

CLOSING THE IDENTITY GAP: THE SEARCH FOR GERMAN UNITY

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INTRODUCTION: INTERNATIONAL REALITIES

The collapse of the German *Reich* on May 8, 1945, opened a new chapter of German and world history. As the focus of two moral and political catastrophes, referred to by Raymond Aron as the Thirty Years War of the twentieth century, Germany felt itself never again to reemerge from the devastation of World War II. Yet, the Cold War again made Germany the focus of international politics. Implicated in a global conflict that conditioned their emergence, the two German states were forced to seek new viable roles and positions in a geographically and ideologically divided Europe.

West German historian Michael Stürmer describes the fundamental dilemma that resulted from the new bipolar international constellation:

Partner of the American sea alliance in the West, part of the Soviet land empire in the East, loyal to irreconcilable systems of values and government, the uneasy heirs to German history are threatened as well as supported through this antagonism, whether they like it or not.¹

Undoubtedly, this dilemma helped to rebuild West Germany economically and socially in the Federal Republic's first decades. While Konrad Adenauer's *Westintegration* and Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* consolidated the Federal Republic, earning international respect under Helmut Schmidt, the West Germans had to accept two constraints: First, they had to restrain themselves from projecting power outside the Alliance; and second, they had to defer not only to American leadership but American dominance as well.

Things have changed, however, in the past decade. Known for his "great statesmanship," Helmut Schmidt set the stage for increased West German self-confidence. Although Germans and Americans have always found reasons to disagree on issues, friction had never been so deep before Schmidt. In fact, Jimmy Carter, in his memoirs, described one of his encounters with Schmidt as "the most unpleasant personal exchange I ever had with a foreign leader."² By the end of Schmidt's tenure as Chancellor, the West German public strongly questioned the underlying motives of American foreign policy. In a

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1. Michael Stürmer, "The Perennial German Question — Is There a German Answer?" *Meet Germany* (Hamburg: Atlantik-Brücke, 1987), p. 50.
2. Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (Toronto/New York: Bantam Books, 1982), p. 538.

1981 public opinion poll, for example, only 38 percent of the German population felt the Federal Republic should adopt Reagan's hard-line course toward the Soviet Union, while 60 percent spoke in favor of distancing itself from Reagan's foreign policy.³ West German media described Reagan as a neo-conservative — an extremely pejorative term in German — with propensities for war-mongering. Reagan's "messianic promise" to rebuild American military power was viewed by a large majority of Germans as threatening. Reagan's foreign policy announcements simply reminded many of the Cold War,⁴ whose impact is still felt upon Germany's, and especially Berlin's, political life. Reagan's emphasis on neo-conservative values was, thus, interpreted as reactionary and as a move backward.⁵

The "counter-culture" that developed in West Germany spread fears of future and progress (*Zukunftsangst* and *Fortschrittsangst*) as well as cultural pessimism (*Kulturpessimismus*).⁶ The alternative threat perception the resurgent protest movement brought forth evoked anti-American or anti-Reagan demonstrations against future deployments of Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs). Under the umbrella of the peace movement, the ideologically divergent groupings, ranging from orthodox communists to concerned Christians, propagated neutralism and romanticist nationalism. In view of these developments in the past decade, the Federal Republic has become ambiguous in the eyes of many Americans. In addition, the 1985 Bitburg affair, the still unresolved Waldheim affair, as well as the recent historical debate on Germany's past and its significance for national identity, have stirred up deeply rooted emotions in both the United States and West Germany.

When Helmut Kohl was elected West German Chancellor in October 1982, he redefined the basics of German-American relations, emphasizing the fundamental system of common values. In his farewell speech for President Reagan on June 12, 1987, Kohl noted that German-American relations were based on "our commitment to freedom, the common heritage and civilization of our peoples, which rest upon the principles of democracy, individual freedom, and the rule of law."⁷ Bilateral differences in opinions, he stated, only follow naturally from major differences in size, geography, and global significance⁸ and cannot shake the foundation of common values. However, for Kohl, the West Germans have to consciously realize that these values which they share with the United States are also their own values.

3. "Militärische Stärke: Gleichgewicht genügt," (Military Strength: Balance Suffices) *Der Spiegel*, 2 March 1981, pp. 35-36.

4. See Hartmut Söll, "Der zweite Kalte Krieg," (The Second Cold War) *Der Spiegel*, 6 April 1981, pp. 48-49.

5. Helmut Ahrens has clearly underlined this hypothesis in his book entitled *Reagan's America: Forward to Yesterday* (Reagans Amerika. Vorwärts nach getern) (Augsburg: Hofman Verlag, 1982).

6. Helmut Kohl, "Weichenstellung für die Zukunft," (Shifting the Switches for the Future), *Die politische Meinung* 32 (1987): 10-11.

7. *Bulletin*, 20 June 1987, p. 535.

8. Helmut Kohl, "Amerikas Verfassung ist das Symbol der Freiheit," (America's Constitution is the Symbol of Freedom) *Die Welt*, 14 September 1987.

By discovering what Samuel P. Huntington once referred to as the "IvI gap" i.e., the widespread gap between political ideals vs. institutions,⁹ Kohl perceives U.S.-German problems to be rooted in Germany's problem of national identity. While the Federal Republic's constitution mandates adherence to German national identity, the past 40 years of political reality and Germany's recent past have stifled feelings of German history and culture. The German "IvI gap" exists between the constitutional ideal of one German national identity and the reality of two German states. Thus, in the past decades, West Germany's national identity has only been defined in terms of economic growth and social security. Determined to close this identity gap, Kohl has developed a new program called "national identity and moral re-orientation" which includes a different approach to reunification. It is both an internal and an external concept. West Germans must strive to identify with positive historical and cultural values, while assuaging the West's and the East's suspicions and fears of a revival of German nationalism.

This essay, thus, seeks to achieve an understanding of West Germany's quest for national identity in the face of its legal and historical dilemma. It depicts Chancellor Helmut Kohl's national identity approach and analyzes it in a domestic and international context. In a concluding section, implications are drawn for the future reunification of Germany.

THE LEGAL AND HISTORICAL DILEMMA

The Constitutional Link of Identity and Reunification.

Germany's search for national identity is closely linked to the issue of reunification (*Wiedervereinigung*). The fathers of the "Basic Law" (*Grundgesetz*) of 1949, the Federal Republic's provisional constitution, clearly stated that they "also acted on behalf of those Germans to whom participation was denied." Considering the division of the German nation¹⁰ unacceptable, the Basic Law mandates the entire German people to "achieve in free self-determination the unity and freedom of Germany." This constitutional claim questions the legitimacy of the German Democratic Republic. Moreover, the Basic Law proclaims the continuation of one German nationality by defining a German as "a person who possesses German citizenship or who has been admitted to the territory of the German Reich within the frontiers of 31 December 1937 as a refugee or expellee of German stock (*Volkszugehörigkeit*)." Every East German is therefore entitled to a West German passport. Naturally, the Basic Law has always been a source of political unease and national ambiguity.

9. Samuel P. Huntington, *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1981) pp. 39-42.

10. The "Two German states, but one German nation" theory is even imprinted in the West German passport. While the cover states "Passport — Federal Republic of Germany," inside page one reads that "The Bearer of this Passport is a German."

Initially, the East German ideological approach sought an independent, but German, identity under the auspices of its Soviet "protector." However, in 1967, the Ulbricht government replaced the citizenship law of 1913, which it still shared with the West Germans, with one of its own. Hereafter, East Germans were not German citizens but GDR citizens. The 1974 constitution completed the first step, superseding "German identity" by "socialist identity" independent of German nationhood. This apparently caused some confusion in the GDR, so the chief ideologues of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) were called upon to differentiate between "socialist nation" and "German nationality." Nation was henceforth to be understood in the dialectic terms of class struggle, while nationality was degraded to an ethnic factor.¹¹

The search for identity in both parts of Germany, once the great nation of Enlightenment, romanticism and culture (*Kulturnation*) of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was overshadowed by international developments. In the first years after World War II the Cold War enforced the division of Germany and Europe. Bipolarity compelled each part of Germany to find its respective protector. International reality, therefore, defined Germany's identity before the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic had regained the necessary independence to do so themselves. The postwar period is best described as Germany's efforts in both West and East to rebuild its respective part of the country and to find its new bloc role and position. While Konrad Adenauer's *Westpolitik* defined identity in terms of West Germany's role in the East-West conflict by offering its "geostrategic key position for the defense of Europe against the Soviet threat as the chief bargaining chip,"¹² Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* identified West Germany's position through his Eastern Treaties *Ostverträge*.¹³

The division of Germany is still a reality and the two German states have found their roles and positions in a divided Europe. Yet, now that the consolidation phase has finally ended, the issue of identity has become more important. The two Germanies have regained self-confidence. East Germany is the Soviet Union's most important economic and military ally as is West Germany for the United States. American politicians in the 1980s, including the late U.S. Ambassador to Bonn, Arthur Burns,¹⁴ and his successor Richard Burt,¹⁵ have repeatedly pointed to West Germany's political and economic

11. See Boris Meissner, "Die deutsche Nation und das deutsche Volk aus der Sicht der UdSSR" (The German Nation and the German People from the Perspectives of the USSR and GDR) in Dieter Blumenwitz/Boris Meissner, eds., *Staatliche und national Einheit Deutschlands — ihre Effektivität* (Cologne: Verlag Politik und Wissenschaft, 1984) pp. 152-153.

12. Stürmer, "The Perennial German Question," p. 50; see also Michael Stürmer, "Nation und Demokratie. Zur Substanz des deutschen Nationalbewusstseins," (Nation and Democracy: On the Substance of the German National Identity.) *Die politische Meinung*, 32 (1987): 26.

13. See Manfred Goertemaker, "German Foreign Policy: Where Does It Stand?" in *Meet Germany*, p. 11.

14. "Burns: Bundesbürger können stolz sein," (Burns: West Germans Can be Proud) *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung*, 15 March 1985.

15. "Burt verlangt tatsächliche Veränderungen," (Burt Calls for Real Changes) *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 11 January 1988; "Burt: Beseitigung der deutschen Teilung muss Ziel der Strategie des Westens sein," (Burt: Overcoming the Division of Germany Must Be the West's Goal) *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 23 May 1987.

successes as a legitimate source of "national awareness" (*Nationalbewusstsein*). But again, to which nation are they referring: the German nation or the nation of the Federal Republic of Germany? While the latter does not exist by constitution, the former now raises definitional problems.

The Role of History in German Reunification

In recent years, Germans have been discovering the role history can play in resolving their identity problem. Although the increasing significance of German history in West Germany has been closely observed by the United States, American foreign policy leaders find it extremely difficult to understand history's role in shaping Germany's future. Michael Stürmer, an academic confidant of historian Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the most articulate advocate of German national identity, emphasizes that the part of Germany that "possesses [Germany's] history is likely to be in charge of its future."¹⁶ Stürmer's warnings came at a time when East German historians started to claim Germany's entire national history for themselves to illustrate that the GDR, and not the Federal Republic, is the logical consequence of German history.

Until recently, history served to illustrate how far postwar Germany has dissociated itself from its Nazi past. For decades the Germans have attempted to come to terms with this era of German history. They have tended to repress or suppress the horrors of German totalitarianism in the twentieth century by struggling hard to rebuild their country economically. Given the devastation of the country in 1945, it is not surprising that just ten years after the war the world was talking about the German "economic miracle." However, a moral reconstruction of Germany seemed inappropriate considering the atrocious crimes which were committed in its name. By constitution the Federal Republic is the legal successor (*Rechtsnachfolger*) of the German Reich, thus inheriting the legacy of the Nazi past. The Germans, including those who enjoy — as Chancellor Kohl once coined it — "the grace of late birth" — were, and still are, plagued by a "collective guilt feeling" as a result. This left little, if any, room for German patriotism. As Cologne historian Hans-Peter Schwarz once stated, "the misuse of patriotic sentiments under National Socialism has 'affected the very core' of German patriotism to this day."¹⁷ This has had a profound effect on West Germany's reunification concept.

Since the division of Germany, reunification has been defined in both West and East in terms of the two German Republics reuniting to form one country. The concept of reunification has thus been conceived of only from a geographical point of view. The approaches that both East and West Germany developed to regain their identity reflect incompatibility from the beginning on. While

16. Quoted in Richard von Weizsäcker, "Die mitte kann auf Dauer nicht Grenze sein," (The Middle Cannot be Border Forever), in Karl Lamers, ed., *Suche nach Deutschland. Nationale Identität und die Deutschlandpolitik* (Bonn: Europa Union Verlag; 1983), p. 15.

17. Quoted in Reinhard Meier, "Germany and Patriotism," *Swiss Review of World Affairs* 37 (1987): 11.

the West employed the "geographical identity approach" through peaceful reunification, the East practiced the "ideological identity approach" through socialist revolution. The debate on the identity of such a future reunited Germany has focused merely upon three options: a communist Germany, a democratic Germany and a neutral Germany. Other alternatives are currently inconceivable.¹⁸ Naturally, the "geographical approach" has caused feelings of concern not only in the East. The loss of the GDR, the Soviet Union's most efficient and productive ally in the Warsaw Pact, would have a negative impact upon the military balance, let alone the East bloc's economic strength. Though a superpower with a strong conventional military and nuclear posture, the Soviets would undoubtedly feel threatened by a reunited Germany with its combined military and economic power. The United States, having never experienced a military confrontation on her own soil in the twentieth century, tends to downplay this threat felt by the Russians, who can point to the loss of 20 million lives and the destruction of parts of its country. Hitler's National Socialist ideology treated the Slavs as "subhumans" (*Untermenschen*). With these memories in mind it is most unlikely that the Soviet Union has ever seriously considered geographic reunification as the solution to the perennial German question.

The complex bipolar system and the military balance have also restricted the West's options for a viable solution. The West Germans, conscious of the East-West stalemate and their vulnerable position, especially in Berlin, have sensed the unease with which the West deals with Germany's unresolved nationhood. Some West Germans have voiced their skepticism about the willingness of their Western allies to pursue a policy in favor of reunification. After all, they query, where were the Allies on June 17, 1953, now celebrated in West Germany as its "Day of German Unity," when Germans in the East rose against their rulers in Pankow¹⁹ and Moscow? Why did they refrain from intervening on August 13, 1961, when East Berlin laced the demarcation line with barbed wire, thereby insulating the last loophole, West Berlin, from the influx of East German refugees? The allied policy of restraint was rationalized both with British, and in particular French, fears of a united Germany dominating the European continent. Hence, persistent allied reiterations in support of the Federal Republic's reunification policy have often been considered empty rhetoric.²⁰ In fact, frustrated and disillusioned by the *de facto* stalemate, West Germans themselves began to distance themselves from the idea of reunification, ascribing it to the realm of utopia. Moreover, some Greens have reflected publicly on the taboo issue of deleting the Basic Law's reunification passage and have called for an agreement on the citizenship issue with the GDR.

18. See *Die Welt's* four-part series on "The Germans and Their Fatherland," especially part 4: "The Younger Generation also Desires a Reunited Germany," *Die Welt*, 30 October 1987, p. 6.

19. Pankow, then seat of the Ulbricht government, is the city district located in the northern part of East Berlin.

20. See "Erklärungsbedürftig," (A Need to Explain) *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 11 January 1988, p. 10.

THE DOMESTIC APPROACH: NATIONAL IDENTITY AND MORAL
REORIENTATION

National Identity Supplemented

Speaking at the 1985 Aspen Conference in Berlin, Michael Stürmer suggested that the more international responsibility the Federal Republic assumes, the more there is a need for "healthy patriotism," or "national awareness" (*Staatsbürgerbewusstsein*), in West Germany.²¹ Irving Kristol, editor of the neo-conservative journal *The Public Interest*, also urged the Germans several years ago to develop a "pro-German" stand which allows for sufficient common interests with the United States to "realize a German-American alliance."²²

Kohl's political philosophy and policies, while rejecting neo-nationalism and romantic neutralism, reflect this positive view of "national awareness." He has made it his administration's political program to close the perceived gap between economic/military strength and political strength by overcoming Germany's sense of moral inferiority. A nation's self-image, he claims, cannot be defined merely in economic and social terms, but must be supplemented by the awareness of history and culture.²³ Calling for "national identity and moral reorientation," Kohl reminds us that the Germans cannot be aware of their country as a homeland (*Heimat*) and proud of it unless they know and accept their history, both the positive and negative sides of it. "National identity," Kohl continues, "is primarily founded upon the knowledge of historical and cultural roots. Only through this can we acquire the orientation we need to cope with the present and mark out perspectives for the future."²⁴

In a speech at the University of Heidelberg last November, Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker emphasized that Germany's national feeling was rooted primarily in German culture:

Philosophy and poetry, Lessing, Herder, Kant, and Goethe shaped the image and self-confidence of the Germans. This was not an unpolitical path. The early democratic movements of the *Paulskirche* were personified by the noblest minds. They were profound patriots. They accelerated the German question which was marked by the tension between unity and domestic freedom.²⁵

21. Uwe Schlicht, "Allergisch gegen Begriff 'Sicherheitspartnerschaft'," (Allergic Against the Word 'Security partnership') *Der Tagesspiegel*, 6 December 1985.

22. Irving Kristol, "Historische, philosophische und soziologische Wurzeln des Konservatismus: Aus amerikanischer Sicht," (Historical, Philosophical, and Sociological Roots of Conservatism: An American View) in Hans Rühle et al., *Der Neo-Konservatismus in den Vereinigten Staaten und seine Auswirkungen auf die Atlantische Allianz* (Melle: Verlag Ernst Knoth, 1982), p. 73; see also Robert Gerald Linington, "Drängen auf einen deutschen Patriotismus," (Urging German Patriotism) *Die Zeit*, 12 June 1987.

23. Helmut Kohl, "Policy Statement by Chancellor Helmut Kohl to the German Bundestag of 18 March 1987," *Statements and Speeches*, 23 March 1987, p. 3. (Hereafter referred to as "Policy Statement").

24. Kohl, "Weichenstellung für die Zukunft," p. 12.

25. Richard von Weizsäcker, "Nachdenken über Patriotismus," (Reflecting Upon Patriotism) speech before the University of Heidelberg of November 6, 1987, in *Bulletin*, 11 November 1987, p. 1022.

In the light of these self-confident views and the need to ensure the practical cultivation of German history and culture, Kohl's "moral re-orientation" program provides for the erection of two museums, the Museum of the History of the Federal Republic in Bonn and the German Historical Museum in Berlin. Justifying the latter museum during the commemoration ceremonies of Berlin's 750th anniversary, Kohl pointed out that this museum "attempts to illustrate German history — in its entire diversity, with both its grand and dark chapters. It is intended . . . to be a place of remembrance of and reflection upon the origin and future of our nation."²⁶

The domestic debate on the museum issue clearly demonstrated that West Germans still have problems coming to terms with their recent past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*). In his widely praised speech before the German *Bundestag* commemorating the 40th anniversary of the end of World War II, Weizsäcker emphasized that all Germans,

. . . whether guilty or not, whether old or young, must accept the past. We are all affected by its consequences and liable for it . . . We must understand that there can be no reconciliation without remembrance . . . We certainly have no reason to be arrogant and self-righteous. But we may use the memory of our own history as a guideline for our future behavior.²⁷

Similarly, CSU chairman Strauss insisted that it is "high time for Germans, in full awareness of historical reality, to 'step out of the shadow the Third Reich' and move through the present with an 'upright posture' (*aufrechter Gang*)."²⁸ Kohl's reconciliation ceremonies with French President Mitterrand and President Reagan in Verdun and Bitburg, respectively, served precisely this purpose, although, as the Bitburg case clearly illustrated, Kohl underestimated American sensitivity in this respect.

The Concept of Constitutional Patriotism

Kohl understands his policy of "moral renewal" as a turn toward value-oriented attitudes. In pursuing this policy he wants to "strengthen the awareness of basic values, particularly the link between freedom and responsibility."²⁹ In view of West Germany's need to identify with positive national values, the phrase "constitutional patriotism" (*Verfassungspatriotismus*), coined by political scientist Dolf Sternberger, has been frequently cited. This concept "combines the emotional value of love for the homeland with the rational, democratic values of the liberal constitutional state . . . without promoting an ahistorical or anti-historical rootlessness."³⁰ The Bonn historian and political

26. Helmut Kohl, "Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin," (German Historical Museum in Berlin) in *Bulletin*, 30 October 1987, p. 973.

27. Excerpts from Richard von Weizsäcker's speech "There Can Be No Reconciliation Without Remembrance," in *Meet Germany*, p. 51.

28. Quoted in Meier, "Germany and Patriotism," p. 10.

29. Kohl, "Policy Statement," p. 1.

30. Meier, "Germany and Patriotism," p. 11.

philosopher, Karl-Dietrich Bracher, defines "constitutional patriotism in a post-national democracy" as a cosmopolitan concept, "freed from nationalist blinders and anchored in Western Enlightenment values and the traditions of the constitutional democracy."³¹

The critics of "constitutional patriotism," however, question its constitutionality because it is based on the "principle of discontinuity" of Germany as a whole.³² Michael Stürmer, seeking historical and cultural identification with Germany as a whole, interprets "constitutional patriotism" in terms of "rejection of the totalitarian temptation and integration of older German traditions such as the rule of law, republicanism, the welfare state, and liberal economics."³³ In his Heidelberg University speech, Weizsäcker, reflecting upon constitutional patriotism, combined these different opinions uttered in the recent debate and concluded:

. . . cosmopolitanism and patriotism are not mutually exclusive. As a native to one's own country, one can understand and respect a neighbor's patriotism. Europe is taking this direction. Here neighborly bonds are maturing which are unique in this world. A patriotism, which is related to one's own people and still allows for a growing European feeling of togetherness, is increasingly and fortunately becoming a normal case for the Europeans' self-image.³⁴

THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT: TIES WITH THE WEST

In view of American and allied fears of a revival of German nationalism and neutralism in the early 1980s, the CDU-led government under Kohl saw a need to restore confidence in Germany. In this respect, both the United States and France play a central role in Kohl's foreign policy. While the United States is the key to German security and freedom, France is the key to European unification. The Chancellor perceives Washington and Paris as the most important allies for Bonn's *Deutschlandpolitik*. In a recent policy statement before the *Bundestag*, Kohl, who is often portrayed as a weak, hesitant and indecisive chancellor "sitting out" politically explosive issues, reiterated his call for "dynamic and constructive development" of East-West relations based on close cooperation with the United States and France.³⁵ Establishing a historical connection between the United States and Europe, Kohl emphasizes that the "common ideal of freedom" originates from the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution as the primers for democratic ideas in Europe.³⁶ Thus, NATO and the European Community

31. Ibid.

32. Hartmut Schiedermaier, "Deutschland als Ganzes. Der Historikerstreit und die nationale Identität," (Germany as a Whole: The Historian Debate and National Identity.) *Die politische Meinung*, 32 (1987): 10.

33. Stürmer, "The Perennial German Question," p. 49.

34. Weizsäcker, "Nachdenken über Patriotismus," p. 1024.

35. See *The Week in Germany*, 5 February 1988, p. 1.

36. Kohl, "Amerikas Verfassung ist das Symbol der Freiheit;" see also Kohl's Farewell Speech for President Reagan on June 12, 1987 in *Bulletin*, 20 June 1987, pp. 534-535.

are more than alliances of interests, they are "communities of values which rest upon common basic convictions."³⁷ Realizing that these "common basic convictions" must be accepted and understood by the Germans as part of their own national identity, the new German coordinator for German-American relations, Werner Weidenfeld, clearly stated that the very essence of the bilateral relations

. . . cannot be summed up in a litany of terms such as common interests and values, joint responsibility, defense and alliance. There is more to German-American relations than that. The contribution of the Americans to the development of Europe and to the development of Germany is a central element of our identity.³⁸

The French Factor: A Socialist-Conservative Alliance

The Federal Republic excluded, France is perceived as the major power on the European continent and thus the key for both European unification and German reunification.³⁹ Kohl has declared the relationship with his French neighbor a "privileged partnership." In his view,

Franco-German friendship has been and will remain the dynamic force in the process of European unification. Its present intensity is unprecedented. This partnership encompasses a very broad common conception of European security, a common vision of Europe's future, and the totality of our political, economic, technological and cultural activities.⁴⁰

Both sides have much to gain from this special relationship in a united Europe. In fact, the two continental powers regard Europe as their political, economic and cultural future.⁴¹ The objective of Franco-German relations is to strengthen the European pillar. Hence, in the past years, there have been efforts to revive and organize the West European Union (WEU).

Paris, economically hard-pressed and declining politically and militarily, has realized that it must abandon its former policy of "national entrenchment,"⁴² while Bonn needs French support for European unification and German reunification. More than any of his predecessors, the conservative Kohl has used Germany's status as an "economic superpower" to influence Socialist Mitterrand's policies. Kohl's objective in the past years has been to

37. Ibid.; see also Berndt von Staden "Germany and America: Allied Through Common Values," in Hans-Dietrich Genscher, *Nach vorn gedacht . . . Perspektiven deutscher Aussenpolitik* (Bonn: Bonn Aktuell, 1987), distributed in English translation by German Information Center, New York.

38. Werner Weidenfeld, "The Political Culture of German-American Relations," *Statements and Speeches*, 3 October 1987, p. 6.

39. See Wolf J. Bell, "Kohl Casts an Optimistic Eye Over Ostpolitik," *The German Tribune*, 24 January 1988, p. 1.

40. Kohl, "Policy Statement," p. 8.

41. Ibid., p. 7.

42. Christoph Bertram, "Bonn — and Europe — Owe Much to Franco-German Ties," *The German Tribune*, 31 January 1988, p. 1.

achieve "an identity of views and interests which should make it possible to embark on the first steps toward an operative common foreign policy."⁴³ Institutionalized monthly bilateral consultations have contributed toward this end. Thus, marking the 25th anniversary of the German-French Friendship Treaty on January 22, 1988, Paris and Bonn signed two protocols to the treaty providing for closer cooperation in defense and economic policy. The agreements are far-reaching. A Paris-based joint defense council, which will develop concepts in the areas of defense and security policy, will be established as well as a joint army brigade under alternating French and West German command, stationed in southwest Germany's Böblingen. In addition, Kohl, seeking active support from Mitterrand for his *Deutschlandpolitik*, has succeeded in integrating France into a new common Franco-German phase of *Ostpolitik*.⁴⁴

The Reagan-Kohl Chemistry in U.S.-German Relations

The other prime focus of Kohl's foreign policy is the United States. Bilateral relations are very much facilitated by the functioning "chemistry" in Kohl and Reagan's personal relationship. On many occasions Kohl has emphasized that

. . . friendship and close cooperation with the United States of America are of vital importance to the Federal Republic of Germany. They are indispensable for the unity of the alliance. They enable us to use our influence in the shaping of alliance policy. They increase the chances of German and European interests being taken into account in all political, strategic, economic and monetary decisions within the Western community. That friendship continues to rest on our common values and the mutual confidence that has clearly emerged again since October 1982.⁴⁵

Self-confident as Kohl is, he considers it high time to capitalize upon West Germany's domestic and international stability.⁴⁶ Considering that "we are America's most important partner in Europe,"⁴⁷ as Horst Teltchik, Kohl's principal foreign policy advisor, stated, political priority should be given to strengthening West Germany as a partner, and not a client, of the United States.

While demonstratively pointing to America's leading role in the West, the Kohl government has, thus, interpreted the Reagan administration's calls for increased European, especially West German, involvement in international security, international economy,⁴⁸ counter-terrorism, and anti-drug traffick-

43. Kohl, "Policy Statement," p. 8.

44. See *The Week in Germany*, 29 January 1988, p. 1; *The Week in Germany*, 5 February 1988, p. 1.

45. "Policy Statement," p. 7.

46. Kohl, "Weichenstellung für die Zukunft," p. 7.

47. Horst Teltchik, "Byrnes und die Folgen," (Byrnes and the Consequences) *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt*, 14 September 1986.

48. The issue of international economy and the Reagan administration's call for the Federal Republic to assume the role of an "economic locomotive" is presently the most controversial one between both countries and, therefore, should be the content of a separate essay.

ing, as a challenge for West Germany to assume a more active leadership role and substantive responsibilities. Having repeatedly referred to the close link between freedom and responsibility mandated by the American Constitution and the Basic Law,⁴⁹ Kohl has shown readiness in several areas of mutual interests to accept the international challenge. Consequently, Kohl has implemented NATO decisions such as INF deployment on German soil to ensure a consistent and coherent Alliance strategy despite its unpopularity among the West German population. Similarly, the Federal Republic's decision to participate in America's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) not only proved that Kohl perceived himself as a staunch supporter of NATO and a close political friend of Reagan, but also demonstrated that the consummate tactician Kohl was willing to trade off with the Americans. Despite German suspicions that SDI research would result in a technological one-way street, Kohl very likely offered Reagan the Federal Republic's SDI participation in return for the President's participation in the controversial Bitburg reconciliation ceremony.

Other unpopular issues include the extension of the length of compulsory military service, in light of the *Bundeswehr's* (Federal Armed Forces) manpower shortage expected for the 1990s, from 15 to 18 months, to take effect in 1989. Recently, though heavily debated, Kohl decided in favor of sending German naval forces to relieve "our American friends," as he frequently refers to the United States, in the Mediterranean en route to the Persian Gulf. Defense circles are also speculating about the Federal Republic's willingness to defend NATO's northern flank in the wake of Canada's withdrawal from its commitment to defend Norway.⁵⁰

In addition, Bonn has increased its NATO activities at the top administrative level. By mid-1988 NATO's two top military and civilian positions will be occupied by West Germans. While General Wolfgang Altenburg, former *Bundeswehr* Inspector General, currently chairs NATO's Military Committee, Defense Minister Manfred Woerner will succeed Lord Carrington as secretary general. Woerner's appointment was viewed by the Kohl government as a logical consequence of the Federal Republic's political and military weight in the Alliance.⁵¹ Woerner's appointment is speculatively the result of another Kohl trade-off, this time in return for West Germany's willingness to relinquish the 72 ancient Pershing I-A missiles, relentlessly safeguarded by coalition right-wingers. In fact, Kohl might have let the Pershing I-A issue explode politically to gain more concessions from the Reagan administration.

Recent American arms control and disarmament initiatives and especially the December 1987 U.S.-Soviet accord on INF seem to trouble West German

49. Kohl, "Amerikas Verfassung ist das Symbol der Freiheit."

50. Dating back to the German occupation of Norway in World War II, German-Norwegian relations have been rather cool; however, Norwegian military officials speak in favor of a West German commitment to deploy troops in Norway. Despite the *Bundeswehr's* own manpower shortage in the forthcoming decade, the Kohl government may consider a possible deployment of reserve forces.

51. See Joerg Bischoff, "Defence Minister Woerner Nominated as Nato's Next Secretary-General," *The German Tribune*, 6 September 1987, p. 2.

conservatives, although Kohl is one of the "intellectual progenitors"⁵² of the Washington summit's outcome. The Kohl government is caught on the horn of a dilemma called "singularization." On the one hand, West German decision-makers are concerned about the continued deployment of short-range nuclear weapons. As the foreign editor of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* Josef Joffe writes, the Germans are now paranoid about the idea that "the shorter the range, the deader the Germans."⁵³ On the other hand, Kohl's conservatives are concerned that further nuclear disarmament would expose West Germany to sizable conventional asymmetries. Modernization, however, could provoke a resurging anti-nuclear movement. Moreover, it would cause Soviet-German relations to deteriorate. A new version of the controversial INF debate in the early 1980s, however, is viewed as detrimental to Kohl's domestic program of highest priority, i.e., national identity and moral reorientation. Calling for U.S.-Soviet negotiations on short-range missiles, therefore, is Kohl's only tactically feasible alternative, for it prevents West Germany from spending political capital and contributes to its image as a sincere promoter of arms control and disarmament.⁵⁴

In recent years, particularly following the West Berlin discotheque bombing in 1986, the West German government has responded to American calls for increased cooperation in counter-terrorism. U.S. Ambassador for Counter-Terrorism Paul Bremer has negotiated with West German Interior Minister Friedrich Zimmermann (CSU) on several occasions. In the past two years, the frequency of bilateral meetings at a high ministerial level has at least tripled. The focus of cooperation has been between American counter-terrorism specialists and the West German rapid deployment force GSG 9, commanded by the Mogadishu hero Ulrich Wegener, as well as the Federal Crime Bureau (*Bundeskriminalamt* or BKA), the FBI's counterpart in the Federal Republic. Heavily concerned with fighting international drug trafficking, American officials in the Reagan administration have encouraged their West German counterparts to cooperate in this field as well. The BKA recently disclosed its plans to more than double the number of its officials stationed abroad to fight international drug trafficking. Instead of 15, now 36 drug agents will cooperate with police authorities in foreign countries to stop the flow of illegal drugs at its source.⁵⁵

OSTPOLITIK CONTINUED

The continuation of *Ostpolitik* is of special importance to Kohl's concept of national identity. The political realist Kohl has benefitted from the recent

52. Jan Reifenberg, "Watershed in Arms Control: Now For the Future," *The German Tribune*, 20 December 1987, p. 1.

53. Josef Joffe, "Germany: Anti-Americanism on the Right," *The Wall Street Journal*, 10 February 1988, p. 21.

54. See Hans-Dietrich Genscher, "Elimination of Intermediate Nuclear Forces," *Statements and Speeches*, 3 September 1987.

55. *The Week in Germany*, 15 January 1988, p. 7.

general improvement in East-West relations. Outlining his *Ostpolitik*, Kohl stated on March 18, 1987:

"We must bear in mind that Germany's destiny is embedded in the overall East-West relationship. The wish to overcome the division of Europe accords with the wish to achieve their unity and freedom. Some people believe our national problem can be solved independently of the East-West conflict. We must counter such illusions, whether they come from the right or from the left. There can be no special path for the Germans to follow. We Germans will only be able to come together if the East-West conflict is resolved by means of a lasting system of peace throughout Europe in which the human rights agreed on in the Helsinki Final Act are respected. Until this division can be overcome, we must try to achieve, step by step, improvements for the people affected."⁵⁶

To this end and for the sake of those Germans living in central, eastern and southeastern Europe, Kohl has stressed the "central importance" of his relations with the Soviet Union.⁵⁷ Following a phase of deteriorated relations in the wake of INF deployments and as a result of Kohl's Gorbachev-Goebbels comparison, Soviet-German relations have improved in the past year, culminating in both CSU chairman Franz-Josef Strauss's visit to Moscow⁵⁸ and Edward Shevardnadze's visit in Bonn early this year. It was the first visit of a Soviet Foreign Minister in seven years.⁵⁹ The sudden intensification of relations is perceived as a result of West Germany's decision to relinquish the *Bundeswehr's* Pershing I-A missiles. Kohl's objective has been to tie the Soviet Union into a "program of cooperation" through ongoing bilateral negotiations and agreements. Aware of Soviet interest in West German high technology, the present administration has signed an agreement with the Soviets on scientific and technological cooperation and is negotiating on an environmental agreement. As a result of the Chernobyl nuclear accident, West Germany was among the first countries to offer its advanced technology for the safety of Soviet nuclear power plants.

In return for increased German-Soviet economic and technological cooperation, the Kohl administration expects the Soviet Union to enable Soviet citizens of German nationality to cultivate their language, develop their culture, live according to their faith, and join their families in Germany if they wish. Speaking in the Kremlin last July, President von Weizsäcker stressed that the German people, cherishing their historical roots, "have not

56. Kohl, "Policy Statement," p. 4.

57. Helmut Kohl, *Report of the Federal Government on the State of the Nation in Divided Germany*, Speech before the German *Bundestag* of 15 October 1987, p. 14. (Hereafter referred to as "State of Nation Report").

58. Upon his return, the anti-communist Strauss, who, as a private pilot, flew to Moscow in his own plane, surprisingly told journalists it was no longer necessary to be fearful of an "offensive, aggressive intention on the part of the Soviet Union." See "Strauss Convinced of Soviet Will to Change," *The Week in Germany*, 8 January 1988, p. 2.

59. See Bell, "Kohl Casts an Optimistic Eye Over Ostpolitik," p. 1.

ceased to feel that they belong to one nation." This sentiment, he continued, is not directed against anyone, but rather makes the Germans in both East and West more aware of the need for peace. "For this reason our primary aim in developing relations between the two German states is to ease tensions. What links Germans in East and West is not only their common responsibility but also their human feeling."⁶⁰ Calling for expanded cultural exchanges, Weizsäcker touched upon one of Kohl's political high priorities. The Chancellor has repeatedly referred to the opening of a German cultural institute in Moscow. Although German-Soviet relations have improved lately, reflecting the current status of East-West relations, Kohl has not yet succeeded in gaining Soviet support for General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to the Federal Republic, initially expected for the spring of 1988.⁶¹

The improvement of German-Soviet relations gave impetus to removing obstacles in bilateral relations with the other Warsaw Pact countries. The German-Polish relationship has always been tainted and most difficult to handle. Returning from his recent visit to Poland, originally scheduled for three years ago but canceled, Foreign Minister Genscher revealed a change of attitude by the Poles. For the first time, a Polish official cast the issue of the German minority in Poland in a historical context. Instead of calling for minority rights for ethnic Germans still living in Poland, Genscher talked about the need to maintain their "cultural and language-related identity."⁶²

Moreover, Bonn is currently negotiating with Warsaw on the establishment of a German cultural information center in the Polish capital. Similarly, based on Germany's commitment to provide active economic support for Hungary, German-Hungarians will be "given improved opportunities to preserve their cultural and linguistic traditions in their native areas."⁶³ Moreover, besides exchanging cultural institutes, both countries have decided to make the borders more open by facilitating and waiving visa procedures, effective January 1, 1988. Efforts to improve relations with Czechoslovakia, described as normal and neighborly but not flourishing,⁶⁴ have also intensified with Kohl's recent visit to Prague, the first one for some 15 years.⁶⁵ As the band-wagoning Czech leaders expressed interest in participating in a wider-ranging East-West dialogue, Kohl called for negotiations on sister-city agreements, easing border crossings, the exchange of cultural institutes, and the resolution of humanitarian questions.⁶⁶

60. "Speech by President Richard von Weizsäcker at a Dinner Given in the Kremlin by Mr. Andrei Gromyko on July 6, 1987," *Statements and Speeches*, 7 July 1987, p. 4.

61. "Der deutsche Kanzler ist nicht bestellbar," (The German Chancellor Cannot be Ordered) *Der Spiegel*, 25 January 1988, pp. 16-17.

62. Josef Riedmueller, "Genscher Visit Reveals a Change of Attitude by the Poles," *German Tribune*, 24 January 1988, p. 3.

63. Kohl, "State of the Nation Report," p. 15.

64. See Horst Opta, "Prague Visit Put to Good use by Kohl," *The German Tribune*, 7 February 1988, pp. 1-2.

65. Interestingly enough, Czech Premier Strougal, in office for 18 years, has never visited the Federal Republic in this function, and Czech President Husak was last in Bonn more than 10 years ago.

66. "Kohl Hopes for Closer Ties with Prague," *The Week in Germany*, 29 January 1988, p. 2.

Bulgaria has also indicated its interest in intensifying bilateral relations with West Germany. Bulgarian economic reforms are expected to stimulate economic cooperation between the two countries. In view of the fact that in seven grammar schools in Bulgaria subjects are taught in German, Bonn has expressed its intention to increase technological and scientific cooperation.⁶⁷ The Kohl Administration's dialogue with Romania also sought the preservation of the cultural and linguistic identity of ethnic Germans living there and future emigration possibilities. With respect to emigration of ethnic Germans, 1987 was the most successful year since 1958. According to Interior Minister Zimmermann, over 86,000 ethnic Germans, more than double the 1986 figure, were allowed to emigrate to West Germany.⁶⁸

REUNIFICATION REVISITED

The four decades that have passed since World War II have rendered a definition of German reunification more difficult. Adhering to the unity of the German nation is constitutionally mandated, but practically impossible in light of the heavily-guarded fences and walls in the middle of Germany and Berlin. Western calls for tearing the walls down — most recently by President Reagan in Berlin in June 1987 — naturally remain unanswered by the East or are rejected as provocative and imperialist. However, it is not so much geographical reunification that is at stake here. The geographical solution, though the ultimate goal of a future united Europe, is an illusion, still falsely dominating the minds of most people in both West and East. In fact, the Kohl administration does not even employ the notion of "reunification."⁶⁹ Instead, it emphasizes the "unity of the German nation," which still exists but whose awareness must be reawakened in both West and East Germany. Hence, political representatives in the Federal Republic have rediscovered the historical and cultural dimension of the German question, which was overshadowed for decades by the two political and moral catastrophes in this century. Thus stated President von Weizsäcker:

The German nation was not created by Bismarck and destroyed by Hitler. The division of Germany is not the division of its history. We are Germans both here and there. The question remains what shall happen with us. Not we but history will answer it.⁷⁰

The Kohl administration has claimed responsibility for translating the political ideals underlying Weizsäcker's words into viable policies. In his latest "Report on the State of the Nation in Divided Germany" of October 15,

67. See Claus Gennrich, "Warmer Climate Between Bonn and East Bloc," *The German Tribune*, 17 January 1988, p. 1.

68. See "Zimmerman Hails Record Eastern Emigration," *The Week in Germany*, 15 January 1988, p. 2. This figure included 14,488 persons from the USSR, 48,423 from Poland, 13,994 from Romania, 835 from Czechoslovakia, and 581 from Hungary.

69. Reunification is not mentioned once in the recent "State of the Nation Report."

70. Weizsäcker, "Nachdenken über Patriotismus," p. 1024.

1987, Kohl, acknowledging the continuity of Germany's long and vicissitudinous history, said:

. . . our policy on Germany is conducive to the cohesion of all Germans. The existing situation of the nation cannot and will not last because the people in Germany will never accept the division. They suffer as a result of a wall which literally stands in their way and repels them. They want to come together because they belong together.⁷¹

Consequently, Bonn's *Deutschlandpolitik* has been to strengthen a German "feeling of togetherness" by placing emphasis on "never-ebbing linguistic, cultural and historical" congenialities. Governing Mayor Eberhard Diepgen declared that Berlin, in its role as the 1988 "Cultural City of Europe," seeks to illustrate that "culture knows no borders." Stating that "European culture is older than political geography," Diepgen maintained that human rights and culture were the roots for Europe's future.⁷²

Confident that the German question will reappear on the agenda of world history, Kohl underscored his administration's policy "not to focus upon issues which cannot be resolved now, but upon that which can be done."⁷³ In practice, Kohl's policy aims at doing "justice to the yearning of the Germans to come together; paving the way for increased human contacts in Germany and also fostering peace on an interpersonal plane."⁷⁴ Following the signing of the German-German Cultural Treaty of May 1986, 17 sister city agreements — the most recent one between the West German capital city of Bonn and the East German city of Potsdam (near Berlin) on January 26, 1988 — have been signed to enhance mutual cultural, youth and sport exchanges.⁷⁵ As a result, according to Kohl, approximately 5 million East Germans visited West Germany in 1987, including more than a million visitors (50,000 in 1982) below retirement age for so-called urgent family reasons.⁷⁶

German-German relations have also increased at the top level. On the occasion of SED Secretary General Erich Honecker's "working visit" (Sept. 7-11, 1987), as Bonn labeled it, three bilateral agreements on science and technology, environment, and nuclear radiation protection were signed. Germans in both East and West were surprised when Honecker, visiting his hometown of Neunkirchen (Saarland),⁷⁷ stated that the intra-German borders "are not as they should be." With "further peaceful cooperation" the day will come when "borders will no longer separate, but rather unite us — as the

71. Kohl, "State of the Nation Report," pp. 3-4.

72. "Diepgen: Culture Knows No Borders," *The Week in Germany*, 22 January 1988, pp. 7-8.

73. "Chancellor Kohl's Opening Statement on the Occasion of SED General Secretary Erich Honecker's Working Visit to the Federal Republic," September 7, 1987, in *Bulletin*, 10 September 1987, p. 709.

74. Kohl, "State of the Nation Report," p. 5.

75. "Bonn, Potsdam Become 'Sisters'" *The Week in Germany*, 29 January 1988, p. 7.

76. "Kohl Reaffirms Policies in New Year's Address," *The Week in Germany*, 8 January 1988, p. 1.

77. Besides the late GDR Defense Minister Heinz Hoffman who was born in the West German city of Mannheim, Honecker is one of the last leading GDR politicians to be born in what is now West Germany.

border between the German Democratic Republic and the People's Republic of Poland unites us."⁷⁸

Undoubtedly, these statements and policies have contributed to fears of a revival of German nationalism in both West and East. Despite American predictions that bilateral problems will increase as West Germany finds its national identity, there are sufficient shared values to ensure that the U.S.-German alliance remains healthy.⁷⁹ In an effort to balance these fears, the Kohl administration has employed a policy underlining Bonn's stability and continuity. For instance, the Federal Republic has increased its ties with the West, in particular with France and the United States, by assuming more international responsibility. Frequently criticized by the opposition parties, Social Democrats and Greens as "blind faith" and "vassalage," the Chancellor's policy is geared toward Germany's firm integration in the Western community of values as the prerequisite for a successful policy on Germany.⁸⁰ In a positive reaction to this new approach, U.S. Ambassador to Bonn, Richard R. Burt, called for a "common strategy" to overcome the division of Germany through implementation of human rights, increased travel possibilities, and reduction of border obstacles, especially the Berlin wall.⁸¹ Kohl's *Ostpolitik* on the other side, endorses a "long-term policy of developing relations with all nations of central, eastern and southeastern Europe in all fields and at all levels. The Federal Republic of Germany is determined to be a reliable, predictable and trustworthy partner for dialogue and cooperation."⁸² Asserting continuity, the Chancellor added in his "State of the Nation Report" that the "foundations of this dialogue and cooperation remain the agreements and documents upon whose letter and spirit our policy is based . . . Progress in intra-German relations is intended to benefit all of [the East]."⁸³

However, along the path toward unity of the German nation in freedom there are admittedly insuperable political-ideological obstacles. Honecker's visit clearly illustrated the conflicting concepts between Kohl's *Deutschlandpolitik* and Honecker's Peace Policy. While Kohl referred to *Deutschlandpolitik* in overcoming Germany's division, Honecker stressed the role of co-existence with the West in preserving world peace. The speeches given by Kohl and Honecker at Bad Godesberg on the evening of September 7, 1987, seemed to be totally unrelated. Thus, the joint communique of September 8 merely names issues and projects, but contains no real commitment to joint measures.⁸⁴ Despite Honecker's "sentimental" visit to his hometown, Kohl's goal of achieving a German felling of togetherness in the near future — especially

78. Quoted from "Bonn Welcomes Honecker Statement on Intra-German Border," *The Week in Germany*, 18 September 1987, p. 2.

79. See Kristol, "Historische, philosophische und soziologische Wurzeln des Konservatismus," p. 74.

80. Kohl, "State of the Nation Report," p. 6.

81. "Burt verlangt 'tatsächliche Veränderungen'."

82. Kohl, "Policy Statement," p. 9.

83. Kohl, "State of the Nation Report," p. 14.

84. For a critical analysis of the joint communique, see Wilhelm Bruns, "After the Honecker Visit — And What Now?" *Außenpolitik* 38 (1987): 344-353.

among East German government officials and ideologues — seems far from realization. There are many questions that remain unanswered concerning the directions taken by both East and West Germany. If the images of a self-confident and internationally committed Federal Republic created by Chancellor Kohl's administration prove not to be fragile and transitory, West Germany may contribute to greater stability and positive change.

