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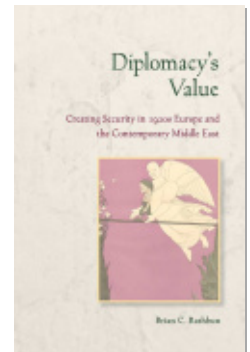
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Getting to the Table

THE DIPLOMATIC PERILS OF THE EXCHANGE OF NOTES

An agreement on a deal that created value for both France and Germany, even with the British lending a hand, was hardly foreordained. Simply getting to the table posed its own problems. The French and German governments, both dealing with domestic constraints, exchanged a number of formal notes whose contents could have broken off negotiations. Under pressure from the French right to engage in coercive bargaining, the Cartel des Gauches government reimagined the German proposal somewhat dramatically in a way that suited French interests. It wanted infractions of the Versailles Treaty to call in the British security guarantee and for France to be able to protect the eastern neighbors of Germany against any German violation of their arbitration treaties with Germany.

Yet diplomacy was again of great value. Even though the French left put forward the same demands that the French right had earlier in terms of the scope of a British guarantee, the former did not hold out in hopes of greater gains, instead expressing understanding and appreciation of the British point of view. And even as they filled in Stresemann's skeletal sketch of a pact in a way that tilted it heavily in France's favor, the French refused to draw any lines in the sand that would make agreement difficult to find. They expressed their optimism about the possibility of success as opposed to the instrumental skepticism that would have marked a purely coercive bargaining style. And the French expressed an appreciation for the concessions that the Germans had made. These behaviors are all indicative of the liberal diplomacy expected from a government with prosocial motivations.

Had the French responded differently, it would probably have triggered enough conservative opposition in the German cabinet to sink the

negotiations. As it was, the nationalists regarded the French proposal, incorrectly, as set in stone and indicative of a wide gulf between the two parties. The DNVP wanted Stresemann to break off negotiations. Only with great difficulty did Stresemann and his realist allies manage to keep the possibility of a deal open in the face of the premature conclusions drawn by those with lower epistemic motivation.

As a pragmatist, Stresemann took a tough line on matters of vital interest to Germany, such as the French guarantee of the eastern treaties, but made concessions on other, less important issues. He also had long-term gains in mind. The German foreign minister believed that, by not linking the conclusion of a security pact to the occupation of the Rhineland, Germany could better signal its cooperative intentions, thereby making the securing of such goals easier in the future. More instrumentally empathetic, he thought such demands would imperil a deal with the French.

Stresemann's far right adversaries in the German cabinet, however, insisted that the German response to the French notes formally refuse its war guilt and forced Stresemann to explicitly link any approval of the security pact to alleviations in the Rhineland occupation and the evacuation of the Cologne zone. This could have easily derailed the negotiations. Briand, however, disregarded the German notes as harmless blustering in a way that his rightist counterparts would not have, given their different diplomatic styles. In something of a role reversal, he responded with more equanimity than even the pragmatic British, indicating the importance, again, of the liberal diplomatic style. French diplomacy was an iron glove over a silken fist.

The role of Britain in the run-up to the negotiations was to urge the two sides to avoid coercive bargaining statements and to keep their exchanges short on the demands that would prevent them from sitting down to resolve their difference privately and calmly in the pragmatic fashion favored by the realist foreign secretary, Austen Chamberlain. As an honest broker, the British defended the Germans to the French and the French to the Germans, regardless of how they actually felt about their respective positions. They continually stressed that the two countries should consider the practical benefits of an agreement and eventually succeeded in getting all the parties to the table.

LEANING LIBERAL: THE FRENCH RESPONSE TO THE GERMAN MEMORANDUM

As seen in chapter 4, the Cartel des Gauches government was open to German overtures, given its diplomatic style of reasoned dialogue. Nevertheless, even though Stresemann's memorandum marked a

significant and promising departure for German foreign policy, a turnover in the French government did not lead simply to a rapprochement between the two countries and an integrative deal on a security pact. There was significant distrust of Germany, even on the French left. And the position of the coalition in French domestic politics was precarious, making it impossible to ignore the objections of French nationalists on the right. Briand explained, through his ambassador, the square he was trying to circle domestically: "He must not rouse French Nationalist opinion by appearing to yield too much or too readily, nor, on the other hand, must he antagonize Socialist opinion by an unsympathetic or harsh reply" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 322). In other words, Briand had to balance a reasonable and liberal diplomatic approach with a coercive and distributive one.

In their formal response to the first German note, whose drafting was supervised by Aristide Briand, the new foreign minister, the French took a position considerably different from that of Germany (and Britain). Their diplomacy, although liberal, was not one of capitulation. Like the Germans, the French envisioned a legal commitment by the parties to the pact to refrain from the use of force against one another to revise borders and also, in the event of the violation of that pledge, an obligation by Britain to come to the aid of the party attacked. Beyond this, however, the French added elements seen before in their bilateral negotiations with the British, when the French conservatives were in power. The British guarantee was also to apply to violations of the Versailles Treaty. The French also wanted a far-reaching compulsory arbitration agreement between the French and the Germans on matters both juridical and political in nature (DBFP I, Vol. 27, Nos. 318, 349). A simple refusal to submit to arbitration, even if the party that declined to do so did not subsequently use force, would require coercive action by the guarantors of the pact (CP 268 (25)). The French, however, excluded any interpretation of the Versailles Treaty from the arbitration process (CP 256 (25)). In essence, the meaning of the treaty would be judged solely by the French and British, allowing France to intervene forcefully against the Germans without submitting to a conflict-resolution process in ambiguous cases. The French also stressed that the new agreement would not be accompanied by any easing of German obligations under the Versailles Treaty (DBFP I, Vol. 27, Nos. 318, 349).

Most controversially, the French took up Stresemann's willingness to conclude treaties of arbitration with the eastern neighbors of Germany but recrafted his proposal so that these agreements would have a form similar to those concluded with France and Belgium. Although these eastern treaties would not require a recognition of the territorial status quo, they would obligate their parties to negotiate all types of disputes

peacefully. Any power associated with the western pact would also have the legal right to protect the victims of an attack in the east (DBFP I, Vol. 27, Nos. 318, 349; CP 268 (25)). France was essentially trying to bring its alliances with the Little Entente under the same umbrella as the proposed security pact and to commit the Germans to peaceful revision. The French feared that, otherwise, the Germans might use the western pact as a legal shield to prevent French intervention in Eastern Europe (CP 268 (25); DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 389). Without this, if Germany did not move against France and the east simultaneously, France would be faced with the unpalatable choice of standing by or risking the intervention of Britain against it if France moved into Germany.

Therefore, the effect of the liberal diplomacy of the French government was not to make immediate concessions but, rather, to facilitate an open exchange of views that might reveal a basis for an agreement in the interest of both sides. The difference with the conservatives was stylistic, not substantive. For instance, the French did not draw any red lines in their memorandum. The French response was presented as a kind of brainstorming document that filled in the sketch provided by Stresemann. Briand explained that it "was not his intention to make exactly formal conditions. . . . He had no intention of dictating the sense of the Germany reply. He wished to give them full freedom as to the character of their answer, and not in any way to appear to force upon them a Yes or a No" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 322). He told the British the same as they coordinated their policy: "M. Briand particularly emphasized the importance of avoiding any appearance of confronting the Germans with a cut and dried scheme which they would have to accept or reject as it stood." Rather, the French note would be a "basis for free discussion" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 443).

Under the leadership of the Cartel des Gauches, the French also did not denigrate the offer made by Germany. Their reply stated that the "French Government do not fail to appreciate the value to the cause of peace . . . of a solemn repudiation of all idea of war." The French recognized "with satisfaction" Germany's willingness to negotiate arbitration treaties with its eastern neighbors. It hoped for a response that would allow the countries to enter into negotiations of a treaty (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 349; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 14). As Briand described it, "His object had been to show that he accepted the German overtures as made in good faith" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 322). These, of course, might be regarded as purely cheap talk, but it should be recognized that even this costless type of signal had not been offered by the rightist coalition under Poincaré. Briand's foreign ministry wanted to encourage Germany to engage in reasoned dialogue.

The note was also quickly followed by the announcement that France would, earlier than scheduled, withdraw its troops from the Ruhr, which

had been occupied by France in 1923 to coerce Germany to pay its reparations. The Germans recognized this more costly unilateral concession as a sign of “goodwill” (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 145). The British noted that it eased the domestic political pressure on Stresemann considerably (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 417).

Briand’s government transmitted its note to Germany on June 16, 1925, and was very pleased with the domestic reception of the memo. The reaction of the press and politicians in all circles was positive. A leading British diplomat reported that the general opinion in France was that “French essential interests have been adequately and successfully safeguarded by M. Briand” but also that the memo was a “work of goodwill and good faith, a sincere effort at conciliation and realization of the desire to safeguard treaty rights” (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 389). Briand used the same argument on Germany that its representatives had used on him. He noted to the German ambassador that circles that had been skeptical of reconciliation were supportive of his conception of the pact and that Germany should grasp this opportunity at peace (ADAP, A13, No. 88). Briand had squared his domestic circle.

BRINGING SOMETHING TO THE TABLE: BILATERAL FRANCO-BRITISH NEGOTIATIONS ON THE GUARANTEE

The difficult question for the British cabinet was determining the extent of the security guarantee it was willing to offer (CC 26 (25)). The foreign secretary suspected correctly that France would seek greater British involvement, “involving us in obligations that we have hitherto refused to assume” (CC 26 (25)). British officials wanted to limit the commitment to the continent to situations that directly threatened the interests of Britain. The cabinet authorized Chamberlain to endorse in the House of Commons only a pledge to safeguard the frontiers of the Rhineland countries (CC 17 (25)).

At the same time as the French were drafting their response to Germany, they were working on a draft security treaty with Britain. Chamberlain insisted that the guarantee would be called into effect only if armed force were used and the actual peace broken (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 343). The French position that parties would commit to an automatic use of coercive force in case of an infringement of the Versailles Treaty, without recourse to arbitration and even if a party did not actually resort to armed hostilities, threatened to draw Britain into smaller conflicts that did not threaten its interests (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 424). The British therefore amended French plans to give the League a larger role (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 349). In their exchanges over a draft security pact, the British drafts envisioned the

League Council, and not just the allies, determining whether a violation of the Versailles Treaty had actually occurred and recommending the appropriate response. The British wanted to “make it clear that the Council of the League has a *locus standi* to intervene” (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 424). The League Council would also take up issues of nonsubmission of disputes to arbitration and noncompliance in which force was not used (CP 312 (25); CP 318 (25); DBFP I, Vol. 27, Nos. 316, 317, 384, 405). This conception limited British commitments while simultaneously promoting the League venue as a new Concert of Europe.

Britain, of course, had the most bargaining leverage in this situation. We might argue that it is therefore unsurprising that its view on the scope of the security guarantee prevailed. But, as we have seen, the French under the conservatives had refused better offers, holding out for greater gains. Chamberlain warned against doing so again. He wrote the French, “I was apprehensive lest the French, in seeking to fill every gap and to provide against unimportant contingencies such as some slight infraction of the demilitarization clause, should so confuse and alarm public opinion that the real guarantee of security which was within their grasp might escape from their hands” (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 424). Even as they had similar goals, however, the French left and right had different diplomatic styles, allowing the Cartel des Gauches to achieve what the Bloc National had not. The British were impressed with Briand’s liberal diplomatic style, particularly his regard for British interests. He had “showed himself fully alive to the need of distinguishing between flagrant violations and purely technical infractions” and “admitted frankly that Great Britain could not be expected to give a guarantee which might involve her in a war as a result of a trivial incident” (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 443). The two sides agreed that only gross breaches of the treaty, such as an assembly of troops in the demilitarized zone, would call into play the security guarantee (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 412).

The liberal-led French coalition government and the realist-led British government were in total agreement that Germany must join the League as a part of the conclusion of the pact. Chamberlain identified German membership in the League as “the basis of our whole conception of the pact” (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 340; see also No. 231). German entry was the “essential condition of the new settlement (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 426). The French also wanted Germany to join the League of Nations on the basis of the conditions affirmed in a note by the League of Nations from March of that year, in which it was implied that the disarmed condition of Germany did not give it a waiver from participating in economic or military sanctions organized by the League against an aggressor (DBFP I, Vol. 27, Nos. 261, 322; CP 256 (25)). The Germans had not proposed joining the institution at all in their earlier memoranda (Locarno-Konferenz No. 14).

PRESSURE ON PRAGMATISM: THE GERMAN NATIONAL PEOPLE'S PARTY AND THE GERMAN REPLY TO THE REPLY

In his proposal, Stresemann did not link the pact to other concessions that Germany desired, in an attempt to extract greater gains (ADAP A12, No. 40). Rather than making the German renunciation of the Alsace-Lorraine contingent on French reciprocity in the areas of disarmament, the evacuation of Cologne or the alleviation of the occupation, Stresemann explicitly advised German representatives to separate these questions to indicate that Germany was not using the security pact to try to wiggle out of any remaining disarmament obligations (ADAP A12, Nos. 67, 81). He suggested language to his ambassador in Paris: "We believe that it would contribute to the relaxation of the situation and would be completely in the interests of a reasonable development of general policy if security policy were simply discussed openly and intimately with the participation of Germany separate from the disarmament question" (ADAP A12, No. 67). He stressed to the British that his proposal "must not be confounded or confused with the controversies respecting disarmament and the evacuation of the Cologne area. From these they are distinguished by being of a different order of magnitude" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 189).

The questions were, of course, connected in Stresemann's mind. The foreign minister did hope that the Cologne situation and the remaining disarmament squabbles could be folded into a security pact deal, but he intentionally did not link them explicitly at the beginning (Cohrs 2006: 228), as the British duly noted (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 263). Stresemann believed that the importance of the German step would be deprecated if it were connected to the shortening of occupation since this would suggest an ulterior motive (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 73–80). The foreign minister, instead, counted on the fact that his offer would create trust that would allow the later solution of the remaining difficulties (ADAP A12, Nos. 40, 67). If the proposal were to be successful, a new "atmosphere" would be created (ADAP A12, No. 81). Stresemann talked and thought in terms not of bargaining quid pro quos but of natural and logical "ramifications" or "consequences" that would follow an ease in tensions. In German, the term is *Rückwirkungen*, and in later chapters I show the importance the foreign minister attached to them. He wrote privately, "It goes without saying that the conclusion of such a treaty, in which the chief powers of Europe proclaim that the security of Europe has thereby been established, involves the corollary that an absolute security no longer needs to be strengthened by a ten years' occupation of the Rhineland. The period of occupation would thus be shortened" (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 67). The Rhineland issue would arise naturally over time as the "logical

conclusion of a security pact" (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 62; see also Gratwohl 1980: 73–75; Stresemann, Vol. 2: 79).

Seeing things from the French point of view, a part of pragmatic statecraft, helped in this regard. He did not make any demands about early evacuation, for instance, "because I said to myself that we ourselves should not do anything of the sort if we were in the position of the other side, and because I always tell myself that policy is the art of what is possible" (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 222). For the time being, "there must be no attempt to make a condition of these matters beforehand. It is of course merely Utopian to try to put forward claims that, for those in responsible positions, do not come into question" (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 135–36).

Stresemann's DNVP coalition partners preferred a more confrontational diplomacy of coercive bargaining, consistent with the proself and low epistemic motivations typical of the far right. With a distributive mind-set, they denigrated the French proposal as not offering enough for Germany. Schiele believed that the Germans had made too many concessions in their note and "found missing guarantees for us" (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 50). D'Abernon, the British ambassador to Germany, explained to London that the DNVP did not understand why its government was giving something away for nothing (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 266). Schiele, the liaison between the DNVP parliamentary party caucus and the cabinet, argued that, by surrendering a concession without a counter-concession, Germany had "thrown a net over its own head" and proposed rescinding the offer of fixing the mutual borders of the countries (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 123).

The DNVP demanded concessions prior to any negotiations. In the full cabinet, Berndt asked what the Germans would receive as a reward for their very willingness to negotiate (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 62; see also Stresemann, Vol. 2: 79). In the first party statement concerning the pact idea in the parliament, Kuno Graf von Westarp noted that France wanted Germany to first completely disarm, enter the League, and negotiate a security pact; only after that would France leave Cologne. For the DNVP, he argued, the order should be the reverse (VDR 62: 1894–1903). This was a staging concern typical of coercive diplomacy. The nationalists opposed giving away Alsace-Lorraine without significant compensation. DNVP members outside the cabinet called on their government to make the inflated goal of a complete evacuation of the Rhineland the basis for negotiations (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 62; see also Stresemann, Vol. 2: 79).

Given the great divide between France and Germany on a number of issues and the presence of the DNVP in the German government, it is not surprising that Stresemann and the German cabinet received the French note unfavorably. The foreign minister complained that it "twisted the

original German offer out of all recognition” and linked it to issues that for Germany were separate, most notably German entry into the League (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 401; see also ADAP A13, No. 136). The Germans had warned the allies against this earlier (ADAP A13, No. 263). Stresemann emphasized that he had proposed treaties with the eastern neighbors of Germany precisely because he had not contemplated entering the League, which was a very contentious issue for his country, given its symbolic connection to the Treaty of Versailles (ADAP A13, No. 136; Stresemann, Vol. 2: 97–113; DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 211). The League had its own provisions for political reconciliation that would make arbitration treaties superfluous. The scope of arbitration was also too broad. The Germans had in mind a process in which only decisions on juridical questions would be binding, whereas political arbitration would only be advisory, even with France (ADAP A13, No. 136; DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 401). Stresemann also found the French hypocritical. They stressed the importance of the League and yet shielded any alleged violation of the Versailles Treaty on their part from the consideration of the League Council (ADAP A13, No. 136; Stresemann, Vol. 2: 89–91, 97–113; DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 401). The Germans pointed out that any French invasion of Germany short of self-defense would violate the terms of an agreement reached in London the year before (ADAP A13, No. 136; DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 401).

The two main points for Stresemann, however, were the effort by France to force Germany into signing nonaggression pacts with its eastern neighbors that France would itself guarantee and the conditions under which Germany would enter the League. These were the issues of most vital interest to Germany (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 97–113; ADAP A13, No. 136). Even as the Germans expressed their desire to resolve conflicts with their eastern neighbors peacefully, they had honestly admitted from the beginning that they were not willing to make formal commitments officially foreclosing the use of military force to rectify German borders. This would have been impossible domestically (ADAP A12, Nos. 201–2; DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 254). The German offer of arbitration treaties was “an indication of our desire to settle any matters in dispute by peaceful methods” (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 67). These would de facto exclude force, the Germans explained privately (ADAP A12, No. 201). Germany would declare formally in a private letter only that the “German Government renounce any idea of bringing about by warlike measures an alteration in the present German-Polish frontier” (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 392; see also DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 274; ADAP A12, No. 213). This “solemn engagement” (DBFP I, Vol. 27, Nos. 216, 220), however, could not be published (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 212). Publicly, Stresemann would declare in the Reichstag only that “to bring about a forcible alteration to the eastern

frontiers Germany has neither the strength nor the will" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 392; see also Stresemann, Vol. 2: 84).

Also at issue was whether Germany in its disarmed state could be obligated as a League of Nations member under Article 16 to participate in a mandatory economic boycott of states deemed aggressors by the League Council. There had been ongoing negotiations previously between the League of Nations and Germany over the terms of its potential membership, and the international body had insisted that Germany take on all the same obligations as other members. Germany was particularly worried about the devastating possibility of being drawn into a war with the Soviet Union. In addition to its inability to defend itself against a Soviet invasion, any such conflict would probably incite a civil war in Germany between communist and nationalist militias. "No obligations can be laid upon us which may involve Germany in the risk of a declaration of war upon her by another Power," said Stresemann (Vol. 2: 97–113). The pragmatic diplomat was, however, willing to accept an informal, de facto release from its treaty obligations rather than a formal exception (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 135).¹

When the German cabinet met to discuss the French note and the German reply, Stresemann identified these two items as the major sticking points (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 110). Nevertheless, the foreign minister, given his realist diplomatic style, believed that the German response should be general and conciliatory. He wanted to make sure that the note "should not be packed with demands"; he cautioned not to "burden the [discussions] with conditions, or with questions that will be dealt with as a matter of course during the negotiations" (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 135). Germany should let negotiations proceed to see if something of value might be gained, even though in light of the French response it might seem doubtful. The best way to proceed was by raising the questions together in a diplomatic conference rather than laying out firm negotiating red lines in an exchange of diplomatic notes (Kabinette

1. At no time did Stresemann attempt to extract more from the allies by dangling the prospect of developing closer relations with the Soviet Union, a coercive diplomatic move that many nationalists advocated. He refused to play the "Rapallo bluff." As a realist, Stresemann saw the need to cultivate good relations with both sides given the currently weakened state of Germany. Stresemann emphasized that Germany was not under the "tutelage of any power or group of powers." He balanced his negotiations with the West by opening discussions with the Russians on commercial matters and eventually concluding the Treaty of Berlin in 1926, a limited neutrality agreement with the Soviet Union to be superseded by German obligations under the League of Nations Covenant (Wright 2002: 310–12, 322–24, 354–59; Jacobson 1972: 81–82, 367–71). "In his effort to win agreement and support in the West, the Russian connection was of no real disadvantage or advantage to Stresemann," writes Jacobson (1972: 369).

Luther, Vol. 1, No. 62; see also Gratwohl 1980: 73–75; Stresemann, Vol. 2: 79). This pragmatism reflected his greater epistemic motivation, which contrasted with the right-wing need for closure. The British noted how this was a departure from the coercive diplomatic style that Germany had employed historically (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 409).

Domestic politics, however, particularly the position of the DNVP, made a simple reply of that kind impossible. Whereas Stresemann's early diplomatic initiatives had taken place without cabinet scrutiny, the formal German response to France required cabinet agreement. The sessions were acrimonious (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 96). Despite French efforts, DNVP ministers treated the French demands as a fixed and unalterable ultimatum rather than an opening offer in a negotiation process. It indicated their perception of the negotiations as zero-sum in nature, in which Germany faced an intractable and unyielding French adversary. Lacking epistemic motivation, they were unreceptive to the signals of the French openness to discussion. Instead, the nationalists saw the French note as an accurate reflection of an unacceptable French position that made talks pointless (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 110; Wright 2002: 316–17; Gratwohl 1980: 86–88; Jacobson 1972: 53). To proceed would amount to a formal recognition of the points of the French note. Their position was highly emotional. Any discussion based on the French note was for the nationalists a "difficult sacrifice" and a "humiliation" of Germany (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 123). Privately Graf von Westarp estimated "with 99% probability that the minimum demands for the protection of honor and interests would not be met by the allies" (Gratwohl 1980: 106).

DNVP cabinet members demanded that the government call off negotiations. If they were to consent to allow them to move forward, it was only with the explicit hope that they would fail. Albert Neuhaus said it would be a "gift from God" if nothing ever came of the German memorandum as he saw no advantage (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 110; Wright 2002: 316–17; Gratwohl 1980: 86–88; Jacobson 1972: 53). Had it been up to the nationalists, Stresemann's ideas would have been abandoned. Schiele advocated abandoning the terms of the original German memorandum and walking back from any pledge on the western borders (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 123).

In contrast, the center-right pragmatists proved more open to recognizing the liberal elements of French diplomatic style. Before the Foreign Affairs Committee, Stresemann stated, "We are convinced that we are not here confronted with an ultimatum" (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 110). Stresemann and Luther were supported by the centrist parties, which all favored the continuation of negotiations without prejudging the results

(Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 110; Wright 2002: 316–17; Gratwohl 1980: 86–88; Jacobson 1972: 53).²

Stresemann tried to make the pragmatic case to the DNVP. The foreign minister denigrated the cost of German concessions, arguing that the recognition of the status quo of Franco-German borders was of no consequence given that Germany, currently weak, was in no position to change them (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 67–69, 88–95). There was “no question of a moral renunciation [of the Alsace-Lorraine] but merely a recognition of the fact, which every sensible person would admit, that it would to-day be madness to play with the idea of a war with France” (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 215–25). It was only of a “theoretic character, as there is no possibility of a war against France” (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 503–6). In short, Germany was gaining more and giving up less than the DNVP claimed. “It was not we who were the givers,” he said to them (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 100).

The conservatives were not convinced by this pragmatic logic. Outside the government, the DNVP launched a vigorous attack against Stresemann to force him to resign. Fifty-one of 111 nationalist delegates to the Reichstag signed a protest demanding that he step down (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 91; Gratwohl 1980: 90; Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 116). Although they failed, Stresemann described the episode as among “the severest fights of his career” (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 399). And the party pressure clearly affected the German response to the French note. Stresemann’s challenge was to craft a formal reply that alienated neither the allies nor his nationalist coalition partners. In his instructions to the German ambassador in France upon transmitting the final draft, he told him of his dilemma in answering generally while not giving the impression of conceding specific French points and drawing right-wing ire (ADAP A13, No. 182).

The influence of the DNVP can be seen in Stresemann’s linkage of the security pact to the occupation. Germany, for the first time, made reference to the alleviation of the occupation’s conditions in the other two zones as a “ramification” of the conclusion of an agreement. The “security pact would be such an important improvement that it could not be without consequences for the arrangements in the occupied zones and the whole question of the occupation,” read the German reply (Locarno-Konferenz, No. 16; Stresemann, Vol. 2: 143; Jacobson 1972: 55–56). This question of *Rückwirkungen* had been part of Stresemann’s thinking all along, of course, but he had wanted to wait and raise it afterward. The

2. See contributions by Heinrich Brauns, Otto Gessler, and Rudolf Krohne. The only exception to this pattern was Josef Frenken, the Center Party minister. He, however, also served as minister for the occupied territories and took a strident position, in keeping with his portfolio (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 110).

foreign minister told his diplomatic emissaries abroad to stress that this was not a formal condition for agreement on a pact (ADAP A13, No. 211). Stresemann did, however, explicitly link the belated evacuation of Cologne with the conclusion of a security treaty (ADAP A13, No. 211; Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 116). Heretofore he had refrained from doing so formally while promising such a result to the cabinet (Jacobson 1972: 53–54; Gratwohl 1980: 95; Stresemann, Vol. 2: 113, 134). Now, although it was not in the official note, Stresemann was laying down this condition. Under pressure from the right, Stresemann was departing from his preferred pragmatic statecraft for the first time and using extractive linkages.

The moderate parties had a different type of influence. To the extent that moderate party members added to the debate, it was to urge Stresemann to add “warmth.” The draft was not “kind” enough (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 123). Stresemann’s DVP was more concerned about overstating its objections to the eastern arbitration treaties than it was about listing its preconditions for an agreement (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 123). Cabinet transcripts show the center of the political spectrum shared the goals of the German right but differed in diplomatic style.

Like the French, the Germans directly stated their position on the issues that mattered most to them, most notably the French guarantee of the eastern arbitration treaties and the right of the League to play a role in settling differences over the interpretation of the Versailles Treaty. Germany conceded to joining the League of Nations but stressed that a solution must be found to the question of Article 16 that took into account the special geographic and military position of the country (Locarno-Konferenz, No. 16; see also ADAP A13, No. 211; Stresemann, Vol. 2: 143; Cohrs 2006: 251–52; Gratwohl 1980: 99).

Rather than remaining aloof and skeptical about the potential for agreement, as when coercive diplomacy is used, the note stressed the openness of Germany to negotiation, its goodwill in working toward an agreement of mutual benefit, and its optimism about the eventual outcome. As the French had done, the note began by stating the German “satisfaction” that the allies were “ready to consolidate peace together with the German government” and “enter into a mutual exchange of opinions” (Locarno-Konferenz, No. 16). The note ended in a conciliatory way as well, stressing that, despite concerns about specific points, Germany observed a “convergence” of the positions of both sides that were “fundamentally united in their genuine desire to settle the security question through the security pact suggested by Germany as well as the expansion of the system of arbitration treaties.” The memo advocated far-sighted realist diplomacy that did not lose sight of the big picture. “Specifics” on which there were still “doubts and differences of opinion

would be overcome if the governments kept in view their goal." For its part, "the German government" hoped "that further discussions will lead to a positive result" (Locarno-Konferenz, No. 16). This had been Stresemann's position vis-à-vis the French since the receipt of the French note (ADAP A13, No. 136).

When the allies, following a preparatory conference of the judicial experts of the three countries, formally invited Germany to a conference in Locarno to conclude a security pact, the same process was repeated. The German nationalists again proved to be a stumbling block, demanding that any acceptance be accompanied by a long list of German demands. They wanted to make resolution of the Cologne-evacuation issue a precondition for any conference rather than an object of negotiations—Germany should claim all it could before it went to Locarno rather than having to pay for this concession in Switzerland. More controversially, however, they insisted on an official denial by Germany of its war guilt, even though previous German governments had already made several such declarations. Although it was not directly relevant to the negotiations, the DNVP claimed that, by agreeing to join the League, Germany would be symbolically and tacitly affirming its guilt were it not otherwise stated (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, Nos. 158, 159, 160, 161). The DNVP insisted on a public and formal statement against the "great injustice" of the war-guilt clause (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 158) to be announced not only to the allies but to all the members of the League (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 159).

Stresemann, again, opposed a long list of demands and favored a written response of only a "few words," accompanied by an informal, private, and oral explanation of the German positions on Cologne and war guilt (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 158). He believed that proceeding otherwise, particularly in regards to the morally charged war-guilt question, would ignite a conflagration that could lead the allies to break off the talks (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 160). As a pragmatist, he believed that Germany had to keep its eyes on its main political goals and not be distracted by largely symbolic issues that did not confer distinct political benefits (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 161). The moderate centrist members of the cabinet agreed (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 158). When the nationalists refused, Stresemann suggested the compromise of an oblique reference to a previous document that had refused German war guilt without direct quotation (Kabinette Luther, Vol. 1, No. 159).

The allies, however, told Germany that they would not accept the receipt of such a document, threatening to derail the conference before it had even begun. In the end, the German reply to the invitation was, instead, accompanied by a written declaration stating that, if Germany were to enter the League, it should not be understood that it was taking

on any "moral charge" against the German people. The reply also stated that any effort toward reconciliation would be prejudiced if there were no settlement of the remaining points concerning the disarmament necessary for the evacuation of the Cologne zone (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 168; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 22; DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 493; Jacobson 1972: 57). The Germans linked these issues to a successful conclusion of a treaty, although they refrained from making them a precondition for negotiations to begin. Thus, the DNVP had an impact on the German diplomatic style.

PUSHING PRAGMATISM: BRITISH BROKERING AND
FRENCH NONCHALANCE

An important part of Chamberlain's realist diplomacy was facilitating an agreement between the French and Germans, acting as an "honest broker" in the foreign secretary's words (Jacobson 1972: 23; Grayson 1997: 59). Early on, he told both countries it "would be a great mistake for the Germans to withdraw [their plan] or for the French not to consider it with the serious and even appreciative attention which it demands" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 216). Chamberlain urged both sides to negotiate in a pragmatic and far-sighted rather than a short-sighted and coercive fashion. The foreign secretary continually cautioned both sides to focus on their most vital of interests. He stressed that they "must have patience in dealing with immediate difficulties so that the larger hopes which seemed to be within our reach might not be shipwrecked on some smaller point before we could bring them into port" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 259). He told the French, "Whether we can do something for France depends on French behavior. . . . An attitude . . . which showed a sincere desire gradually to improve the relations between the two countries and to reconcile Germany to the conditions of the Peace of Versailles would do a great deal to remove one of the difficulties in our path. On the other hand, an attitude of unreasonable insistence on small points or a constant succession of irritating incidents would . . . only keep alive the hostility of Germany and accent the danger to French security with which France was already oppressed" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 188). At one point, Chamberlain said that he was "not unhopeful that in spite of . . . all the *unreason*, whether in Berlin or in Paris, we have made some progress" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 255 emphasis added).

Britain pushed France toward Germany and Germany toward France, encouraging them to seize the window of opportunity to remake Franco-German relations. On remaining issues of disarmament preventing the evacuation of Cologne, he wanted to show "consideration for German

feeling" and to "honestly try to meet their point of view," focusing on "big questions" rather than "trifling matters of no military consequence" (Jacobson 1972: 49). He asked the French to "stretch a point here and there in favor of Germany, provided she shows a reasonable spirit" (Cohrs 2006: 245). At times, he called French policy "frivolous" (Cohrs 2006: 215). But Chamberlain simultaneously reminded the Germans of Briand's domestic political difficulties with the French right.

During the initial exchange of notes, the British stressed to both the French and Germans that their notes should be conciliatory in nature and general in substance (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 388). He saw the formal exchange of notes laden with preconditions and demands—in other words, coercive diplomacy—as inhibiting the negotiation of deals of mutual benefit. Chamberlain characterized the French and German notes as conciliatory whether this was true or not. When the French sent their formal reply to Germany, he asked his ambassador to make sure the Germans saw it "as a not unfriendly response" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 283). When the French formally responded on June 16, he told Luther, "The Briand note was as favourable an answer to Germany as could be expected in view . . . [of the] necessity of protecting . . . against nationalist attack" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 409). He then urged the Germans to respond in kind: "I most sincerely trust that German government are not going to be misled into making quibbling difficulties over French note of June 16th. It was drafted by the French government in markedly conciliatory terms. . . . It is surely inconceivable that they will throw away such an opportunity. To my mind the proper course for the German government is to express acknowledgement of the spirit of conciliation which so obviously inspired the French note, to avoid all petty discussion of detail, and to accept without cavil the broad general principles which it enumerates" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 388). Chamberlain promised to "to use his whole influence with the German Government to induce them to send a reply of an equally conciliatory character, to refrain from offering meticulous criticisms and to get to practical negotiations as early as possible" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 410).

By July 1925, Chamberlain wanted both parties for stop their exchange of notes and begin private negotiations that would facilitate value creating negotiation. "It seems to me impossible to continue indefinitely a written and public exchange of views in which it must be clear that neither side will be willing, or indeed able, to commit itself beyond a certain limit. . . . It is clear that personal meetings and informal conversations will be necessary before complete harmony of views can be obtained" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 426; see also No. 429). Getting to the table, however, was not easy because of the diplomatic style of the German nationalists.

Chamberlain's response to the German note is worth quoting at length because it so trenchantly analyzes the distinction between pragmatic and coercive diplomacy and shows how poorly British realists received coercive bargaining. The British foreign secretary maintained that Germany was in danger of sinking the entire negotiation through its diplomatic style. He complained that "Germany having opened to her a prospect which would have seemed impossible a few months ago now shows a disposition to delay and haggle which would justify every suspicion of her good faith and would not only deprive us of all power to help her but must make us feel that it is not only useless but dangerous to attempt it" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 400). This stood in contrast to its earlier, more pragmatic diplomacy. He also wrote,

It cannot be too strongly insisted that the problem which faces us is psychological. Security is a state of mind rather than a physical fact. It can only exist in stable conditions and when there is confidence that stability will continue. The German offer of the 9th February was valuable because it tended to produce stability and confidence, and therefore, in the end, security. It diagnosed the situation correctly and proposed the proper remedy. . . . The German note of the 20th July, on the other hand, appears to have been based on a different principle and wears a wholly different aspect. The German Government no longer appear in the role of a far-seeing contributor to the general cause of peace, but rather in that of a somewhat unwilling participant, who acquiesces in a scheme, not because of its intrinsic merits, but merely in the hope that consent will enable him to drive a bargain in other directions. (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 429)

Chamberlain emphasized how coercive bargaining could raise suspicions about German intentions and undermine the efforts of Germany to reach a mutually beneficial deal. "In a word, the German note raises again those doubts as to Germany's real intentions, which had in a large measure been allayed, and which must be cleared up if a lasting settlement is to be reached" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 429). He excoriated Germany for its lack of regard for others' interests. He complained, "Thinking only of the party position in Germany they published an election manifesto and addressed it to the French government" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 431). Due to this shift in diplomacy, Germany was in danger of missing an important window of opportunity offered by the reasoned dialogue of France and the pragmatic statecraft of Britain. "Never was France so set on peace or her government so liberally inclined. Never since the war has the British government so definitely marked its desire for better relations with Germany or spoken with such generous appreciation of the

attitude of the German government. What is the result? As we advance, Germany recedes" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 400).

Specifically, Chamberlain chastised the Germans for making an explicit link between the pact and the easing of the occupation, which of course Stresemann had done to pacify nationalist opposition at home. Consistent with his diplomatic style, Chamberlain did not begrudge the Germans for their "very pertinent criticisms" and goals but, rather, their clumsy and unpragmatic diplomacy. "Quite apart from its relation to their previous assurances, it is permissible to question the wisdom of the German Government's attitude. Even if it be true that the condition of a security pact 'could not but react on the conditions in the occupied territories and the question of occupation in general', the *manner and moment* chosen by the German Government for its assertion are such as merely to invite rebuff" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 429, emphasis added). He objected to the diplomatic style of Germany, not its foreign policy. He continued, "It was only to be expected that the German Government would advance them at some stage. I had hoped, however, that they would have found means of reserving such questions of detail for later verbal discussion" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 429). This, of course, had been Stresemann's preference, but he was overcome by the DNVP.

When the second German note raised the issue of war guilt, the British were again outraged because this indelicate act of diplomacy undermined their attempts at honest brokering. As a pragmatist, Chamberlain objected not to the German position but to the obstacle it placed in the way of beginning negotiations on more important and tangible issues. "All that the German government are asked to decide is whether or not they will take part in a conference where they will have full opportunity of making such declarations as seem good to them. . . . It is unnecessary to make specific reservations which can only be regarded as conditions and will thus introduce precisely that controversial element which it is essential to avoid at this stage" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 488).³ This was particularly galling because the allies had not made any recognition of war guilt a condition of a pact. Germany was very unpragmatically creating problems that did not exist. "As far as my memory served me, not one word had passed between the German and the British Governments on the subject of war guilt since the Pact negotiations opened. Why on earth did the German Government raise the question now? What possible useful

3. In response, "The German ambassador sheepishly stated that he did not expect Chamberlain to confirm or respond in any way. He simply had to deliver this message." It was "not his intention to make any conditions" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 493). This was not something that Stresemann cared about, but it was needed to get the Germans to the table.

purpose could be served by their so doing? . . . Nobody asked the German Government to repeat [their war guilt]" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 493).

Yet, as he had done for the French note, Chamberlain defended the Germans to the French. He emphasized that the German note accepted membership in the League. The Germans indicated no desire to modify existing treaties, in particular provisions regarding the occupation. "A careful examination of the German reply shows on the whole a closer approximation of views than might have been expected," he wrote. As he had for the French note, he stressed the difficult domestic circumstances the government was facing (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 426). Privately, however, Chamberlain was vexed by the coercive style of the German response. He told D'Abernon he was putting "the most favourable construction possible upon the note" (DBFP I, Vol. 27, No. 429).

As much as Britain acted as mediator between the two sides, Germany and France would have never gotten to the table were it not for what Chamberlain called Briand's "liberality." Although under more pressure at home than the British foreign secretary, the French foreign minister was not particularly annoyed by the first German note. Briand said it was necessary to read between the lines of the German reply (Unger 2005: 491). Unlike Chamberlain, who was irritated that Germany had raised the question of the occupation, Briand was reassured by the German promise not to make this an issue during the formal pact negotiations. On the eastern treaty question, Briand stressed his simple desire to prevent the possibility that governments might use arbitration treaties as a way to prevent self-defense in situations of obvious aggression. In other, more ambiguous situations, another mechanism could be used, and he stressed his belief that a solution could be found. In an expression of empathy, Briand even went as far as to say that he would have taken the same position had he been in the Germans' shoes. The German ambassador to Paris, after meeting Briand, reported that his meeting "went as well as one could have hoped. . . . The understanding he has for our position even surprises me somewhat" (ADAP A13, No. 219).

Whether proceeding to face-to-face negotiations was possible depended on how the French received the second German note. Stresemann was not optimistic. He believed that it would lead "French public opinion . . . [to] boil over" (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 135). The foreign minister wrote, "It is so unfavourable to the Briand Note that I should not be surprised if the whole matter dropped. Much diplomacy will be needed to get the matter through at all" (Stresemann, Vol. 2: 141). Yet the French treated even the war-guilt issue with more equanimity than did the British, again showing the importance of liberal diplomacy in facilitating an agreement. The French response simply stated matter-of-factly that the issue of war guilt had been settled and was not a question for upcoming

negotiations (DBFPI, Vol. 27, No. 499; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 23). Other than that, the French were pleased that the Germans would come to Locarno. The French did not rise to the bait of the German nationalists, allowing negotiations to proceed. The reasoned dialogue of the leftist coalition allowed discussions to continue, whereas previously they might have broken down due to conclusions about German intentions drawn from the German coercive bargaining style.

During this entire period, members of the French and German right who opposed diplomatic rapprochement were working against, rather than with, the core economic interests of their constituencies. French and German business interests had an acute interest in securing credit from U.S. investors, who had been largely scared off from placing their capital in Europe given the instability of security relations between the two countries (Jacobson 1972: 5; Wright 2002: 342, Cohrs 2004: 250; Keeton 1987). The agricultural and business interests that supported the DNVP were particularly in need of a cash infusion and upset with the line that their party was taking (Wright 2002: 279; Stresemann, Vol. 2: 140, 205, 233; Gratwohl 1980: 145). Yet it was the French left and German center-right that pushed this financial and economic argument. This was not a case of political economic determinism, however. Stresemann and Briand were the drivers of the policy. Their motivations were primarily political, and they mobilized business interests behind them to place pressure on those in their countries who were reluctant (Wright 2002: 287, 319; Cohrs 2004: 250; Gratwohl 1980: 87). Even Edward Keeton (1987), who more than any other scholar stresses the role of political economy in 1920s diplomacy, claims only that business did not act as an encumbrance on their efforts.

Crass electoral party politics also seemed to not have influenced the process in any meaningful way. Genuine policy-seeking motivations, rather than office-seeking motivations, drove Stresemann (Rathbun 2004). The foreign minister's considerations about the constellation of German party coalitions were based on what he felt gave him the best chance of bringing his pragmatic statecraft to fruition. It had been largely at Stresemann's insistence that the DNVP was brought into government. The foreign minister, largely on the basis of his experience with the nationalists' parliamentary intransigence during the reparations negotiations over the Dawes Plan, concluded that his policy of rapprochement with the western allies would be easier to accomplish if the DNVP were in government rather than criticizing it from outside. Stresemann believed that the "responsibility" of governing would have the effect of inducing a greater recognition of "realist political necessities" on the part of the DNVP (ADAP A12, No. 28; see also Wright 2002: 196, 279; Stresemann, Vol. 2: 26). He was overly optimistic.