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United Germany's Quest for Leadership

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Before the revolutions of 1989 had erased Europe's bipolar order, neither the West nor the East Germans had to make difficult decisions about their fundamental responsibilities and orientations in the international community. Firmly entrenched in the two dominant blocs, almost all aspects of their foreign policies—from trade to strategic doctrine to foreign aid—were clearly prescribed by their respective and competing functions in the Atlantic and Soviet hemispheres. Despite divergent paths, however, the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic were both bound by the perceived moral obligation to distance the postwar order from the scourge of national socialism. Each country accepted this obligation as a basis for the abridgement of its sovereignty.

Today, the victors of World War II no longer exercise their pedagogical control over Germany's sense of responsibility. With political reunification achieved and sovereignty fully restored, Germany is searching for a new consensus in its relations with neighbors and allies. Although post-reunification Germany is heir to the values of the old Federal Republic, a new generation of politicians must determine the priorities that Germany will project abroad.

In shaping this image, German leaders are struggling to find a balance between those forces that encourage them to act boldly and unilaterally on the international stage, and those that encourage a more restrained approach. This promises to be exceptionally difficult, since most foreign leaders recall that Germany has twice in this century pushed Europe into cataclysmic conflict. At the same time, however, Germany's geographic position in the heart of Europe, combined with its massive potential to

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propel economic and political change, requires that it assume a leading role in international politics. The result is a symbiosis of these incompatible pressures. The new Germany can be expected to resolve this dilemma by being simultaneously meek and assertive.

In his first speech before the U.N. General Assembly in September 1992, Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel guaranteed that neither the German parliament nor the government would forget that history requires a special obligation of restraint from Germany (Süddeutsche Zeitung 1992, 2). This historical obligation—strongly emphasized in the wake of last year's resurgence of neo-Nazi hate crimes—manifests itself in a form of diplomatic over-compensation. German leaders want to show that Germany is a reliable, peaceful, and moderate power, and they demonstrate these traits through rigorous financial and political support for international organizations (most notably the EC, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the U.N.) that help absorb the impact of Germany's newly-enhanced sovereignty. This very activism will undoubtedly touch sensitive nerves and resurrect fears of *Germania*. Nevertheless, only by acting in a manner commensurate with its ability to enact change will Germany dispel old fears and garner a position in the ranks of "normal," sovereign states. Since 1990, this interplay between the competing mandates of sensitivity and sovereignty has shaped Germany's international maneuvering and has resulted in declared or implicit commitments to at least four areas: European integration, Russia's rehabilitation, bilateral cooperation with its neighbors, and maintenance of the transatlantic friendship.

European Integration

By promoting the "deepening" of the EC, Germany furthers its goals at two levels: it facilitates the export of German products to their most important and reliable markets, and it binds the Community's strongest member to a federal system that illustrates its commitment to peaceful coexistence with its neighbors. Whether the result is a more European Germany or a more German Europe, the German commitment to a united Europe as envisioned by the Maastricht Treaty for Political Union is unwavering. The consensus in Bonn is that *Maastricht darf nicht an Deutschland scheitern* (Maastricht may not fail because of Germany).

Admittedly, the framework for the monetary and political unification of Europe as conceived at Maastricht has been crippled by Danish skepticism, French nationalism, and British withdrawal from the European Monetary System. In Germany, too, there is reticence about the prospect of trading the deutsche mark for a common European currency. Nevertheless, an overriding majority from all major parties favors further integration. Even if a "multiple-speed" Europe emerges, Germany will remain

devoted to the core group of "deepeners." As a young German friend recently told me, *Der Riese Deutschland lässt sich gerne fesseln* (The giant Germany gladly allows itself to be fettered). Now that the giant has gained nearly 20 million inhabitants and annexed territory roughly the size of Ireland, it executes its responsibility of promoting Europe with added conviction.

At a broader level, Germany devotes itself to the empowerment of the CSCE. Germany needs the CSCE to help repair the ruins of the Warsaw Pact and achieve transparence and cooperation between western Europe and the fragile democracies in eastern Europe. As a central European state unable to avoid the consequences of instability in eastern Europe, Germany will undoubtedly continue to take the CSCE more seriously than do its partners in the EC and NATO.

Russia's Rehabilitation

By virtue of its geographic position, Germany is naturally interested in preserving a modicum of stability in its gargantuan neighbor to the east. The death of the Soviet empire and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from German territory have yet to diminish German concerns about the former great power. Despite President Yeltsin's reformist agitations and halting efforts for integration into the global economy, Russia remains a massive, unpredictable military might with thousands of nuclear weapons.

The keen interest in preserving stability in Russia and its neighbors in the former Soviet Union is undergirded by the tangible manifestations of further decay. First, according to the German embassy in Moscow, there are at least 2.2 million ethnic Germans (ITARTASS, Moscow radio broadcast, 1992) in the former Soviet Union with the right to migrate to Germany. German authorities shudder at the thought of this potential influx of immigrants. Second, the German economy has traditionally relied heavily on markets in the East. Germany needs to dominate these emerging markets to rebuild its own industrial strength. Finally, close Russian-German cooperation will be needed to slow the wave of crime that is spilling into Germany. From auto theft to the sale of fissile uranium and plutonium, organized crime in Russia directly threatens Germany's security.

These factors, combined with German gratitude for former President Gorbachev's support of German unity, guarantee the continued flow of assistance to Russia. Undoubtedly, the ruinous consequences of World War II for the Soviet Union also help to account for Germany's willingness to provide more financial and humanitarian assistance than the other G-7 nations combined.

Bilateral Cooperation with Neighbors

Among Germany's neighbors, the transition from fear to trust has been most difficult for Poland and France—both of which were bled by Nazi terror during most of the five years that World War II raged across Europe. Memories of the barbarism notwithstanding, restoring trust has been difficult due to uncertainty about the future stability of national frontiers and lingering suspicion of German irredentism.

Intent on dispelling the insecurity that naturally evolved from Germany's pre-1945 expansionist ambitions, postwar German leaders initiated a series of bilateral acts of good will to restore Polish and French confidence in Germany. Konrad Adenauer joined Charles de Gaulle in a Declaration of Franco-German Friendship in 1963, and Willy Brandt fell to his knees before the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Warsaw, Poland in 1970. Chancellor Helmut Kohl's government continues this tradition by taking initiatives to strengthen bonds with its neighbors: Poland is reassured of the permanence of the Oder-Neisse border, and France is assuaged with promises of intensified military cooperation.

Transatlantic Cooperation

Germany remains inextricably linked to the United States through the long-standing NATO partnership. Although the presence of American troops and nuclear weapons on German soil has, at times, spurred anti-American activism, an inter-party consensus maintains that the United States security guarantee is indispensable. In describing the German-American security relationship through NATO, German politicians and diplomats frequently pepper their speeches with terms like "foundation," "bedrock," and "keystone"—all used to dispel fears in Washington that Germany might rethink its critical role in the European pillar of the Alliance.

Since 1990, Kohl's government has taken steps to realign Germany's position in NATO which has often been unwelcome among orthodox Atlanticists in the United States. Suspicion of anti-Alliance thinking reached Washington in several waves: first, as a minority of German politicians and intellectuals (most notably, novelist Günther Grass) discussed German neutrality à la Sweden or Switzerland in the immediate aftermath of East Germany's fall, and then as Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand declared their intention at the La Rochelle Summit to form a European Army as part of the Western European Union. Also, the delayed and limited German support for the American-led coalition to oust Saddam Hussein from Kuwait prompted many U.S. officials to fear for the future of NATO.

Still, Germany's benefits from nourishing this relationship far outweigh the possible disadvantages. First, core political values in Germany re-

semble those in the United States partly because Americans helped write Germany's postwar constitution and steady streams of German immigrants helped build the United States. Second, Germany needs the Alliance to anchor its armed forces. Although the Bundeswehr is reducing its ranks to a targeted size of 370,000 troops, Germany seeks avenues for legal participation in international peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. Since unilateral deployments remain unthinkable, NATO is the obvious structure for German deployments abroad once the constitutional crisis regarding "out-of-area" deployment is resolved. Third, the integrity of NATO complements Germany's goal of building a stable eastern Europe. As long as NATO is the only security institution that can provide a true security guarantee for its signatories, the budding democracies of eastern Europe will seek closer association with their western neighbors in the Alliance.

Synthesis

One of the principal values the new sovereign Germany wishes to project to its neighbors is that of a reliable ally, permanently situated in the western fold of nations. This priority finds strong symbolic expression in the new parliament building in Bonn, partly constructed of glass to demonstrate the transparence and predictability of the German parliamentary system. Above all, German politicians and diplomats want to convince other governments that the fundamental values adopted by the Federal Republic after 1949 are as current today as they were before unification.

In order to prove that Germany deserves the role of a "normal" state, echoes of restraint and hesitation characterize its post-reunification foreign policy. Many Germans believe that German participation in "out-of-area" conflicts is morally untenable and consider premature Foreign Minister Kinkel's conviction that a legal framework for German military action abroad can be crafted in the near future. As Der Spiegel editor Dirk Koch recently wrote, in the century of Auschwitz, a giant difference remains between media reports of destruction caused by American troops and pictures of devastation left by German troops (Koch 1992, 26).

Such thoughtfulness should be welcomed. As the dominant pole in Europe, the vitality of Western European integration and pan-European cooperation hinge on Germany's willingness to act as a reliable, peaceful, and generous partner.

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