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Dividing Germany, Accepting an Invitation to Empire: The Life, Death, and Historical Significance of George Kennan's "Program A"

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Cover Page Footnote

This paper has been adapted from a research essay originally produced in the fall of 2015 for History 130, Professor Daniel Sargent's course at the University of California-Berkeley on the history of the United States' foreign policy. I would like to thank Professor Sargent and my graduate student instructor, Ryan Nelson, for all the help they have given me; Professor Jeffrey Pennington, who reviewed my paper at the 2017 Claremont-UC Undergraduate Research Conference, also provided me with invaluable assistance. Kenneth Leonardo and the editors of this Journal were excellent guides through the revision process. This paper is dedicated to my grandfather, Thomas Dant, who fostered my interest in Kennan.

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Dividing Germany, Accepting an Invitation to Empire: The Life, Death, and Historical Significance of George Kennan's "Program A"

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ABSTRACT

This paper will attempt to reinterpret the early Cold War moment in Euro–American relations that gave rise to and ultimately destroyed George Kennan’s plan to reunify and neutralize Germany—the so-called “Program A” of 1948–49. Kennan envisioned his Program as the first and decisive step towards creating a “free European community” capable of acting as a non-aligned “third force,” thus ending the Cold War on the Continent. But before it could be presented to the United States’ European allies, Britain and France, some of the plan’s principal features were leaked to the *New York Times*. These features, as described in the *Times*, received a hostile reception in Europe; the State Department withdrew its support for Program A; and the American policymaking establishment embraced a strong transatlantic commitment, cementing the East–West division of Europe.

Some scholars of the Cold War, including John Lewis Gaddis, have blamed the demise of Program A on the Europeans, whose resistance to Kennan’s neutralization initiative compelled a reluctant United States to play the hegemon in Western Europe. But this extreme version of Geir Lundestad’s “empire by invitation” theory would not have satisfied Kennan, who maintained that his State Department colleagues were too fearful of offending their European allies and too eager to abandon his plan. Examining the circumstances from which Program A emerged, the opposition it faced from within the State Department, and the steps its authors took to address British and French concerns suggests that Kennan may have been right. The extreme “empire by invitation” thesis demands revision: Europe may have extended an invitation to empire, but as Kennan grasped, the United States bore the responsibility for accepting it.

KEYWORDS

George Kennan, Program A, division of Germany, empire by invitation, Cold War, Third Force

I. INTRODUCTION

On 12 May 1949, as the Berlin Blockade Crisis extinguished itself and the chill of Cold War began to settle over Europe, an extraordinary article appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*. Wrote *Times* columnist James Reston: “The United States was reported today to have under consideration a plan under which all occupation troops would be withdrawn into restricted areas.” The implications for European security were obviously profound, and Reston did little to gloss them over. Though the Soviet Union was to be compelled to pull back its forces as well, “the disadvantage, from the West’s points of view, is that the screen of United States, British, and French troops now standing between the Soviet Army and Western Europe, would be withdrawn. This thought disturbs some officials in the Western countries” (Reston, 1949, p. 1). Who had proposed this dramatic and possibly dangerous policy reorientation? The party responsible, Reston revealed, was none other than George Foster Kennan, the father of Containment and head of the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff.¹

Kennan had indeed devised a scheme—the so-called “Program A,” under consideration since mid-1948—for scaling back occupying forces in Germany and regrouping them into garrisons on the country’s periphery. Program A’s real aim, however, was to prompt a simultaneous *Soviet* withdrawal from central Europe. Germany could then be reunified and demilitarized, and the European states system, freed from both the German menace and entanglement in the East–West rivalry, would be able to function on the international stage as a fully-integrated, autonomous, non-aligned unit—a “third force.”²

In May 1949, American officials were preparing to unveil Kennan’s plan to their British and French allies at a Conference of Foreign Ministers in Paris. It was on the eve of this Conference that the Reston article appeared. Reston’s source, whose identity remains unknown, was almost certainly an opponent of Program A who hoped to scare off the Europeans—and sure enough, Britain and France expressed concerns about the troop regroupings as described in the *Times*. The Americans, faced with a what sounded like rejections of a key component of Program A, chose to press no further. Convinced that Europe was unready for any of Kennan’s ideas, they never revealed the other elements of the plan to their allies (Gaddis, 1987, p. 65–66; Gaddis, 2011, p. 347–49; Miscamble, 1992, p. 166–71). Kennan’s ally Philip Jessup concluded that “[h]ad we come [to Paris] with ‘Program A’ (even if unhampered by the really serious effects of the Reston article), I do not think we could have secured tripartite agreement” (as cited in Miscamble, 1992, p. 171).

Scholars of the Cold War have tended to agree with Jessup’s conclusion; Kennan, however, was much more willing to criticize his colleagues for giving up so quickly. This paper attempts to evaluate these two interpretations by situating them, and Program A, within a broader historical and analytical context. Drawing on the work of historians like Gaddis as well as on views expressed by contemporary Western policymakers in

1 The authoritative source on Kennan is Gaddis (2011). Gaddis’ views will be discussed at length throughout this paper. For more on Kennan and the Reston article, see Gaddis (2011), p. 348–49; and Miscamble (1992), p. 170.

2 My summary draws on the analyses of Program A by Miscamble (1992, p. 143–71) and especially Gaddis (1987, p. 65–66; 2011, p. 328–34, 347–49). Gaddis’ views will be examined in Section II below. The original text of Program A appears as the Sub-Annex to Document 720 in the second volume of *Foreign relations of the United States, 1948* (Policy Planning Staff, 1948c, p. 1325–38).

State Department documents, I will reexamine the circumstances from which Program A emerged and the steps its author took to address concerns raised within the State Department and by the British and French. My conclusion, simply put, is that Kennan may well have been right. It seems clear that the initial European resistance to Program A could have been surmounted and the damage inflicted by the Reston article avoided had not key American policymakers convinced themselves, prematurely, that the scheme was bound to create trouble for the United States.

One thing should be made clear at this point: I am *not* going to argue that the Americans would *definitely* have been able to force Program A upon Europe in 1948. It is *possible* that, eventually, the British and French might have been persuaded to accept German reunification and endorse a Kennanist third-force policy—but one cannot be certain when dealing with hypotheticals. The possibility, however, is interesting enough. To suggest that the Americans themselves might have played a decisive role in killing Kennan’s Program is to call into question a hard-line interpretation of the “empire by invitation” theory: that the United States’ allies forced it to establish, against its will, a hegemonic presence in Europe.

II. “EMPIRE BY INVITATION”?

“Empire by invitation” was introduced as an academic term by the historian Geir Lundestad, who believed that “the revisionist view of the United States thrusting itself into the affairs of other countries,” though accurate in other contexts, was poorly suited to describing American engagement with Western European states. As Lundestad pointed out, the governments of those states, with “tacit or even stronger support from their peoples,” had in fact sought out stronger transatlantic economic, political, and military relationships. As a result, “[t]he rule was that the United States was invited” into Europe. This did not mean, however, that American policymakers had no independent interest in accepting the invitation. Lundestad “just [took] it for granted that the United States had important strategic, political, and economic motives for taking on such a comprehensive world role.” Ultimately, “America’s foreign policy was determined by America’s own interests, not by the invitations from the outside. This point is obviously true” (Lundestad, 1986, p. 268–73; Lundestad, 2003, p. 99).

The “obvious truth” of this statement has been lost on some of Lundestad’s fellows. For Gaddis (1987) and the political scientist G. John Ikenberry (1989), the invitation to empire, extended by a nervous Europe, was one the United States was forced reluctantly to accept. Gaddis submits as proof of this the demise of Program A. In his opinion, the effort to establish a geopolitically-independent third force in Europe was doomed to failure by intransigent, narrow-minded European timidity. The reactions to Reston’s article merely made “painfully clear” the fact that “Britain, France, and their smaller neighbors preferred the known risks of a Europe divided into Soviet and American spheres of influence to the imponderables of a unified ‘third force’ that could conceivably fall under German or even Russian control.” If the European sense of security “depended upon a formal American military commitment, then Washington . . . was hardly in a position to argue.” Thus, pondering why Program A and “the Kennan vision of an autonomous ‘third force’ in Europe . . . failed to materialize,” Gaddis has concluded that “[t]he reason . . . was

that the Europeans themselves did not want it” (Gaddis, 1987, p. 61–71).³

Kennan’s own reaction to his program’s abandonment accords superficially with Gaddis’; he recognized the decisive role criticism from Europe had played in its demise (Miscamble, 1992, p. 171–72).⁴ But crucially, according to Kennan, the reason the Europeans had been able to flex their muscles was because the Americans, foolishly, had let them do so. Writing to Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Kennan laid much of the blame for the Paris debacle at the feet of his colleagues. “We do not really want to see Germany unified at this time,” Kennan lamented. “[W]hat we felt would be a logical program for advance towards the unification of Germany” had been dismantled “in our own deliberations . . . and in the concessions we have made to French and British feelings.” Ruefully, he proposed that the Europeans be held responsible for defending the new Western position on Germany, but only on the grounds that the United States had “deferred extensively to their views” (Kennan, 1949c, p. 888–90).

Thus, according to Gaddis, European resistance killed Program A—end of story. Kennan, on the other hand, implicated not just the resistance *per se* but also the extent to which his American colleagues had meekly given way before it. The difference is subtle, but decisive. Kennan’s view, if correct, would at least complicate the Gaddis-Ikenberry formulation of the empire-by-invitation theory. It would also raise some interesting questions: why were American policymakers, allegedly inclined to “thrust themselves into the affairs of other countries,” so sensitive to the concerns of their weaker European allies in May 1949? And how was this sensitivity related to the way in which the Americans had defined their “own interests” in shaping the future of Europe? The weight of such considerations will add gravity to my contextual analysis of Program A.

III. CONTEXT AND ORIGINS OF PROGRAM A: THE THIRD FORCE PROJECT AND THE GERMAN QUESTION

During the uncertain period after 1945, American policymakers struggling to implement a viable containment strategy across the Atlantic found themselves faced with a dilemma. The success of containment was assumed to hinge on the extent to which the United States could cultivate indigenous resistance to communism within strategically-important, heavily-industrialized regions like Europe. This was the object of the third force strategy: without some degree of political and economic integration, the “free” European states would be too weak to resist Soviet pressure on their eastern flank (Gaddis, 2005, p. 35–39; Policy Planning Staff, 1948a, 510–12). Unfortunately, relations between the United

3 While Ikenberry (1989) does not address Program A specifically, he has made statements regarding Kennan that parallel Gaddis’. For example: “Taken together, the United States and State Department officials such as George Kennan were much more eager to see an independent Europe than the Europeans themselves. In the end, the European governments were not willing to take the risks, expend the resources, or resolve the national differences that would necessarily be a part of an independent, third force” (p. 394).

4 Miscamble has submitted as evidence in support of his claim a quotation from a letter to him written by Kennan in 1979. However, the letter also supports my interpretation. Kennan asserted that “[French and British views] made a deep impression on Mr. Acheson: first, I think, because while he did not know much about Europe, he assumed that they did; secondly, because they largely coincided with those of our own military establishment; and thirdly, because they had the support of the Western European division of the department of State” (as cited Miscamble, 1992, p. 171, fn. 125). In other words, the real sources of European influence were Acheson’s ignorance and the support European views received from like-minded Americans.

States and its two most important European partners, Britain and France, had been rendered more complicated by reemergence of the old German Question. At the end of the Second World War, the defeated Germany had been split into zones of occupation, each administered by one of the four major Allied Powers; the country's long-term fate remained uncertain. Nightmarish visions of a resurgent *Reich*, possibly allied to the Soviet Union, loomed large in the minds of both British and French policymakers, but the countermeasures they sought were, initially, antithetical. Recognizing the advantages of speedy German economic revival, eager to expand their security perimeter, and determined to safeguard resources under their control and especially the rich Ruhr from the reparations-hungry Soviets, the British leaned towards division and the establishment of a friendly, truncated West German state in 1946, eagerly merging their zone with that of the United States. By contrast, French officials, driven partly by Germanophobia, partly by concerns that the fast-moving Anglo-American policies would provoke a war with the Soviet Union, tried to stymie their allies and hobble more completely German power and independence (Foschepoth, 1986, p. 392–404; Leffler, 2010, p. 74–75, 78–81, Schwarz, 2010, p. 139–40, 144–45).

Throughout 1948 and 1949, a number of factors pressed American policymakers towards endorsing a compromise response: German rehabilitation would proceed in the British, French, and American zones of occupation while the United States strengthened its military commitment to western Europe, helping to calm especially French nerves. Efforts to achieve four-power management of German affairs through cooperation with the Soviet Union had broken down completely; Paris had seized upon enhanced security guarantees from Washington as an essential precondition of a mutually-acceptable German settlement; and British policymakers, led by Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, were lobbying for a transatlantic alliance—what would become the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)—capable of fending off Soviet pressure and taming the western half of Germany. By mid-1948, American officials, eager to reinforce Europe's defensive position and concerned that failure to stabilize conditions in Germany would imperil European economic recovery, were simultaneously considering plans to adhere to NATO and, alongside British and French representatives, laying the constitutional foundation for an independent West German state at a conference in London (Gaddis, 1987, p. 62–65; Leffler, 2010, p. 74–75, 78–81; Miscamble, 1992, p. 113–33, 142; Schwarz, 2010, p. 144–45).

Why did Kennan oppose this joint program, endorsed as it had been by so many of his colleagues and allies? Certainly not because he was unduly optimistic about the political situation in Central Europe. Even as he began to sketch out his reunification plan in August 1948, Kennan was willing to acknowledge that the “confused, embittered, self-pitying, and unregenerate” Germans might, if left to their own devices, fall under Moscow's sway or renew their own quest for continental hegemony (Kennan, 1948, p. 1293–94). Nor did he regard dividing Germany *per se* to be incompatible with the third force project. In fact, quite the opposite is true. European integration, he asserted in February 1948, “would be much easier if Germany were partitioned, or drastically decentralized, and if the component parts could be brought separately into the European union” (Policy Planning Staff, 1948a,

515).⁵ But crucially, Kennan also seems to have believed that such a fragmented German state could *only* exist as part of a federal Europe—or, at least, that its politically-immature inhabitants could only be trusted once they had been led to conceive of themselves as responsible European citizens. The problem was that the timid western European powers were still unwilling or unable to press decisively in favor of integration. With Europe divided, the Germans remained isolated and volatile; breaking up their *Reich* would only alienate them further, leaving them susceptible to aggressive nationalism and forcing them to look to Moscow for support. “A Western German Government set up in present circumstances will thus be neither friendly nor frank nor trustworthy from the standpoint of the Western occupiers,” warned Kennan in March 1949 (Policy Planning Staff, 1948a, p. 515–17; Kennan, 1948, p. 1291–92, 1295–96; Kennan, 1949a, p. 96–98).

It was from this analysis of the German Question that the fundamental rationale for Program A emerged in August 1948. Kennan’s argument proceeded neatly from problem to solution. European disunity, he argued, was hindering the dissolution of the German national impulse, and if the United States did not wish to undertake the burden of forever suppressing that impulse, it would have to coopt it, to “recognize and give scope to it”:

The fact of the matter is that there is no solution of this German problem except in terms of a federated Europe into which the several parts of Germany could be absorbed. Without such a Europe, the partition of Germany would be a futile attempt at retrogression. Such a Europe can be created only by the Europeans, not by us. But they have not yet created it; and it looks as though it would be a long time before they did.

Plainly, no such constructive solution of the German problem will, or could, be found in the face of the tragic east–west differences which now divide Europe. This is the real reason why Germany must be given back to the Germans. The inability of the recent Allies to agree on the treatment or the future of Germany obliges them, by a sort of iron logic, to restore the power of decision to the Germans themselves. For the development of life in Europe cannot await the composure of [E]ast–[W]est differences. Something must be done; and something will be done, whether we like it or not.

5 Gaddis (1987) has argued that Kennan’s ambivalence towards German division in principal demonstrates that he recognized, in spite of himself, “the force of [the] logic” pressing in favor of the London program (p. 66). In defense of his position, he references the following Kennan quote from March 1949:

Either the rest of Europe tries to work with the West German State, as it is now emerging, takes a sympathetic and constructive interest in it, and learns to regard its development as a European as well as a German responsibility, or there will be soon no Germany with which the rest of Europe can cooperate, and no possibility of real unity and strength within Western Europe. (as cited in Gaddis, 1987, p. 66)

The problem with Gaddis’ interpretation of this statement is that, in March 1949, Kennan was in fact urging his State Department colleagues to *shelve* their West German plans in favor of something like Program A, to *delay* implementing them, or at least to present them as merely provisional in order to avoid fanning the flames of German nationalism. Ultimately, he remained convinced that only the rise of an antinationalist “Europeanism” in Germany would make division palatable to the Germans. Kennan did not believe that such a sentiment had crystalized yet (Kennan, 1949a, p. 96–102). Hence his eagerness to ensure that Western Europe took a more “sympathetic and constructive interest” in West Germany. Gaddis’ quote accords entirely with my analysis.

Frustrated as we are in our efforts to agree with Moscow about the future of Germany,—faced with the weariness and timidity and lack of leadership among the western European allies which prevents them from making real progress towards a federation of at least the western European peoples,—saddled ourselves with responsibility for the early restoration of hope and progress among the western Germans,—I do not see that we have any choice but to strive for a general relinquishment of Allied responsibilities in Germany and for the assumption of the risk of granting to the Germans the ability to manage their own affairs. (Kennan, 1948, p. 1295–96)

None of this meant that Kennan had given up on the rest of Europe. Rather, he presented German reunification under American auspices as an alternative catalyst to third-force European cohesion and independence. Restoring independence to all of Germany would necessarily involve “a certain withdrawal of Soviet forces toward the east,” reducing the security threat to the anxious British and French and perhaps permitting the integration of the Soviet Union’s former eastern satellites into a truly “united a free Europe.” Even if Moscow balked at first, as Kennan believed it would, the United States could at least hope to “keep the situation flexible . . . for an eventual softening of the Russian position.” And in the meantime, the Soviets, rather than the Americans or Europeans, would come to be regarded in Germany as the chief enemies of reunification (Kennan, 1948, p. 1290–91; Policy Planning Staff, 1948b, p. 1321–23; Gaddis, 1987, p. 65, 68–69; Gaddis, 2011, p. 328–330, 332). Any lingering nationalist resentment would be directed eastwards; *vis-à-vis* the London program, the shoe would be on the other foot.

Of course, Kennan’s concerns about the political character of a divided Germany later proved to be largely unfounded. The young West German government was able to contain its chauvinist and Communist opponents and bound itself firmly to the emerging transatlantic bloc. My aim in this section has not been to vindicate Kennan; I have merely sought to highlight the extent to which he shared the deep-seated concerns about Germany and the Soviet Union that gave rise to the NATO-London approach. Kennan simply extended these concerns to their logical conclusion, and in doing so, he flipped on their heads the arguments in favor of German division and identified a way to achieve European union without following the path towards American hegemony laid down by Britain and France. As Gaddis (1987) has grasped, Program A thus “raised fundamental questions as to where the American interest in Europe lay”: Kennan had brought into sharp relief the choice between empire by invitation in Western Europe and a true third-force policy (p. 65). Yet it also seems clear that Kennan’s scheme, properly contextualized, ought not to have seemed outlandish or unintelligible to whose views on the German Question reflected the mainstream circa 1948.

IV. ASSESSING PROGRAM A’S VIABILITY

Nevertheless, Program A quickly became the focus of fierce debates within the American foreign policy establishment. Secretary of State Acheson, who had been involved in early planning alongside Kennan, was sympathetic (Miscamble, 1992, p. 148, 158–62). Others were not, and strikingly, they tended either to parrot or point to their European colleagues who, at this stage, remained entirely unaware of Kennan’s proposal. John D.

Hickerson, one of the reunification project's fiercest critics, believed that the Soviet Union would inevitably exploit the emergence of a military vacuum in Germany given Western Europe's military and economic weakness. It was also feared that any retreat from the London program would deal a mortal blow to the fragile West German economy, forcing the Germans into waiting communist arms. Unsurprisingly, many American officials simply assumed *a priori* that Britain and France would react with hostility to such a potentially dangerous policy proposal (as cited in Kennan, 1948, p. 1287–88, fn. 1 and 2). “[O]ur French friends, if they saw [Program A], would immediately re-classify you and me as ‘les meilleurs amis,’” quipped General Lucius Clay, commander of the occupation authority in the American zone, to Kennan (as cited in Policy Planning Staff, 1948b, p. 1320, fn. 1). Hickerson went further, warning Acheson that an American endorsement of Kennan's scheme “would risk breaking the united western front” (as cited in Miscamble, 1992, p. 154).⁶

Kennan was fully aware that implementing Program A was likely to cause trouble in Europe. As we have seen, he did not entirely trust the Germans; despite the base-level similarities between the European outlook and his own, he still expected to encounter stiff opposition from especially the French, whom the prospect of a reunified German state was “bound to alarm and dismay”; and it is worth noting that, prior to 1948, he himself had been an outspoken advocate of German division, deploying some of the same arguments later set against Program A (Kennan, 1948, p. 1293–94; Gaddis, 2011, p. 332; Miscamble, 1992, p. 143–45, 146). But Kennan's familiarity with the positions of his opponents (and likely opponents) also left him particularly well-equipped to address potential pitfalls. And address them he did.

The full Program A, as presented to Kennan's State Department colleagues in November 1948, was in many respects a cautious document. It incorporated a set of safeguards “designed to assure against the ‘capture’ of Germany by the Russians, as well as against a revival of German aggression”—and, at the same time, clearly intended to disarm critics. A State Department summary of the Program's conclusion contains the revealing observation that “special steps would have to be taken to impress the safeguards of the program on the French,” and sure enough, the suggestion that occupying troops be regrouped at specified sites within Germany rather than completely removed was designed to placate wary policymakers in Paris. Kennan went further: the regrouping itself would not take place until a fully-functioning German government, freely and democratically elected, had been firmly established; given the unpopularity of Soviet activities in the East, the Germans would almost certainly vote anti-communist; and in any event, as a final precaution, Germany would be demilitarized in a manner described as “sweeping and complete.” Kennan's prudence also left its mark in areas less directly tied to national security, giving rise to policies meant to protect the German economy against Soviet pressure and prevent the misuse of German police forces, which were particularly well-organized in the Soviet zone. Most cleverly of all, Kennan was careful to present Program A as a harmonious outgrowth of the existing plans for creating a West German state. This was convenient, as it

6 Miscamble (1992) has also discussed at length the American opposition to Program A—though he does so without grasping that this was ultimately responsible for the failure of Kennan's project (p. 147, 149–54). See my Note 4.

meant that the Americans “might obtain British and French acquiescence to the plan as a development of the London program” already supported by the Western European powers (Policy Planning Staff, 1948c, p. 1325–1330, 1338).⁷

In light of Program A’s disastrous debut at the Paris conference, such hopes might seem naïve at first glance. However, closer inspection reveals that Kennan anticipated with remarkable precision European concerns and desires as articulated in mid-1949. This was especially true in the case of the British. In spite of their reactions against the Reston article, British officials in Paris seem to have been at least as eager as Kennan to roll back Soviet influence in Germany, even suggesting that Moscow be granted partial influence over the precious Ruhr in exchange for Eastern Germany’s freedom (Bruce, 1949, p. 878). And while military officials had raised strong technical objections to the troop regroupings, the Foreign Secretary, though worried about the “unsettling” effect the Reston article might have on European public opinion, reported from London that he did not reject regrouping as a concept; rather, he deemed it worthy of “a most careful study among us” (Bevin, 1949, p. 874–75). True, the British were nervous about the idea of evacuating Germany, especially given the strength of Soviet-backed police forces, and they had pledged to establish a stable government for Western Germany before sending any troops home (Bruce, 1949, p. 878). Yet as I have explained, Program A contained provisions intended to assuage both of these concerns.

The French, too, revealed themselves to be neither as narrow-minded nor as reflexively Germanophobic as American officials assumed them to be. In March 1949, a French official, clearly speaking under instructions from Paris, told Kennan that “the time had come for a sweeping and forward-looking solution” to problems in Germany. France was open, he declared, to the abolition of Allied military government and a scaling-back of the Allied administrative presence. True, the official did not seek to withdraw troops, and his comments on administration referred only to steps to be taken by “the three [presumably Western] governments.” Yet intriguingly, he concluded by declaring that “[w]e should seize the occasion . . . to place *the whole German question* [emphasis mine] on a new and higher plane” (Kennan, 1949b, p. 113–14). Indeed, even after the Reston debacle, the French did not categorically oppose the creation of a single German state. At the Paris conference, French officials declared that unification would be acceptable provided that free elections were held and that the national government operated according to the constitutional framework that had emerged from the London proposals (Bruce, 1949, p. 878). Program A, I have shown, was not incompatible with such aims.

V. CONCLUSION

Of course, as explained in the introduction to this paper, the aftereffects of the Reston article ensured that the softer side, the persuasive side of Program A never saw the light of day in Europe. But what if things had been different? What if, instead of confronting the troop-regrouping proposals alone, lifted from their context and set sprawling across the front page of the *New York Times*, the British and French had seen those proposals set alongside Kennan’s reassuring safeguard proposals? What if Program A had been proffered

⁷ As will be explained below, the strength of police forces in the Soviet zone worried the British. See Bevin, 1949, p. 875.

carefully, firmly, and most importantly *in toto*, under better conditions than those brought about by the leak, which Kennan deemed a “spectacular *coup de grace*” directed against his plan (as cited in Miscamble, 1992, p. 170)? What if the states of Western Europe had been presented with a sensible, well-conceived alternative to embracing the strong transatlantic commitment that cemented the division of their continent?

To try to answer these questions, to draw more exciting conclusions about what might have happened had Kennan’s grand scheme been seriously discussed during the Paris Conference, would be to leap into the realm of historical fiction—an interesting exercise, to be sure, but one that lies beyond the scope of an academic paper. It should be clear, though, that the demise of Program A and the establishment of American hegemony in Western Europe cannot be blamed exclusively on the Europeans. Conceivably, something akin to Kennan’s proposals might have emerged from determined negotiations with the British and the French. That this did not occur was partly, but not entirely, the fault of the Europeans. American officials, by assuming that their allies were incapable of compromise, fatally limited the pressure they were willing to exert on Kennan’s behalf. The version of the “empire by invitation” thesis put forward by Gaddis and Ikenberry thus demands revision: Europe may have extended an invitation to empire, but as Kennan grasped, the United States bore the responsibility for accepting it.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This paper has been adapted from a research essay originally produced in the fall of 2015 for History 130, Professor Daniel Sargent’s course at the University of California-Berkeley on the history of the United States’ foreign policy. I would like to thank Professor Sargent and my graduate student instructor, Ryan Nelson, for all the help they have given me; Professor Jeffrey Pennington, who reviewed my paper at the 2017 Claremont-UC Undergraduate Research Conference, also provided me with invaluable assistance. Kenneth Leonardo and the editors of this Journal were excellent guides through the revision process. This paper is dedicated to my grandfather, Thomas Dant, who fostered my interest in Kennan.

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