movements, and their most formative years were marked by global war, the rise of totalitarian states, and genocide. It therefore comes as no surprise that most members of the WWII Generation were tired and exhausted of political radicalism. Instead of trying to change the world, this generation seemed mostly focused on re-building it. Instead of becoming politically active in the public sphere, many members of the WWII Generation turned “inward” and spend their energy and efforts on economic issues.

In addition, the case of the WWII Generation also confirms, though only to some extent, the hypothesis that political generations turn politically traditional if their members perceive the response of the old elite in confronting challenges to society successfully. World War II posed the problem of industrial warfare, just like World War I had done a generation earlier. Yet, while WWI certainly caused horrific damage, it paled in comparison to the “total war” that was engulfing the world starting in 1939. In addition, the invention and first use of the nuclear bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki increased the destructive potential of modern warfare even more. As a consequence, the lesson that war was part of the “normal” life of nations in the international system, which had been one of the core beliefs of both fascist and communist generation units belonging to the WWI Generation became untenable to many West European youths.

While the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany was portrayed and perceived as a success of communist elites in Russia, thereby preserving communism as credible
political ideology, fascism as a generation unit of the WWI Generation had effectively been eliminated as a socially viable alternative. The liberal wing supporting appeasement and a policy of pacifism had also clearly failed to contain the problem of violence in European and international politics and it therefore became equally de-legitimized. The question obviously arises whether this same scenario would have occurred had the Allies lost the war against fascist Germany. But in the actual case of World War II, the total defeat of the fascist Germany and the Axis powers seems to have clearly confirmed the legitimacy of the “Wilsonian” wing of the liberal generation unit and, to some extent, communist elites who had been in power during the war.

However, the situation was obviously different for youth cohorts in the Axis powers. Fascism and with it, the elites who had belonged to the WWI Generation had obviously failed to address the challenges of the war. The fascist powers and Imperial Japan not only had to admit total defeat, but many of the old elite were tried for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. In short, the legitimacy of the old generation in power in the Axis powers had been completely destroyed, which, according to my theoretical framework, should have resulted in the emergence of a new and radical political generation in the defeated states. Yet, there is hardly any evidence that members of the WWII Generation turned politically radical in any of the defeated nations.

There seem to be three major reasons for why the experience, and the total defeat, of World War II did not result in the emergence of a radical political generation in
Germany, Italy, and other defeated Western nations. Even though the conditions were certainly different in many of the Axis powers, I will focus here on Germany, given that it was the most extreme case and most important politically for the post-war order. First, and most importantly, the Allies replaced members of the Nazi elites by force from positions of power at the level of state and society and engaged in extensive measures to de-legitimize fascism as political ideology. While this process of de-nazification failed to remove a great number of Nazi sympathizers from positions in power, especially at institutions of higher education or even at the German foreign ministry, it nevertheless managed to ensure that fascism was essentially removed as a political force in Western Germany and most of Western Europe.

A second, and related, reason for why the losing nations, and most prominently, Germany did not witness the emergence of a radical political generation is that defining oneself with the WWII Generation immediately identified oneself with the crimes of the Nazi regime, most importantly the Holocaust. In contrast to the First World War, Germany was not only forced to surrender unconditional and accept the responsibility for the war, but also to accept responsibility for the genocide of millions of Jews and the mass extermination of socialists, communists, gypsies, homosexuals, and other groups deemed a threat to the Nazi regime. In short, Germany and the other Axis powers were not only guilty of a war of aggression, but of mass murder, which explains why most

\[84\] Both Dr. Zöpel and Dr. Volmer explicitly confirmed that the German foreign ministry was staffed by former members of the NSDAP or Nazi sympathizers.
fascist members of the WWII Generation remained silent about the war and their individual role and responsibility in it. To some extent, this even might explain the lack of a clearly articulated generational consciousness in France due to the collaboration of the Vichy regime with the Nazis.

In any case, the occupation of Western Europe by Allied forces and their efforts at political re-education made a generational revolt against the WWII Generation obsolete, especially in Western Germany. However, it also created the sense in the former Axis powers that the legacy of the WWII Generation and the crimes committed under fascist rule had not been dealt with properly, which would later come to constitute one of the primary causes for the emergence of the Sixties Generation in Western Germany.

The final reason for why the WWII Generation developed into a traditional political generation was that, even during the Nazi regime, many Germans had remained strong supporters of liberalism and they perceived the war as a confirmation of their established political beliefs and became strongly committed to the collective identity of the “West.” During our interview, Hans-Dietrich Genscher recounted that he and most of his peers after the end of the war were confronted by two possible scenarios for the future of Germany. The first scenario would entail an autonomous and neutral, but unified Germany, as proposed, for example, by Jacob Kaiser. The second scenario was a divided Germany, with Western Germany deeply integrated with the liberal West. This was
essentially the basic idea underlying Konrad Adenauer’s policy of “Westbindung,” or Western integration.

During the interview, Mr. Genscher clearly supported Adenauer’s policy of Westbindung and repeatedly stated that it was clear to him and his peers this was the only acceptable course of action, even though it entailed the division of Germany into a Western and Eastern state. For this reason, he also considered it paramount in later years that the West Germany would join NATO. Neutrality was, according to Mr. Genscher, not an option for the BRD. Coming from Mr. Genscher, who grew up in and maintained strong emotional ties to his hometown Halle in the Eastern part of Germany, this constitutes a strong empirical indicator for the hypothesis that members of the liberal generation unit in Germany perceived the result of WWII as a confirmation of the superiority of liberalism over totalitarian regimes and explains why members of the WWII Generation that were to govern post-war Germany during most of the Cold War would come to constitute the probably most loyal allies that the United States ever had on this side of the Atlantic.

**Generational Change and Political Stability**

The members of the WWII Generation started to enter positions of political power at the level of state and society between 1949 and 1962 and its core members started to
leave those positions between 1979 and 1990.\textsuperscript{85} As a traditional political generation, the WWII Generation in the West did not bring about change in Western political culture or changes in the international system. However, that does not mean at all that the WWII Generation did not have important political effects. Instead, the WWII Generation proved crucial for reproducing and institutionalizing the post-war order designed and created by its predecessors, the WWI Generation.

With fascism eliminated and communism pushed to the fringe in Western Europe by the Western Allies in response to the policies of the Soviet Union, the liberal generation unit of the WWII Generation embraced and reproduced the discourse of the “West” and the political culture of progressive liberalism in the post-war period, which resulted in a significant level of political integration and isomorphism. As Holger Nehring remarks, this “[c]onvergence could also be seen at the level of political systems. A specific kind of consensual model of democracy emerged, based on the negotiation of conflicts and on widely held notions about central features of the post-war societies, such as the welfare state” (Nehring 2007: 60). However, more importantly, the coming to power of the WWII Generation resulted in the support for and the further creation of Western and international organizations based on the blue-print provided by the progressive realists of the WWI Generation. In doing so, the WWII Generation firmly

\textsuperscript{85} These numbers are based on the assumption that most individuals occupy positions of power in state and society between the ages of 35 and 65. Again, those age boundaries are only rough estimates.
anchored the states and societies of the United States and Western Europe into the transatlantic community and reified the notion that they were part of a larger “West.”

During the reign of the WWII Generation, European and Western political integration proceeded at a rapid pace. The BRD had joined NATO in 1955 and the European Coal and Steel Community was created in 1951. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was established in 1973 and further deepened the political and military integration of the West. The Treaty of Rome (1957) established the European Economic Community which, after a period of rapid enlargement between 1973 and 1990, created the basis for the Treaty of Maastricht (1993) and the creation of the European Union.

The foreign policy of the BRD during this time was characterized by a strong focus on transatlantic cooperation and European integration. Even though the “Ostpolitik” of Willy Brandt and his effort to begin the process of reconciliation and cooperation with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union was not necessarily received with enthusiasm amongst the Western allies, even during the administration of Brandt, one of the primary goals of West German foreign policy was to avoid any conflicts or confrontation with the United States. During our interview, Dr. Zöpel, for example, stated that Brandt and the SPD “were not interested in any conflict with the United States.” And even though Charles De Gaulle, who was a member of the WWI Generation, was more than hesitant to fully integrate France into NATO, France nevertheless played a crucial
role in further deepening European integration and thereby the further reproduction of the West. In sum, the WWII Generation in the United States and Western Europe had adopted and institutionalized a political culture based on the principles of liberal progressivism. As a result, the notion that the states of Western Europe and the United States constituted members of one and the same transatlantic/Western community became the new “normal” not only for policy makers, but also for the general public and Western societies at large. This outcome is obviously especially impressive given that many of these states had been fighting each other very recently in two world wars. There has probably never been, and there never might be again, a generation of Western Europeans that was as committed to the transatlantic relationship with the United States as was the WWII Generation.
Case-Study III: How to Change the World - The Sixties Generation and the Creation of Global Civil Society

Over the last decade, a number of IR scholars have called for a shift in focus from the study of international relations, defined as the interaction of states in an anarchy environment, to the study of global governance (Kaldor 2003). The argument for studying global governance is based on the claim that the discipline of IR has neglected important actors and process that determine outcomes in global politics from consideration by restricting its analytical focus to the role and interaction of states. However, the increasing interest in the role of NGOs, transnational networks, and decentralized forms of global governance amongst IR scholars was not merely the result of a shift in analytical perspective that all of a sudden revealed a hitherto unnoticed range of actors, but it was motivated by a rather dramatic increase in the number of NGOs and other transnational actors that began in the late 1970s and early 1980s and which has not abated since (see Figure 4.1 below).
The rapid increase in the number of non-state actors in global politics qualifies as an instance of change at the level of the international system. Even though non-state actors existed prior to the 1970s, the increase in number of organizations, their geographical spread, and the ever broadening range of tasks and functions that they

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86 Based on data from the *Yearbook of International Organizations*, published by the Union of International Associations. Reports for 1909-2012 are available at [http://ybionline.nl.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/s/or/en/v5](http://ybionline.nl.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/s/or/en/v5) Retrieved on 11/12/2012.
perform, made non-state actors an important source of agency in international politics for the first time in history.

While there has been a lot research on the role of non-state actors, their efficacy or level of accountability and their interaction with other actors in the system, there are few explanations for why non-state actors and especially NGOs increased at such a rapid pace after 1980. The standard explanation seems to be that the rise in the number of NGOs and the emergence of global civil society were the result of the civil rights and environmental movements that came out of the 1960s and 1970s. However, while this seems to be true almost by definition, it only raises the question of what caused all of those movements to spring up predominantly in the West in the first place.

In the following case-study I show that the emergence of global civil society was caused by the “Sixties Generation” whose members externalized and institutionalized their protest culture and the idea that liberal states need to be held accountable from “below.” The Sixties Generation was clearly one of the most radical political generations in the 20th century with a very strongly articulated generational consciousness. In many ways, the Sixties Generation is the archetype of a radical political generation. Moreover, the Sixties Generation was the first truly transnational, and some argue even global (Edmunds and Turner 2005), political generation in the West.

87 Following Delli Carpini (1986:15/16), I define the period of the sixties roughly as the period between 1963 and 1974. The core members of the Sixties Generation, who experienced the sixties during the age of youth (18-25 years), therefore include age cohorts born between 1938 and 1956.
Whereas different generation units came to dominate different Western states once the WWI Generation came to power in the 1930s and 1940s, the Sixties Generation was transnational in so far as the generation was no longer divided along national lines, but along the cleavages created by generational units, primarily on the left and right.

I offer two major reasons for the transnational character of the Sixties Generation. As several generation scholars have pointed out, changes in communications technology after WWII, especially the invention of television, allowed formative events to be experienced by an ever increasing number of people around the world (Edmunds and Turner 2005: 566). For example, in the United States, during the period between “1950 and 1970 the number of television states increased 500 percent, while the percentage of households with TV sets jumped from 10 percent to almost 100 percent” (Carpini 1986: 28). The shift towards electronic forms of communication in the post-war era therefore created the conditions of possibility for the emergence of a transnational and possibly even global generational consciousness.

However, while scholars such as Edmunds and Turner certainly are correct to highlight the importance of technological change for explaining how the Sixties Generation became such a transnational movement, they are ignoring the fact that generational consciousness can only develop against the background of a shared political culture that seems to be challenged by external events. Events can only become “problematic” against a shared cultural background that generates similar expectations.
about the future. While technological developments constitute a necessary condition for
the emergence of transnational generational consciousness, the ability for events to be
mediated to millions of people around the world does not constitute a sufficient cause for
the emergence of a transnational political generation. The lack of a global political
culture during the post-war decade therefore casts doubt on the proposition that the
Sixties Generation was truly a global generation. Among Western states, however, a
shared political culture was established after the defeat of the Axis powers in WWII and
only by discussing this prior Western political culture will it be possible to understand
fully why and how the Sixties Generation turned into a politically radical and
transnational generation.

Prior Political Culture

Members of the Sixties Generation in Western Europe and the United States grew
up in the late 1940s and 1950s, during a time when the WWII Generation replaced the
WWI Generation from positions of power. As discussed in the previous case-study, the
WWII Generation was traditional and consequently re-produced the political culture
inherited from the WWI Generation. The defeat of Nazi Germany and the Axis powers
had been interpreted as a sign of the superiority of political liberalism and the WWII
Generation in the West was therefore strongly committed to a political culture that
identified the “West” with the ideology of political and economic liberalism. The Second
World War had shown that whereas fascism had resulted not only in self-defeating
policies of aggressive expansionism, but also genocide, the liberal West had been a
defender of political and economic freedom. The collective expectations in the West
during the period 1945-1963 were therefore that Western nations constituted a bulwark
against totalitarian regimes, such as Nazi Germany, and that the West protected the
freedoms and universal rights of all human beings.

At the same time, just like in the United States, the political climate of most
Western European states in the post-war period was one of political conformism,
conservatism, and a lack of interest in the past. Many members of the WWII Generation
had been active fascists or at least supported the policies of Nazi Germany, Vichy France,
and Fascist Italy and did not want to talk about their past. Even members of the WWI
Generation, who were in positions of power in the post-war period, were not keen on
addressing the time of the Third Reich, which was confirmed by all three of my
interviewees. In response to my question as to what might have caused the emergence of
the Sixties Generation, Mr. Genscher first cites the efforts of students to achieve reforms
of institutions higher education, a common theme during the 1960s. However, he then
added that another major reason for the emergence of the Sixties Generation was that the
BRD had been governed in the immediate post-war years by a “generation that tried to
pretend as if the political history of Germany had stopped in 1933 and started again in
1949.”
Both Dr. Zöpel and Dr. Volmer also confirmed that the political culture of the post-war period in the BRD was marked by a lack of interest in the history of Nazi regime and a lack of interest in politics more generally. Dr. Zöpel, for example, grew up in the middle-sized town of Minden in Western Germany, which was dominated by a “conservative authoritarian climate.” He stated that during his time in high school, from which he graduate in 1962, there was little discussion of politics and that there was very little coverage of the Nazi period in his history class. The events of the Second World War would be dealt with in a highly “objective” fashion, if at all, but there were no expressions of outrage. The only exception this trend was Dr. Zöpel’s German teacher who, as an avowed pacifist, took a clear stand against the Nazis. However, Dr. Zöpel was also able to clearly identify his history teacher as a former Nazi and suggested that he was certainly not the only teacher who had sympathized with the Nationalist Socialists.

In sum, the post-war period was a time of political conformism and conservatism and characterized by a lack of political engagement. At the same time, the success of liberalism against the forces of fascism during the Second World War created collective expectations about the behavior of liberal states that would soon be frustrated consistently. Taken together, the political apathy and the collective expectations created by the Allied victory in World War II created the necessary conditions for the emergence of a new, and politically radical, generation in the West.
Formative Events

Beginning in the early 1960s the political culture maintained by the WWII Generation became increasingly challenged by internal and external events in Western Europe and the United States. Most important in this respect was the conflict in Vietnam. As discussed already in the previous chapter, the conflict obviously most directly affected American cohorts in their youth, who were subject to the draft and who suffered significant casualties. When I asked him what he considered to be the main event that triggered the emergence of the Sixties Generation in the United States, Mr. Genscher clearly considered the conflict in Vietnam to be of crucial importance.

However, what allowed the Vietnam conflict to have such a strong formative impact on youth cohorts across the West and, to some extent around the globe, was the fact that it constituted the first major international conflict that was widely televised. As Carpini notes, “[e]very evening the American [and I would add Western European] public could watch the fighting, see the suffering not only of American soldiers but of the Vietnamese men, women and children (Carpini 1986: 36). Vietnam therefore clearly constituted a transnationally polarizing event that was formative not only for American youth during the time, but also for the Western European peers. As Arthur Marwick notes in his impressive comparative study of the 1960s movements in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, “[t]here can be no study of the sixties without consideration of the

88 More than 1.6 million American draftees had seen combat by the end of the war, more than 50,000 U.S. soldiers died during the conflict, and hundreds of thousands were disabled due to combat injuries. See Carpini (1986: 35-36).
complex repercussions of the Vietnam war” (Marwick 1998: 24). As the conflict dragged on throughout the 1960s, student-led movements in almost all Western European states emerged that protested the involvement of the U.S. in Vietnam and the support of their own governments for a war which many young people came to increasingly perceive as a morally unjust intervention of an imperialistic West against a “poor Third World” nation. Dr. Zöpel, for example, stated that in the eyes of his generation, the U.S. intervention in Vietnam was perceived as a continuation of colonialism. According to Dr. Volmer, many young Germans had been inspired by American leaders such as John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy or Martin Luther King, who were perceived as modernizers. Accordingly, the disappointment was huge when those modernizers were murdered and when it became clear “that their successors maintained and escalated this awful war in Vietnam. And that’s how the generally positive view of America became clouded during the 1960s. And then America no longer provided the identifying foil and people started to turn elsewhere,” such as Maoist China, while others believed the GDR was “the better Germany.” A female student activist from Berlin and member of the Sixties Generation expressed the importance of Vietnam as a formative event as follows: “For years I’d had nightmares about the terrible bombing of Dresden at the end of the Second World War. I could see the houses burning still. And that’s what I identified with the Vietnamese – the campaign against the war was a kind of working through my personal history”” (quoted in Nehring 2007: 62).
Despite the fact that the Vietnam conflict provided an over-arching theme for the 1960s, an event that came to crystalize the discontent of youth across the Atlantic, several other events provided formative for the Sixties Generation in the West. Even though most of these events were experienced across national borders and were interpreted in similar fashions by generation units across the West, they were obviously colored by national differences. However, in most of Western Europe and the United States, the sixties constituted a period of domestic political violence, political assassinations, and an often violent response by state authorities. Especially the assassination of JFK seems to have had a strong formative impact on this generation, which was partly due to the fact that many young Europeans at the time saw him as a political role model. As Dr. Zöpel, who personally saw JFK on his visit to Berlin, pointed out that “the Berlin Student Generation saw itself represented in Kennedy,” and added that “when the news spread that he was killed, there were huge, spontaneous demonstrations by students.” The assassination of the Kennedys and Martin Luther King also clearly constituted a formative experience for Dr. Volmer:

The first event that I consciously experienced, and shockingly so, was the assassination of John F. Kennedy. That was the first foreign political event that severely shook me because Kennedy was obviously a “Lichtgestalt” (role model) and then he was murdered. Since then I have followed foreign affairs, especially in the United States. The assassination of Robert Kennedy or Martin Luther King; all these events occupied my mind and had a very formative impact on me.
Other events that were mentioned as significant and formative during the interviews included the Prague Spring and the Cultural Revolution in China (Volmer), as well as, the efforts of the anti-colonialism/liberation movements in the Third World (Zöpel). As Dr. Zöpel stated, “we were against the military dictatorships in Latin America and in this context also against the United States which fostered and supported those dictatorships.” When I asked Dr. Zöpel whether the events that took place during the 1960s had been formative for his political worldviews, he answered “Yes, absolutely!” Aside from national differences that obviously colored the impact and significant of the events that took place during the 1960s, it therefore seems clear that this time period was formative for a new political generation in the West.

A Radical Political Generation

Historians and scholars of generations overwhelmingly agree that the Sixties Generation constituted a self-conscious political generation. Furthermore, both Dr. Zöpel and Dr. Volmer confirmed that the Sixties Generation, or “68er Generation,” as this generation is known in Germany, constituted a distinct political generation whose formative experiences had clearly shaped the worldviews and belief systems of its members for the rest of their lives. According to Dr. Volmer, “this generation did have very specific goals for domestic and foreign policy and it overwhelmingly held on to these goals over time” and Dr. Zöpel stated: “I have never changed the convictions that I

89 See, for example, Carpini (1986); Schuman and Scott (1989); Nehring (2007); Jennings (2002); Fraser (1988); Feuer (1969); Kraushaar (1999).
have developed during my time in high school and at the university. I just didn’t throw any stones.”

Most research on the Sixties Generation also strongly suggests that it was a transnational political generation (Edmunds and Turner 2002; 2005; Marwick 1998). Holger Nehring argues that “In almost all European countries (with the possible exception of Britain), historians, journalists commentators have identified a ‘generation of 68.’” (Nehring 2007: 57). In his analysis of the student protests that reached its climax in 1968 in France, Richard Vinen states that “the students protests of 1968 were part of an international movement that embraced people from Berkeley, to the London Schools of Economics, to Tokyo University” (Vinen 1996: 184). Margaret Mead even suggested it to be a global generation, stating that the emergence of the Sixties Generation had created “a generation gap that ringed the earth, a gap that separated all those born and reared before the mid-1940s and all those reared since” (Mead 1978: 96). During the interview, Dr. Volmer also mentioned Petra Kelly, another founding member of the Green Part who had studied in the United States. According to Dr. Volmer, she had “worked for the campaign of [Robert] Kennedy” and had “brought the American campaign experience into Europe and into the social movements,” which indicates that there was a certain amount of transatlantic norm diffusion, if primarily originating from the United States.
One major reason for why the Sixties Generation turned politically radical across the West was because it had been preceded by a traditional political generation that left “political space” for a more active role of youth in the post-war order. The lack of interest in politics and social reform that had characterized the WWII Generation in both the United States and Western Europe created a political vacuum that provided the necessary conditions for the emergence of a new radical political generation.

The second reason for why the Sixties Generation became a radical political generation was that the events of the 1960s were interpreted on all sides of the political spectrum as indications for the failure of the existing political culture and the policies of the old generation in power. Two major interpretations and discourses emerged out of this time period and these two interpretations were adopted by two major generation units that comprised the Sixties Generation.

It seems clear that the Sixties Generation was dominated by the political left; an amalgam of liberal, socialist, Marxist, anarchist, and other left-leaning political orientations (Lyons 1996). However, despite the strong interests of many members of the Sixties Generation in the politics of Marxism, Leninism, or Maoism, many of them were critical of the positions taken by the extreme left. Dr. Volmer, for example, identifies himself during this period as somehow who was “Undogmatic Left, meaning not aligned with the policies of Moscow or East Berlin or East European ideas of communism, but at the same time [I] could (absolutely) no longer support the political
system of the West”. This statement is especially relevant because Dr. Volmer clearly identifies the political system of the West to be deficient and not just the political culture of West Germany, which indicates that for the Sixties Generation the West had become the relevant political and cultural unit.

The primary interpretation of their formative experiences among generation units on the political left was based on the perception that the collective expectations that had been created by the victory of liberalism during WWII seemed to clash increasingly with the policies of liberal states in the post-war period. The conflict in Vietnam, the response of states to protests and social movements in general, and the large number of political assassinations all seemed to show that liberalism failed to live up to the expectations that had been created after the end of the Second World War. Instead of defending human rights across the world, protecting and enlarging civil rights, and bringing prosperity to all, liberal Western governments, and therefore the old elites in power, were perceived to be violating these commitments. Dr. Volmer himself suggested and strongly endorsed “the hypothesis that the 68er movement emerged because the basic conservative values, or basic Christian values, that had been conveyed by parents or in school, i.e. during the process of socialization, were not realized in political and economic practice.”

In short, the political culture of the old generation was perceived as a failure because it seemed to fail to live up to the expectations that had been created by the victory of liberalism after WWII. The intellectual forerunners of this critique were
members of the Frankfurt School and public intellectuals such as Michel Foucault, who were members of the WWII Generation (Edmunds and Turner 2002:48-53). This interpretation of the 1960s was shared most prominently by generation units falling within the liberal, socialist, and Marxist camps. Communism made a strong resurgence during the 1960s amongst Western European youth, though most of them identified more with the teachings of Mao rather than those of Lenin and Stalin because the violent suppression of the Prague Spring reform movement in 1968 by Soviet forces had discredited the legitimacy of the Kremlin in the eyes of many left-leaning members of the Sixties Generation.

However, even though the public discourse and image of the Sixties Generation was clearly dominated by the political left, the generation also entailed a generation unit on the political right. Surprisingly, as Vinen (1996: 189/190) has shown in the case of France, movements on the political right actually joined students protest and even shared some of their demands, such as the reform of institutions of higher educations, as well as, their “[s]uspicion of the centralizing state, attachment to real freedoms and to small intermediate communities, to the region and its language” (Vinen 1996: 189).

Members of Sixties Generation who belonged to the political right also interpreted the events of the 1960s as sign that the political culture of Western liberalism was facing a severe crisis. But in contrast to the political left, which argued that the source of this crisis was the old generation in power at the level of state and society, the
political right saw the protesters themselves as the source of the crisis of liberalism. In Western Germany, for example, the political right perceived “the protesters’ emotionality … [as] an expression not of genuine political concerns but of a lack of self-control and normality. The protesters this became part of a threat to the democratic order of the young West German state: (Nehring 2007: 63).

These two generations units existed in all Western countries and the political left dominated the politics and discourse of the Sixties Generation across states, while generating a less public and articulated counter-movement on the political right. This clearly shows that the Sixties Generation was a transnational political generation and not an international generation, which would have been indicated by variations in strength of those two generation units across countries.

**Generational Change**

The members of the Sixties Generation reached the age of political maturity (35-65) and entered into positions of power between 1983 and 1991 and are about the “leave” those positions between 2013 and 2021. It seems hardly questionable that the Sixties Generation brought about significant cultural and political change in the West. The increasing concern for environmental issues, the continuing push for the rights of racial minorities, changes in the institution of marriage, the gradual process towards equal treatment of women, and recent success of the gay community; all of these developments were a direct or indirect effect of the coming to power of the Sixties Generation. As
Ludger Volmer stated in our interview, “Everything that we experience as modern life today is a result of the revolution of 68.”

Most importantly for the purposes of this chapter, the Sixties Generation gave birth to global civil society by institutionalizing its protest culture and social movements into a lasting network of international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The central lesson learned by the political left during the 1960s was that liberalism had to be held accountable by non-state actors who would represent the interests of society and its weakest members vis-à-vis the state. The very idea was therefore to bring about political change from “below” and the preferred method clearly seems to have been the creation of non-governmental organizations and networks that provide a societal counter-weight to the power of the state. Moreover, the Sixties Generation was acutely aware that the problems of liberalism extended beyond national boundaries, affected the lives of people around the world, and consequently required a transnational response.

The data presented in Figure 4.1 (see above), shows that from the beginning of the 20th century until the mid-1970s the number of NGOs stays relatively low, but then begins to increase dramatically during the late 1970s and continues to climb steadily until the present day. The timing of this dramatic increase in the number of NGOs correlates almost perfectly with the generational change that brought the Sixties Generation to power. The evidence therefore strongly suggests that the dramatic increase in the number of NGOs since the early 1980s is a direct effect of the coming to power of the Sixties
Generation. Today, these networks of NGOs and other non-governmental actors constitute important actors in global politics and it seems justified to call this a change of the international system, since it not only created a new set of actors, but also changed the way global politics is conducted.

At the same time, many of these NGOs also function as norms entrepreneurs and mechanisms of norms diffusion. Given that most of these groups emerged out of the Sixties Generation, which was bound on fundamentally reforming liberalism in order to align its practice with its professed ideals, the increase and global spread of these NGOs has further spread the liberal and progressive political culture of the West around the world. The Sixties Generation therefore also provided the basis for the emergence of even more transnational and possibly global political generations. And that’s how you change the world.

**Conclusion**

The empirical analysis has shown that political generations have become increasingly transnational phenomena over the course of the 20th century and that they have brought about two important changes in the international system; an international post-war order based on a network of international organizations and a global civil society based on an increasing number of international NGOs. In addition, the evidence provides some support for the claim that political generations played an important role on the construction of the “West” and its establishment on the principles of political and
economic liberalism. The history of the construction of the “West” is intimately tied up with the success of modern liberalism as a transnational political ideology and political generations have played an important role in the diffusion of liberalism, as well as, helped to adapt its principles to a changing world. To put it differently, transnational political generations have constituted the intellectual carriers that have promoted and reformed Western liberalism and thereby brought about, what Francis Fukuyama (1992) called, “The End of History.” However, in contrast to Fukuyama, whose Hegelian and teleological account of the spread of liberal values assumes that we have reached the end of ideological evolution, my analysis suggests that transnational, and potentially global, political generations will continue to adapt Western liberalism in the future. Furthermore, in contrast to Fukuyama’s analysis, the account I propose is agnostic towards the question of whether the success of Western liberalism was an inevitable outcome or whether it was due to historical contingencies.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The goal of this dissertation was to develop a theoretical framework of political generations and generational change in order to examine the explanatory power of the concept of generations for the study of foreign policy and international politics. While previous studies, such as the work by Michael Roskin (2005 [1974]), Jervis (1976), and Steele (2012) have shown that there is serious interest amongst scholars of Foreign Policy and International Relations in the concept of generations and the role of political generations in world politics, the conceptual confusion surrounding these terms have prevented the emergence of a coherent research program on generational effects in foreign policy and international politics. In order to rectify this problem, the main purpose of this dissertation was therefore not to test some pre-established theoretical framework or to examine the effect of a set of specific independent variables on a single outcome, such as foreign policy, but to lay the theoretical and conceptual foundations for a more systematic analysis of the explanatory value of the concept of generations and the role of political generations in international politics. Consequently, the research design and selection of case-studies were developed with the overarching goal of theory development in mind. I have pursued this goal in two major steps. The first step consisted
of resolving the conceptual confusion surrounding the concept of generations to clear the ground for developing a theory of political generations and generational change that generates the necessary observable implications to make it amenable to empirical tests.

In pursuit of this goal, I resolved the definitional problems surrounding the concept of generations by arguing that a generation in its most abstract form constitutes a temporal unit of analysis that locates individuals or groups in the process of time. More specified notions of the concept of generations were then incorporated at lower levels of abstraction into a generational framework of analysis. Based on this conceptual framework, I developed a theory of political generations, which I defined as cohorts whose members develop a sense of generational consciousness in response to a set of formative events during their youth. Political generations can be either “traditional” or “radical,” depending on whether they perceive the response of the old elites to those events as a success or as a failure. I then argued that the alternation between “radical” and “traditional” political generations explains periods of political change and stability respectively.

The second step in the process of theory development was to determine the explanatory value and empirical validity of the initial theoretical framework. More specifically, the empirical case-studies were supposed to fulfill three major functions. First, they allowed me to examine whether the historical record supports my theoretical framework. In each case-study, I employed process tracing and examined various steps in
the causal chain from generational emergence to generational change, in order to then
determine whether variation in the dependent variables and the timing of these variations
correlate with the predictions generated from the theory of political generations. In
addition, I examined the interaction between radical and traditional political generations
over time and whether or not they were able to explain long term patterns that extended
across several generations, thereby creating another set of observable implications that
helped to test the validity of my framework.

Second, by examining alternative explanations the empirical case-studies allowed
me to illustrate the explanatory value of a theory of political generations. Again, the goal
of this dissertation was not test the theory of political generations against a set of
alternative explanations, but instead to show how we end up answering old questions that
are relevant to the study of foreign policy and international politics in new ways by
adopting a generational perspective. Finally, the empirical case-studies also showed that
there exist some anomalies or patterns that I had not consider in my original framework
and in this respect the initial empirical test also generated important information that will
be valuable in further refining the theory of political generations.

In chapter 3 and chapter 4, I examined the theory of political generations against
the historical record in order to account for variations in a total of four dependent
variables at the level of foreign policy analysis and at the international system level
respectively. Each chapter consisted of three case-studies, dealing with the WWI, WWII,
and Sixties Generation, which allowed me to test the plausibility of the hypothesis that radical and traditional political generations alternate and explain the timing of political change and stability.

Chapter 3 examined the effects of political generations on the foreign policy of a single nation over time and showed that cycles between radical and traditional political generations explain periods of foreign policy change and stability in U.S. foreign policy from roughly 1900 until 2008. In addition, the analysis also supported the hypothesis that the alternation between radical and traditional political generations accounts for the timing of shifts between extrovert and introvert foreign policy moods in the United States during that time period. Within this chapter, the first case-study about the WWI Generation and its impact on U.S. foreign policy certainly constitutes the hardest case for my theory. Correspondingly, this case was treated in more detail than the other cases. The examination of the “Greatest Generation” and the Sixties Generation, on the other hand, strongly suggests that the alternation between radical and traditional political generations can indeed account for periods of foreign policy change and stability. Overall, the three case-studies in chapter 3 have also been able to show that the alternation between radical and traditional political generations can account for the timing of periods of extrovert and introvert foreign policy moods in the United States.

In chapter 4, I broadened the analysis in order to examine the role of political generations at the regional and international systems level. The empirical analysis has
shown that political generations have become increasingly transnational phenomena due to the spread of mass media and changes in communications technology and that they can have important effects not only at the regional level, but also at the level of the international system. With respect to regional integration, chapter 4 has shown that increasingly transnational political generations have played an important role in the construction of the political and cultural formation nowadays called the “West,” which provided the basis for the transatlantic security community and cooperation between the United States and Western Europe throughout the Cold War and beyond. The discourse that would provide the basis for post-war reconstruction and the establishment of a stable, liberal, post-war order was championed by members of the WWI Generation and later reproduced and further institutionalized by their successors, the traditional WWII Generation. While the Sixties Generation was certainly critical of the conduct of liberal states in the post-war order, it nevertheless identified and further reproduced the political culture and discourse of a liberal West. In addition, through the creation of an increasingly dense network of international NGOs, the Sixties Generation has further diffused Western political culture around the globe. The chapter therefore shows that increasingly transnational political generations have constituted an important causal mechanism for the diffusion and political evolution of liberalism over the course of the last century.

With respect to the international level, chapter 4 has shown that inter/transnational political generations can be a potentially powerful cause of systems change. The WWI
Generation not only provided the necessary and sufficient conditions for the outbreak of the Second World War, but its liberal generation unit was also instrumental in creating a stable post-war order through the creation of a set of international organizations designed to facilitate cooperation on economic issues and matters of security. This system was fully endorsed and further strengthened by members of the WWII Generation. The coming to power of the Sixties Generation, motivated to pursue political change because of the perception that liberal states needed to be held accountable from below, provided the impetus for the emergence of global civil society and the dramatic increase of international non-governmental organizations which started in the early 1980s and has still not abated.

Obviously, the empirical analysis still suffers from some major shortcomings. Both empirical chapters covered more than a hundred years of history and required the examination of several empirical indicators in each case-study. Given that the secondary literature on the time period under consideration is vast to say the least, a lot of empirical evidence has certainly not been considered in much depth. In addition, I have largely ignored a trove of quantitative data and especially public opinion surveys, which certainly could have provided valuable insights. I decided to ignore most of this data for the current study because a systematic examination of the wealth of surveys that cover the period under consideration would have been very time consuming and would probably require a separate dissertation by itself. In addition, various studies on political generations that rely on surveys already exist, yet, there is, at least to my knowledge, no
study such as this dissertation, which provides a qualitative study of the interaction of several political generations and their effects on foreign policy and international politics.

Despite these shortcomings, the empirical analysis has provided considerable empirical support for my theoretical framework and the general hypothesis that political generations and generational change constitute important mechanisms of political change in foreign policy and international politics. The empirical analysis comprised a total of six empirical case-studies. In each of these cases, process tracing showed that there was evidence to support almost every step in the causal chain, from the conditions needed for the emergence of political generations to the period of generational change and the dependent variable. In some cases the evidence for the presence of particular indicators was certainly not as strong, such as in the case of the WWI Generation in the United States or in the case of generation units on the political right who belonged to the Sixties Generations. However, the fact that most steps in the process of generational emergence and generational change were confirmed in most cases strongly suggests the plausibility of my theoretical framework and indicates that it has substantial explanatory power. In addition, it was been shown the alternation of radical and traditional political generations correlate with the timing of cycles in foreign policy and international politics, which serves as additional support for my theoretical framework.

The empirical analysis has also illustrated that political generations themselves are historical products that emerged through a confluence of public beliefs about the
transformative power of youth, the establishment of a public school system, and the spread of mass media. Over the course of the 20th century the political significance and efficacy of political generations has undergone certain transformations as well. Most importantly, innovations and the geographic spread of communications technology have enabled political generations to become increasingly transnational phenomena. In addition, there seems to have been some extent of social learning between different successive political generations. As both Dr. Volmer and Dr. Zöpel suggested, the Sixties Generation, in contrast to the WWI Generation, became dominated by moderates, rather than extremists. This seems to have been the result of the realization that resort to violence had little chance of bringing about lasting political change, which might indicate that political generations learn from the successes and mistakes of their predecessors.

Obviously, this dissertation can only provide a first step towards a full-fledged research program on the role of political generations in foreign policy and international politics. However, already at this stage, this project generates an enormous number of questions for further research. Possibly the most intricate and most interesting complex of questions relates to the “ultimate causes” that explain the apparent synchronicity of major wars or times of political crisis, on the one hand, and the alternation of radical and traditional political generations on the other. Put differently, why do generational cycles follow an apparently regular pattern, if formative events and how they are interpreted seem historically contingent? In chapter 3 and 4, I have shown that generational cycles can explain the timing of periods of change and stability at the levels of both, foreign
policy and international politics. Yet, ultimately, the question is how these levels are connected and whether we can establish a causal relationship between long term cycles, such as identified by Goldstein (1988), periods of foreign policy mood, and structural changes in foreign policy. My hypothesis at this stage is that political generations are not the primary cause, but rather “intellectual carriers” that provide a causal mechanism to adapt the political culture of their societies to an external environment that changes in line with long-term patterns, such as the long cycles of war. However, this will require a much more detailed and long-term analysis of generational cycles that will have to be reserved for the future.

A second major goal for further research is to relax some of the scope conditions of the research design. First of all, the present study examined the role of political generations in pre-dominantly democratic and Western societies. Put differently, political regime type was held more or less constant in the dissertation with the obvious exception of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The next step is to examine the theory of political generations in the context of non-Western and non-democratic countries. Whereas in liberal democracies, leadership transitions occur frequently and involve changes in the dominant party in power, Communist regimes, such as China, usually replace entire cohorts of decision-makers with a new, carefully vetted, cohort of young successors. Accordingly, generational changes, and correspondingly, their effects on foreign policy, should be even more pronounced in non-democratic societies. This should be especially the case, for example, in China, where the concept of generation is
frequently used in order to refer to different groups of decision-makers that have guided Chinese foreign policy in the past. At the same time, China is a hard case for a theory of generational change, since the elites who occupy positions of power select and socialize the following generation into their political belief system. This would lead us to believe that the effects of generational changes would be outweighed by the countervailing effects of socialization. To determine how these institutional and cultural conditions of China’s political system interact and potentially balance each other out during the process of generational change would be one of the key questions for future research.

Second, a proper examination of generational cycles and their effects on foreign policy and international politics would also require one to extend the empirical analysis backward and forward in time. Even though the analysis stopped with the Sixties Generation, it seems pretty plausible to argue that cohorts in their youth who experienced the end of the Cold War in the West constituted a traditional political generation that perceived the collapse of Soviet communism as a confirmation of the political culture of the West and therefore largely adopted the political culture of the Sixties generation. This outcome would also be predicted by my theoretical framework which stipulates that radical generations are followed by traditional political generations. A related question for further research is whether the period from 2000 to 2010, which was characterized by the terror attacks on 9/11, the War on Terror, the 2008 economic crisis, and the beginnings of the Arab Spring movement, constituted a time that proved formative for the emergence of a new radical, and potentially, global political generation. Even though the
The emergence of the Occupy movement and the strong role of youth protest during the early Arab Spring strongly suggest that these movements signal the birth of a radical political generation, more evidence will need to be examined before it will be possible to project the possible changes that this generation might bring about in the future.

Finally, one aspect that I have not discussed at all in this dissertation, but which certainly deserves attention, concerns the normative implications of political generations and their role in global politics. One of the questions that emerge out of this research project is whether generational change provides a normatively desirable form of political change and democratic practice at the global level. The underlying argument to support this position would be that generational change is “more democratic” than other forms of change, such as class struggle, because it is based on a political identity that is constitute by age, not race, ethnicity, nationalism, religion, or economic status. In this sense, generational identities are more inclusive than other political identities, since they, to quote Pierre Nora once again, constitute a “violent affirmation of horizontal identity that suddenly dominates and transcends all forms of vertical solidarity” (Nora 1996: 503/04). In addition, the analysis has shown that political generations can emerge across national boundaries and develop into transnational, and even global, movements for political change, which makes them a suitable mechanism for addressing problems of global governance while also providing a possible avenue for mitigating the democratic deficit that continues to plague global governance.
This dissertation has tried to take a first step towards the development of a systematic research program on the role of political generations in foreign policy and international politics. The empirical evidence to support my theoretical framework is significant, but spotty at times, and numerous theoretical and empirical questions obviously remain open. However, as long as I have been able to convince you, my readers, that the study of political generations and their role in world politics deserves our time and effort then the primary goal of this dissertation has been achieved.
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255


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