

# 11. The End of Double Containment. The Revolution of German Foreign Policy in Historical Perspective, 1990

German unity is the result of a peaceful revolution of world politics within Europe. The collapse of communist rule and the revolutions of freedom of Eastern and Central Europe, the disintegration of the Soviet empire, the de facto end of the Warsaw Pact and NATO as we knew it, the policies of that radical innovator Gorbachev, and the decisive action of the present German government have profoundly changed Germany's foreign policy position and its room to maneuver in foreign policy. The Germans, defeated and divided in 1945, tamed and contained in 1955, are being given a third chance to play a productive role in Europe and the world as a united, free, democratic, and peaceable state.

This upheaval in German foreign policy can only be understood if one recalls German, European, and world politics from 1947 to 1955. During these years, the basic structures of international politics were created; the same ones which are now collapsing. This initial phase represents the antithesis, the historical contrast to the revolution of the present.

The German Reich was able to maintain its existence as a nation-state in the First World War and lost it in the Second World War as a result of the attempt by Hitler and National Socialist Germany to conquer Europe under National Socialist tyranny. Since the assumption of supreme governmental authority by the four victorious and occupying powers on July 5, 1945, there was no longer a German nation-state in the political sense—however international law scholars have interpreted this fact. The fate of the Germans was no longer decided by the Germans, but by the interests of the victorious powers and their neighbors. The Germans themselves had only plans, hopes, and illusions.

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## Germany as an Object of World History

Germany became an object of world history; its unity fell victim to the dynamics of global East-West tension, especially the American-Soviet antagonism. Since the victorious powers could not agree on a common policy on Germany, each power integrated its part into its own sphere of power.

The initiative for the establishment of a German western state originated from the USA. When American politicians realized in 1946/47 that they could only have half of Germany, they decided to have half of Germany entirely. They wanted to ensure that the future West German state would have a federal, liberal, and free-market capitalist form, closely integrated economically, politically, and eventually militarily into the Western camp. The political foundations laid in 1949 had been preceded by the economic foundation that were laid in 1948. The inclusion of the three western occupation zones in the Marshall Plan, the currency reform in the western zones, and the basic economic policy decision in favor of a socially committed market economy ensured that the new western state would under no circumstances adopt a socialist, even communist economic system.

After North Korea's invasion of South Korea in July 1950, i.e., after the Far Eastern Cold War had turned into a hot war, first the American military, then the American politicians became convinced that the Federal Republic had to be rearmed. A few years after the defeat of Hitler's armies, they were the first to dare to say the, then, almost unspeakable: that Western Europe could not be defended without German soldiers.

This American policy toward Germany formed at the same time a central and integral part of American policy toward Western Europe. The following goals of American foreign policy were closely related: the political unification of Western Europe; the economic and political integration of the western half of Germany into a liberal-capitalist world economy; and a controlled, limited, and denationalized rearmament of the Federal Republic. German soldiers were to help improve the security and defense capability of Western Europe under the American nuclear guarantee; an independent German army was not to be created.

## **The Two Sides of U.S. Foreign Policy**

American policy toward Germany was thus a subordinate function of the global containment policy toward the Soviet Union and international communism. The westward integration and rearmament of the Federal Republic served the purpose of containing the Soviet Union and the communist danger. At the same time, however, and this is often overlooked by Germans, they served to contain the German danger itself. From the perspective of the Americans and the Western Europeans, the economic, political, and eventually military integration of the Federal Republic into the European and Atlantic organizations was at the same time intended to prevent Germany from becoming a danger to the West again for all time to come. And finally, Western integration was to prevent the Federal Republic from attempting a neutralist policy between the blocs. This was the strategic purpose of the policy of double containment in Western Europe: To keep the Soviets out, the Americans in, the Germans down, and the Europeans happy.

The Americans found their most important ally for the policy of Western integration in the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Konrad Adenauer. Adenauer's goals were largely parallel to those of the United States. Adenauer wanted exactly that: the unification of Western Europe, the Westward integration and rearmament of the Federal Republic, Franco-German reconciliation, and security and economic welfare for the German Western state within the framework of the West and the Atlantic Alliance. The most important common precondition was the joint designation of the Soviet Union as the supreme enemy. In this, Truman and Acheson, Eisenhower and Dulles agreed with Adenauer. Moreover, as his electoral successes showed, Adenauer succeeded in convincing the majority of West Germans of the correctness of his foreign policy. Western integration and anti-communism were two sides of the same coin.

### **Adenauer's Grand Bargain**

This convergence of interests with the U.S. made possible Adenauer's grand bargain of reciprocity in the years from 1950 to 1955. After the outbreak of the Korean War, Adenauer offered rearmament to the Western powers and demanded the lifting of the occupation statute, i.e., the sovereignty of the Federal Republic.

American policy toward Germany was broadly supported by Great Britain. British policy after World War II was under no illusions that economic recovery and the defense of Western Europe could succeed without American help. Therefore, tying the United States to Europe in perpetuity was an integral part of its policy after 1945. London supported the policy of containment and integration of West Germany; in the fall of 1950, the British government agreed in principle to German rearmament. However, like the Americans, the British assumed that German rearmament should not mean the rebirth of a national German army and an independent German general staff.

In the West, the greatest resistance to the establishment of a German western state, especially to a new German army, came from France. While the first phase of French policy toward Germany from 1945 to March 1947 was characterized by harsh thoroughgoing demands regarding French security policy, a second phase amounted to reluctant accommodation of Anglo-Saxon ideas. The Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in March 1947 marked the turning point, at which Paris had to recognize that neither the Anglo-Saxons nor Stalin were prepared to take French interests into account in the intensifying East-West conflict. Given its narrow power base and economic dependence on the U.S., France had no choice but to conform to Anglo-American policy toward Germany. So, if it could not be prevented, it was necessary for France to become active and to influence the founding of the Federal Republic, the form of its integration into the West, and its rearmament as far as possible.

This turn in French policy toward Germany could not be taken for granted, as it was exposed to the fluctuations of public opinion and changing party constellations within France. The French National Assembly approved the London recommendations for the establishment of a Western state only by a narrow majority, 297 votes to 289. One can construct an alternative course of history in which nine French votes prevented the founding of the Federal Republic. In contrast, French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman's plan to place all Franco-German steel and coal production under a common supreme supervisory authority, which other European countries could join, received more support in France. This plan eventually led to the Treaty of April 18, 1951, that established the European Coal and Steel Community.

The acid test of the new French policy toward Germany, however, was the French reaction to the Anglo-American desire to rearm the Federal Republic. This project evoked all France's primal fears of

Germany. France was caught between the fear of the Soviet danger and the fear of new German soldiers. The French would have preferred to equip the Federal Republic with weapons that could only fire eastward.

French policy gradually provided three answers to this dilemma: First, the plan of French Defense Minister René Pleven from Oct. 24, 1950; second, the Treaty on the European Defense Community (EDC), concluded by France, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg on May 27, 1952, which failed in the French National Assembly on Aug. 30, 1954; and finally, French approval of the accession of the Federal Republic to the Western European Union (WEU) and NATO on Dec. 29, 1954.

The Pleven Plan discriminated so strongly against the Federal Republic and the German soldiers that were deemed necessary that it met with determined resistance not only from Konrad Adenauer but also from the Anglo-Saxons and thus failed. The EDC—the integrated European army with a European defense minister—failed because the majority of the French did not want to do without the symbol of their own greatness and independence, their own national army, the “Grande Armée.” The fact that the French National Assembly eventually agreed to the substitute solution to the EDC just a few months later, namely, the accession of the Federal Republic to the Western European Union and NATO, was due to the fact that the new construction left France’s national sovereign rights and its national army untouched.

From 1948 to 1955, the Soviet Union tried in vain to prevent the establishment of a Western state and German rearmament by bargain and intimidation, by carrot and stick. It did not want to resign itself to losing decisive influence over Germany as a whole. In addition to this expansionist objective, Stalin and his successors saw the security of the Soviet Union to be at stake. Especially the planned European defense community held threatening prospects from the Soviet point of view: A combination of NATO, American nuclear superiority, pan-European armed forces, German soldiers, and a Federal Republic that laid claim to a reunified Germany, and a revision of the Oder-Neisse border constituted a dangerous “imperialist and revisionist bloc” in Moscow’s view.

How could the Soviet Union stop the “express train to the West”? The Berlin blockade of 1948/49 had failed due to the determined resistance of the Americans and the airlift; a military invasion of the Federal Republic would certainly have led to World War III.

## The Key to Unity Lays in Moscow

There was only one remedy: to offer the Federal Republic and the Germans what they could not achieve without the Soviet Union—German reunification. Even then, the key to German unity lay in Moscow. All of Stalin's diplomatic offers—especially his famous notes from 1952—and those of his successors were aimed at a neutralized reunified-Germany and at the same time at the Achilles' heel of Adenauer's foreign policy which was the basis for the passionate reproach from his domestic opponents, especially the SPD; namely, that western integration meant the division of Germany.

The Western powers and Adenauer were determined to reject Stalin's offer. They considered it a maneuver by the Soviets to stop Western integration, to decouple Germany from the United States, and to bring a neutralized Germany under Soviet control. The Western powers therefore built in their responses a maximum position that Stalin and his successors would not accept: A freely elected all-German government that would have the right to enter into defensive alliances, i.e., to join NATO of its own free will. The revolutionary nature of the current foreign policy was particularly evident in the fact that on July 15 and 16 of this year, in negotiations with Chancellor Kohl and Foreign Minister Genscher, Gorbachev ended 45 years of Soviet policy on Germany by agreeing to precisely this non-negotiable Western position. At that time, a Soviet politician would probably have been immediately shot at the Kremlin wall for such an act.

In 1955/56, the process of dividing Europe and Germany came to an end when the Federal Republic joined NATO and the GDR joined the Warsaw Pact. Until the revolution of the present, this appeared to be unalterable, because the attempt of a violent change would have meant the nuclear downfall of Europe, while a peaceful upheaval was not imaginable.

The foreign policy revolution of the present means the end of the double containment policy in Europe. Not only those who were contained until 1989, the Soviet Union and Germany, but all European states and the overseas guarantor of equilibrium in Europe, the USA, are faced with the enormous task of representing the national interests of their individual states, in a new pan-European order. So far, this order is only dimly visible, especially in the main area of security policy, where a new structure is not yet discernible.

The united Germany will have to find its foreign policy position in Europe and the world in view of the mortgage of the Third Reich and under the worried and suspicious eyes of its neighbors. In addition to the joy over the fall of the Wall and the triumph of freedom, since November, fear of a new great power in Europe has become visible in London, Paris, The Hague, Copenhagen, Oslo, Warsaw, Moscow, and Tel Aviv, not infrequently coupled with envy and jealousy of the Germans, who have been so successful. As in 1848, 1871, and 1919, it is only the Americans who have no problems with a united Germany in the center of Europe. Germany's neighbors, maltreated by the Nazi tyranny of Germany, hope that the united Germany will retain the foreign policy culture of the Federal Republic, which on the whole was characterized by a high degree of sobriety, a sense of proportion, a sense of what was possible in terms of power politics, the ability to cooperate and compromise, and, above all, a realistic consideration for the legitimate interests of other states.

They fear a new economic superpower that will eventually also throw off the security shackles it has put on itself by reducing its armed forces to 370,000 men and continuing to renounce nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. The fact that the German government did not inform and consult the Allies either before the Chancellor's historic speech on Nov. 28, 1989, or before the decisions on the Caucasus, alarmed Germany's allies. They therefore did everything to ensure that a united Germany would seek its welfare and security in Europe and with its neighbors, not against Europe and against its neighbors. The Germans have learned from history, for possible new German aggressions the objective possibilities and the domestic political pre-conditions are all missing.

Economic domination of Europe by the Germans is not in sight. A united Germany generates about 30 percent of the gross national product of the European Community expanded to include the GDR. That is a significant portion, but far from dominance. Within the framework of a free world economy, the way to the East is open not only to the Germans, but to all nations. Moreover, the reconstruction of the bankrupt economic, social, and educational system of the former GDR, the economic price that the Germans have to pay to the Soviet Union for unification, and the movement of poverty from the East flooding into Germany will become for the foreseeable future not only a source of new prosperity but also of great internal German conflicts and identity debates.

In the opinion of the author, everything speaks against the idea that the special economic burdens and sociopolitical conflicts will be of considerable magnitude. Before the unification yields profits, it will cost a great deal. The entrepreneurs already know that the prosperity of the Germans must continue to be earned essentially in the West and on the traditional markets.

A security threat to Europe by the Germans is completely without foundation. By recognizing the Oder-Neisse border, Germany ceased to be a revisionist power. It has found its geography and its borders after two world wars. Militarily, it will be a power capable on its own of neither defense nor offense. Germany's neighbors will do their utmost to keep the country at the center of Europe in this position, and in this sense will continue the policy of containment by other means.

### **No Particular German Security Problem**

There is no particular German security problem for Europe in the foreseeable future. The present and future question is how Europe as a whole will organize its security after the end of the Cold War. The Warsaw Pact and NATO were military alliances whose purpose in life was tied to the historical era of the Cold War. With the loss of their enemy, they have lost their purpose. Soldiers and weapons require a new justification. Organizations such as the UN, a transformed NATO, the Western European Union (WEU), the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), and the European Community (EC) compete to assume security functions.

The cardinal problem lies in Europe's relationship with the United States. Europe will continue to depend on the USA as a global military power for protection against the nuclear potential of the Soviet Union, and as a guarantor of freedom of the seas and access to energy sources. Europe can only increase its influence within the Western community of security and values if it succeeds in a second attempt in what failed in 1954 at the French National Assembly: the establishment of a functioning European Defense Community as the second pillar of a transatlantic security structure. The chances of this, however, remain slim, with English and French nationalism in particular jealously guarding their own sovereign rights as an expression of national power and greatness.



### **Nationalist Narrowness no Longer Stands a Chance**

After the loss of victors' rights in Germany, France and England will cling to the remaining two factors that symbolize their prominent place in the community of nations, nuclear power status and permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council. A re-nationalized defense doctrine of France could, ironically, only create the problems in relation to Germany that our western neighbors fear so much.

However, the best protection against German-national unilateralism lies in the development of world history itself. The great tasks of the present cannot all be solved at the national level, many not even at the European level. The world has become irrevocably interdependent. The welfare and security of the Germans can only be guaranteed in the difficult, expensive, and strenuous business of international cooperation, which is always threatened by setbacks. A disengagement from America and a relapse into nationalistic narrowness, even ersatz religious chauvinism, could endanger both.

