The Changing Status of German Reunification in Western Diplomacy, 1955-1966

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II. NATO AND THE GERMAN REUNIFICATION PROBLEM

The Allied Settlement with Germany of 1954

The decision to include West Germany in NATO in 1954 was the consummation of the conception of an alliance backed by American power to defend Western Europe against the Soviet Union. As the cold war intensified in concrete disagreements over the treatment of Germany, it was only a matter of time until the evolving society that the allies nurtured in their zones of occupation would be accepted as an ally instead of a protectorate. Moreover, at the same time that Germany was admitted as a fully equal partner in Western defenses, the allies made a binding commitment to support reunification as a "fundamental goal" of their diplomacy. The formal extension of the alliance to its natural defensive perimeter occurred simultaneously with the formal assumption of a pledge to extend Western political influence beyond that perimeter. The completion of an alliance championed from its inception as defensive involved the reassertion of revisionist political goals.

It was one thing for the Western allies—America, Britain and France—to subscribe in a vague and tentative manner, at various times during and after the war, to the ideal of a Germany reunited along democratic lines. It was quite another to make a similar commitment in clear and contractual form to a German government actually functioning in one part of the country and openly challenging the legitimacy of a well-ensconced administration on Ger-
man soil across the border. The Paris agreements constituted in their entirety the Western peace settlement with West Germany. It was a separate peace, in which a recovered and reformed German government converted its former enemies in the West into allies and obtained their support in continuing the struggle with its Eastern foe for control of the rest of the country. The allied undertaking was all the more weighty since the West German government was providing in return an army that its partners, especially the United States, considered indispensable for its own and Europe's security.

Not only the broad give and take of the settlement but its several particulars must be kept in view to convey completely the nature and extent of the commitment by NATO to the goal of German reunification. First and most fundamental, the former occupying powers undertook in the Paris agreements to accord the Federal Republic "the full authority of a sovereign State over its internal and external affairs," and to apply the "principle of sovereign equality" as defined by the United Nations Charter in all their relationships with West Germany. This acknowledgment was no mere formality in the eyes of the West German government. It gave the nation back its political life, whatever the accompanying limitations and qualifications might be. Second, the allies accepted the West German government as sovereign not only within its own juridical borders, but as the sole legitimate spokesman for the whole German people. This implied a joint policy of nonrecognition of the East German regime, which could not be abandoned without violating the sovereignty of the Federal Republic, since its very raison d'être as expressed in the federal constitution was to repre-
sent all Germany until a truly national government was formed. Third, the allies declared that the "achievement through peaceful means of a fully free and unified Germany remains a fundamental goal of their policy," and stipulated expressly that no decision on the borders of a future Germany could be made except by means of a peace treaty freely negotiated with an all-German government. This entailed a refusal to grant the finality of the Oder-Neisse border, less because it was the result of a fait accompli by the Soviet Union that contributed to the failure of postwar cooperation than because such a recognition would constitute for the West's new ally a fateful reversion to the practice of a dictated peace. Fourth, the determination to defend allied presence in Berlin was reiterated. Here, too, a policy previously adhered to in the over-all evolution of the containment doctrine was integrated into a series of pledges to the West German government, which followed the more specific goal of marshaling and making permanent allied support for the national task of achieving reunification.

In return for this complex of allied undertakings on its behalf, the Federal Republic accepted a burden and submitted to certain limitations. The burden entailed the provision of 500,000 troops for NATO defenses. The limitations on its sovereignty in general and on its specific role in military affairs were several. Unilaterally, West Germany made a three-point declaration of peaceful intentions, to the effect that it would (1) conduct its policies in ac-

cordance with the provisions of the U.N. Charter, 
(2) refrain from any actions inconsistent with the 
defensive character of the Western defense treaties, 
and (3) never resort to force in the pursuit of unity 
or the modification of existing borders. In the mili­
tary field, the Federal Republic renounced the man­
ufacture of atomic, biological, or chemical weapons 
in its own territory, and, within the framework of 
the Western European Union arms control agency, 
agreed to major restrictions on the production of 
other “offensive” arms. All its military forces were 
to be integrated in NATO defense planning.

For their part, the allies expressed certain reserva­
tions on the extent of German sovereignty. The 
former occupying powers retained their rights and 
responsibilities inherited from the war relating to 
Berlin and Germany as a whole, including reunifica­
tion and a peace settlement. They preserved residual 
troop stationing privileges, consistent with the maxi­
mum possible participation of Germany as an equal 
partner in the alliance. All of the NATO allies asso­
ciated themselves with a proviso that were Germany 
to resort to force in violation of the principles of 
the Charter or of the defensive character of the 
alliance, it would forego the right of assistance un­
der the treaty and face joint action by the other 
members to prevent its becoming a threat to their 
peace and security. This warning capped the several 
efforts to reconcile the incorporation of an ally 
openly dissatisfied with the political status quo into 
a military organization excessively self-conscious 
about its defensive origins and purposes.

With the accession to NATO the West German 
government under Adenauer continued its policy of 
rehabilitating the German people in the eyes of the
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Western political community by playing a willing and sometimes leading role in joint ventures whose purpose was said to transcend the nation-state. The limitations on armament and promises of peaceful behavior involved in the 1954 bargain were considered necessary gestures of good faith to the Federal Republic's new allies. Within their bounds, Germany was entitled both to a fully sovereign and equal role in the evolution of military arrangements providing for the collective defense and to the collective backing of her allies in the pursuit of reunification. German territory was securely covered by the NATO shield, German armed forces were welcomed as an integral part of its strength, and Germany's primary national objective was fully incorporated into the diplomacy of the NATO partners.

During the years 1950–55, when the question of Germany's rearmament and international status was still undecided, the Federal Republic had been at one with the United States in resisting the idea of high level talks with the Russians, favored predominantly by the British. Once the Western defense system was consolidated, however, pressure for negotiations became irresistible. The three Western allies, in close cooperation with West Germany, issued an invitation to the Soviets for a summit conference just five days after the Federal Republic formally entered NATO.

Reunification and East-West Relations in 1955

The base year for any consideration of the role of the reunification problem in recent East-West diplomacy is 1955. At the heads of state and foreign ministers conferences of the summer and fall, each
side elaborated with great persistence its basic stance on the preconditions for a safe and stable European political order. The positions established in 1955 provided the dominant theme for all discussions of a European settlement in the subsequent decade.

The Geneva summit approached during a period when the Russians’ apparently more conciliatory posture on a range of international issues had fostered high but unspecific hopes for a significant East-West détente. Of particular note had been the agreement on an Austrian peace treaty. It prompted a favorable mention by President Eisenhower in the weeks before the conference of the concept of a neutral belt of armed states in Central Europe as a possible solution to the cold war. This reference to the “Austrian model” aroused a flurry of diplomatic activity in the West that resulted in a clear public delineation of the principles and priorities that would determine the Western position. Immediately, the President’s remark was qualified by Secretary of State Dulles, who said that the idea of armed neutrality had no relevance whatever to the future of Germany. Chancellor Adenauer seconded Dulles’s view, emphasizing that his country’s assumption of NATO membership was in no sense an act to be bargained away for reunification, but rather a prerequisite to achieving it. He won allied endorsement of the German view that reunification by free elections and disarmament in Europe must be negotiated simultaneously, and that additional European security arrangements could only be devised after the re-establishment of German unity. Adenauer did not assert the need for a direct link between reunification and American efforts to reach a general and complete disarmament accord with Russia, the pros-
pects for which were held to have improved considerably in view of the surprisingly moderate tenor of recent Soviet proposals. He granted that such an agreement would contribute to an eventual solution of his country’s division.

The commitment to reunification in the Paris treaties involved only two specific guides to actual policy: the refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the East German regime and the refusal to recognize the finality of Germany’s current borders. Adenauer’s accomplishment prior to the conference was to make this essentially defensive stance on German unity operational by stipulating more fully the procedure and substance of a possible settlement. He made reunification the centerpiece of Western diplomacy in a time of détente.

President Eisenhower set forth the dominant and enduring propositions in the first Western speech at the summit:

Germany is still divided. That division does a grievous wrong to a people which is entitled, like any other, to pursue together a common destiny. While that division continues, it creates a basic source of instability in Europe. Our talk of peace has little meaning if at the same time we perpetuate conditions endangering the peace. . . . In the interest of enduring peace, our solution should take account of the legitimate security interests of all concerned. That is why we insist a united Germany is entitled at its choice, to exercise its inherent right of collective self-defense. By the same token, we are ready to take account of the legitimate security interests of the Soviet Union.3

Eisenhower was prone to emphasize that the existing functions of NATO as a source of peace and the Western European Union (WEU) as a constraint on West Germany's military freedom would basically ensure that even a reunited Germany within these organizations would not be an added threat to European peace or Russian security. His colleague, Eden, concentrated on the additional assurances that the West would offer the Russians if they accepted a plan for German unity through free elections. These might include force limitations and even a certain amount of demilitarization in Central Europe, as well as new security commitments between East and West embodying an implicit pledge to meet in common any renewal of German aggression. These commitments, however, would only be superimposed on the prevailing alliance structure, although it would be somewhat modified by the arms agreements foreseen. Eden's conception of a German settlement was a reappplication of the Locarno idea, which aimed at "combining security for allies with restraints on them and stability for the system as a whole."

More generally, the Western position that security measures had to be accompanied by the simultaneous solution of political disputes rested on the view that the armed confrontation in Europe resulted primarily from a prior conflict of political wills. Subordinated, if not ignored, was the premise behind proposals for simple disarmament that some portion of the accumulated military force was less attributable to the persistent dispute over Germany

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than to the inner dynamic of an arms race with modern weapons. In the Western view, any reduction of arms would require a stable political base to be safe and lasting; the acknowledged sources of conflict would have to be eliminated, or the fear of attack and hence the justification for arms would remain. The ideal proposal was a package one, which carefully linked progress toward political compromise with reductions in the actual means of waging war.

Leeway for maneuver outside the preferred Western package was practically nonexistent. Eden's proposal at another juncture of the conference for a simple inspection zone on either side of the prevailing demarcation line was politically distasteful to America in particular, because it seemed to imply that the situation on the continent was sufficiently stable to be accepted de facto as the starting point for lasting relaxation. And the cool allied response, both to French Premier Faure's speculation on a partial dissolution of blocs occurring after German reunification and to the concept of armed neutrality alluded to earlier by Eisenhower, demonstrated that the content of the package itself was even less subject to modification.

Russian policy on the content and sequence of a Central European settlement stood in radical opposition. Premier Bulganin arrived in Geneva with various proposals to retard, if not reverse, the process of West German rearmament and incorporation into the NATO system. Initially, Bulganin concentrated his efforts in support of a European security pact to replace NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO). Institution of the pact would have been accompanied by a halt of the Federal
Republic’s rearmament, the initiation of foreign troop and base withdrawals in all of Europe, and extensive worldwide disarmament measures. The new arrangement was to include two separate German states until the creation of a single Germany. Bulganin’s guiding premise was that the

. . . easing of tension in international relations and the creation of an effective system of security in Europe would largely facilitate the settlement of the German problem and would bring about the necessary prerequisites for the unification of Germany on peaceful and democratic principles. . . . It must be admitted that the remilitarization of Western Germany and its integration into military groupings of the Western Powers now represents the main obstacle to its unification.5

This package was unacceptable as a whole, both because it violated the several allied propositions about Germany’s right to national unity and a free foreign and defense policy and because it challenged the entire framework of Western security arrangements in Europe. But even when the Russian proposals were presented separately, without reference to the evolution of a new European security pact, they were rejected. All the individual suggestions that the Soviets put forward at the two Geneva conferences—troop cuts in Germany, more general zones of arms limitation and inspection in Central Europe, a nonaggression commitment between WTO and NATO, the formation of all-German committees—suffered in Western eyes from the same basic liability. They either sought to begin dismantling Western defenses before the real source of instability, the

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German division, was removed, or they tended to perpetuate the division itself. Every Western pronouncement on European affairs at the 1955 meetings reiterated the necessity for a firm link between disarmament and German reunification. The NATO allies were in Geneva to argue for the one settlement upon which a lasting, cumulative détente could be based.

Thus it was considered a victory for Western diplomacy, despite the total lack of substantive agreement, that the Soviet Premier affixed his signature to the Geneva Directives, which restated the "common responsibility" of the Big Four for the settlement of the German question by means of free elections, and acknowledged the "close link between the reunification of Germany and the problem of European security and the fact that the successful settlement of each of these problems would serve the interests of consolidating peace." Whatever interpretations the Soviets subsequently chose to read into the Directives, the West felt with good reason that they constituted a valuable statement of its basic position on the preconditions for a stable European order, a welcome supplement to the lamentably vague and increasingly distant Potsdam accords. They formed the East-West counterpart to the Paris agreements.

Still it is not customary to view the Geneva sessions on Germany as a positive achievement at all, but rather as the last of the long series of postwar conferences on the country's future. It is argued that after the futile confrontation of manifestly incompatible designs for the continent, the Soviet Union

took the final steps to establish East Germany as a separate regime, and the West proceeded with the policy of rearming and integrating the Federal Republic in NATO defenses, a course whose ultimate effect was to cement the division just as finally as the Eastern actions. This interpretation has the virtues of realism and simplicity. But even if eventually correct in its essentials, it fails to indicate the extent to which the priority accorded by the West in 1955 to the achievement of reunification had an operative influence on major junctures in East-West diplomacy as well as on the development of the NATO alliance in the succeeding decade. The premises of 1955 provided a main functioning guideline for Western policy until 1960, they complicated infinitely the efforts of Presidents Kennedy and de Gaulle to explore new paths in East-West relations after 1960, and they remain crucially relevant today to any consideration of how the European stalemate may evolve.

Thus the arguments of the Western statesmen must be seen as more than simply pro forma justifications to the Soviets and to world opinion of Germany's integrationist course. Eisenhower and his colleagues genuinely believed that the solution to the German problem evolved by the West since 1949 was the only sensible means of treating a potentially great and disruptive power. The logic behind the Coal and Steel Community and European army proposals is familiar enough. However implausible it was to assume that the Soviets would accept the Geneva suggestions, it is even more implausible to expect that the West would have abandoned the integration formula and its rationale in a major confrontation of views on the prerequisites of a healthy
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European order. Far from being a naïve or hypocritical approach to the problems dividing the two blocs, the Western offers were based on policy principles that had developed over an entire decade and were not to be abandoned overnight.

The Adenauer government regarded the common Western stand on Germany as the crowning vindication of the Federal Republic's undeviating westward course since its foundation. Fidelity to the West had now resulted in the strongest possible defensive and diplomatic front to the East. Opposition calls for a more independent diplomacy were rejected on the grounds that Bonn was fully represented in all allied deliberations. More fundamentally, the government's resolute denial of the necessity for a unilateral search for reunification rested on the argument that only if Germany continued its voluntary cooperation with the West could it fulfill its appointed task of assuring the existence of a free order on the continent against the threat of the repugnant political system in the East. If, for example, permanent neutralization were accepted as the price of reunification, as the Soviets had sometimes suggested, the country would be at the mercy of East and West alike in their continuing efforts to strengthen or weaken it in accord with their prospects of gaining control. Under such circumstances, a Germany pressed for its very existence could revert to a dishonest policy of playing one side against the other, a Schaukelpolitik; nor would a free domestic order be possible in the context of such external threats. This dire logic, which could end either with a Communist takeover or with the re-emergence of Germany as an independent and estranged great power, was employed by Bonn to demonstrate to allied and
domestic opinion that a reunited Germany could evolve as a stable and reliable political entity only if it were free to continue a natural association with the Western community. An intermediate buffer state status, in which its freedom in foreign and domestic policy were compromised, would produce dangerous insecurity and resentment.

Such reasoning was employed by the Federal Republic after 1955 to convince Western opinion that the model of a Germany reunited with the West rested on enduring mutual interests. It was largely accepted. Politically relevant criticism of Western policy at Geneva and in succeeding years related less to the substance of the settlement proposed than to the interim policies advocated by the Bonn government for attaining it. Since by 1955 the Soviets had ended virtually all references to reunification and had adopted the two-state theory, West Germany's job was not only to defend the ideal settlement envisioned by the West, but to convince its allies and, needless to say, the Soviet Union that nothing short of that settlement, even the tacit acceptance of the status quo, could ever guarantee tranquility in Europe. This involved the question of tactics, of what could be done in the period before a settlement was attained. Given the cardinal assertion that the denial of self-determination to the German people was an injustice on which no stable order could ever be based, continued refusal to grant diplomatic recognition or political respectability to East Germany was the indispensable minimum requirement for holding open the possibility of reunification. Moreover, precisely because the enforced division created the basic instability, while it persisted, disarmament and security measures were also unacceptable lest
they shift the military balance against the West before the conflict was resolved, or contribute to a freezing of the intolerable status quo. West Germany must continue to participate in building the free world defenses through NATO, while simultaneously holding out the promise of security concessions to the Soviet Union in return for unity. In that way it would fulfill its legitimate security needs within the WEU restrictions, and prove at the same time that the best guarantee that a reunited Germany would never again misuse its power would be its incorporation into a similar system of restraint in which it would continue to voluntarily forego the possibility of independent action.

The point of great debate was whether wholehearted dedication to the Westward course would leave sufficient room for maneuver and experimentation in the search for a settlement in the East. Bonn considered its unchanging task in the years after Geneva to prove to skeptics in East and West alike that the allied German settlement of 1954 was a workable framework that would some day have to be extended for the necessary all-European regulation of the political and military problems dividing the continent. After the arduous years of regaining sovereignty and respectability for one portion of Germany, the Federal Republic's leaders felt that the longer road to national unity in freedom was just opening up.

The Maintenance of the Reunification Commitment, 1955–60

The operative effects of pursuing the policy on Germany adopted in 1954 and 1955 can be de-
scribed under three headings: first, the Western response, and attempts at counterinitiatives, to Communist-bloc proposals on disarmament and a political settlement in the period 1956–58; second, Western reactions to the first Soviet ultimatum on Berlin in November, 1958; and third, post-Camp David diplomacy regarding a summit conference.

**Disarmament and Détente, 1956–58.** Whereas Soviet inflexibility on German reunification was understood by Dulles and Adenauer as a vindication of the Western position, the British and French lamented the extent of the deadlock and arrived at the first disarmament talks after Geneva, which convened in London in March, with plans for a new start. They sought a beginning agreement on great power conventional force reductions so that the imminent rearmament of Germany would not be necessary; its postponement might lead to new measures in the field of European security, thus facilitating reunification. In effect this endorsed the Soviet sequence of priorities, by placing the German issue last. Bonn quickly set about to recreate the clarity and unity of the allied position, declaring itself in favor of controlled general disarmament, while iterating that that search would ultimately be futile and dangerous if it ignored the German division. Before disarmament began, it was argued, West Germany must attain the minimum military establishment necessary for its security, to which level other nations' forces could be initially reduced; above all, there must be no agreements leading West Germany toward a neutral status.

This elaboration of the Geneva premises into a set of clear priorities resulted in a unified Western statement to the Soviets at the London negotiations
that, in principle, while progress toward general disarmament could certainly begin on the basis of existing political circumstances, completion of the process would have to await resolution of outstanding political problems. Insistence on this principle added to the already long list of differences that divided the two camps in their search for universal disarmament, but its most important effects were felt in the discussion of European affairs.

For the Soviets, the years after Geneva were a time of maneuver. They continued to advocate in the name of peaceful coexistence a series of partial measures that, while less ambitious than the idea of a new European security pact, had the same dual purpose of gaining recognition of the status quo and preventing NATO's adoption of a nuclear posture, especially in Germany. The heart of their program was the suggestion for a nuclear free zone in Central Europe, first proposed by Gromyko in March, 1956, and later to become permanently associated with Polish Foreign Minister Rapacki, who broached a more concrete plan in October, 1957. This was never accepted by the West, even as a basis for discussion, because of the objection in principle to isolated disarmament agreements based on the continuation of the German division; less fundamental but equally effective was the objection to discrimination in armament against one ally before the common threat was overcome. Strategic arguments always complemented these objections to nuclear free zones, but the primary criterion was political.

The Soviets' major political proposals were two: the idea of a NATO-WTO nonaggression agreement, rejected by the West because it threatened to involve the West in diplomatic relations with East
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Germany and to imply tacit acceptance of the political and territorial status quo; and the idea of a German Confederation, first put forth by Ulbricht in late 1956, rejected because it formalized the existence of two German states, proposed the execution of radical disarmament measures as a prerequisite for progress toward unity, and contained rules for political relations totally at odds with Western constitutional and democratic practices.

Western objections to the Soviet program for détente were procedural as well as substantive. Calls for a summit conference beginning in the winter of 1958 were resisted in part because the proposed agenda omitted all reference to reunification as a matter of four-power responsibility according to the Geneva directives.

Defensiveness to this degree inspired criticism within the Western camp as well. The course of disengagement advocated with mounting insistence after 1955 by opposition spokesmen in Germany, Britain, and America questioned both the sequence of the officially favored settlement, by putting denuclearization and foreign troop withdrawals at the head of the process, and its substance, by proposing a semi-detached status for a reunited Germany between the blocs. With varying emphasis, these critics upheld the demand for German unity through free elections, but the loose-linked process allegedly leading to that goal was considered too risky in the interim, too vague in the long run, by the Western statesmen in power.

One measure in the realm of arms control and disarmament thought to be applicable to Europe prior to a reunification agreement was the conception of an inspection zone to guard against surprise
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attack. Under American initiative, the West advanced in 1957 several proposals for air and ground observation. These did not invalidate the principle that actual arms reductions in Europe demanded concurrent political progress; they were not limited to European territory alone, but very pointedly included strategically significant areas of Russian soil; and they did not center on the prevailing demarcation line. Nevertheless, even the process of exploring, with such elaborate precautions, simple force inspection on the continent put immense strains on the American-German relationship.

The inclination of the chief American negotiator, Stassen, to engage in tête-à-têtes with the Soviet delegates occasioned the first serious suspicion in Germany of a great-power deal on Europe. German diplomacy in this period worked actively to prevent that possibility, and a series of allied declarations such as the following communiqué from an Adenauer-Eisenhower meeting revealed the severe limits that past policy had set to a more flexible search for arms agreements in Europe:

The President stressed that any measures for disarmament applicable to Europe would be accepted by the United States only with the approval of the NATO allies, which he hoped would take a leading role in this regard, and taking into account the link between European security and German reunification. He assured the Chancellor that the United States does not intend to take any action in the field of disarmament which would prejudice the reunification of Germany.

The President and the Chancellor agreed that, if a beginning could be made toward more effective measures of disarmament, this would create a degree of confidence which would facilitate further progress in the field of dis-
armament and in the settlement of outstanding major political problems such as the reunification of Germany.  

Allied efforts to seize the initiative in the political field did not gain great attention, much less a positive Russian response. In a series of major notes to the Soviet Union, Bonn underlined in vain its willingness to make concessions on disarmament and European security in return for reunification, preferring this type of coherent reiteration of NATO's policy on Germany to the tactic of gingerly holding political issues in abeyance while investigating promising first steps in other areas. Even a modest procedural proposal, the joint Western call for a standing four-power commission to work out common suggestions for a solution to the German question, was evaded by the Soviets.

In the two years after 1955 the Russians succeeded neither in gaining recognition of the political status quo nor in inaugurating any diminution of NATO's military strength through separate agreements. They had forced the West to concentrate increasingly on the tactics of holding open the possibility of its desired settlement in lieu of substantive negotiations, but this was only a negative gain. Thus Soviet diplomacy reverted in November, 1958, from the language of détente to ultimatum in a bold effort to force concessions on the political issues lying at the core of the European conflict.

*Berlin and the Geneva Foreign Ministers Conference.* The belligerent Soviet declarations of late

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1958, threatening to convert West Berlin into a neutral and demilitarized city and to transfer the control of Western access rights to a sovereign East German regime unless the four occupying powers could agree jointly on such arrangements within six months, had the initial effect of reopening East-West talks on German unity. While rejecting vigorously the idea of negotiations under pressure and Russia's intention of abrogating unilaterally any aspect of four-power responsibility, the allies did offer to engage in talks at the foreign ministers level, provided that they treat the "problem of Germany in all its aspects and implications," which meant precisely reunification, European security, and a peace treaty in that order. Berlin was simply added to European security and disarmament as another issue that could only be satisfactorily solved in the context of German unity. This time, however, the NATO powers were unable to display the unity and consistency on Germany that had characterized their position four years earlier.

Even before the conference convened there were signs that the premises and priorities of past years were being called into question. Dulles's remarks that East German officials might be acceptable as "agents" of the Soviet Union in controlling access, and that free elections were not necessarily the only conceivable way to unity, threatened the heart of Bonn's policy: nonrecognition of the Soviet zone and the inalienable right of self-determination. On a hurried trip to Moscow and Western capitals in early 1959, Macmillan propagated limited disarmament schemes in Central Europe to be coupled with a confederation leading gradually to reunification. This, too, indicated how skeptical Western statesmen
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had become about the realism of reproposing the optimal settlement of 1955.

Especially significant was Macmillan's desire to convey to the Soviet Union the Western determination to defend its rights in Berlin, while probing at the same time for ways to make that presence more palatable. Two years later, the American government under Kennedy made a similar search. Under Kennedy, the demand for firm guarantees for West Berlin came gradually to replace the former insistence on German reunification as a prerequisite for consideration of other security arrangements in Central Europe. At the time of Macmillan's efforts, the search for a new Berlin agreement was conducted as a more isolated undertaking. To negotiate primarily on Berlin was to accept the Soviet definition of the sources of tension in Europe; to concentrate in these talks on defending the substance of Western rights in the city without due regard to the implications of the form of a possible new agreement on the legal and political status of the existing order was to compromise further the Western position. After 1959, Bonn repeatedly felt the need to call attention to these risks.

The Herter plan for reunification, the West's opening bid, was a tightly-knit package of interrelated political and military measures. It departed not in form but in content from the previous allied position, by postponing free elections for a two and one-half year transition period and instituting a good measure of disarmament and additional East-West security pledges before reunion occurred. West German officials endorsed the plan for its logic and the inseparability of its provisions, but were careful to point out that, especially in its confederal tenden-
cies, it represented a maximum in concessions to Soviet desires.

Nonetheless, the feeling was practically universal in 1959 that the presentation by each side of its respective German plan was a mere formality. The Soviets had defined the key issue. The West, in consenting to discuss Berlin's status separately, granted implicitly that instability derived from circumstances other than the lack of a general German settlement. One interim proposal foreseeing the city's union in the context of the Herter plan was rejected by the Soviets out of hand. A second, acknowledging the absence of agreement on reunification, reaffirmed allied access rights but contained major concessions by allowing East German personnel to administer access, by limiting allied garrisons in the city, and by establishing rules against hostile propaganda issuing from either sector. Despite these efforts to placate Russian demands, it fared no better. The Soviet charge of Berlin's "abnormality" was indirectly conceded.

Deadlocked at every point, the ministers meeting in Geneva chose as occasion for adjournment the announcement of Khrushchev's coming visit to America. In a final effort to revive the 1958 idea of a four-power commission to discuss reunification, the West proposed that the foreign ministers forum be kept in existence, but the Soviets predictably objected. Thus ended the last formal conference of the postwar period dedicated to the "problem of Germany in all its aspects and implications," although the narrower issue of Berlin was far from dead. Thereafter, Western diplomacy was less certain than ever in defining a common focal point for negotiations with the Communist camp.
Camp David to the 1960 Summit. The only concrete outcome of the Camp David meeting was Eisenhower's assent in principle to a Big Four summit, after which there ensued a most complicated period of intra-Western deliberations over whether to talk and what to talk about. The British were extremely desirous both of high-level negotiations and of proceeding with the Berlin suggestions made at the close of the foreign ministers conference. The United States was not so positively inclined to a summit as the British, but found it unavoidable, and tended to support a more reluctant Germany in the argument that the basis for talks should be the Herter plan. France under de Gaulle was unenthusiastic for various reasons and also tended to back the German position on how to proceed. The Adenauer government became progressively apprehensive that reunification as a distinct topic would be dropped from the agenda and, in a tactical maneuver to avoid discussions limited only to Berlin, tried to direct attention away from European issues entirely toward general disarmament as a topic for the summit. Defense of the position elaborated in 1955 continued to ensure Western rejection of Communist proposals on disarmament in Europe, and the "three Germanies" concept implicit in the Berlin demands. But consensus on the contents of an alternative Germany plan was fading, and differences were obvious on how best to counter Soviet tactics as they switched from ultimata to summitry and back again. Indicative of the endemic allied disagreement is the fact that prior to the abortive summit of May, 1960, no clear announcement was ever made on whether an interim Berlin agreement was to be sought anew.
As the Eisenhower years drew to a close, there were indications that the maintenance of the reunification commitment was becoming a matter of rhetoric to a greater degree than it had been in the past. At the 1959 Geneva sessions, Western delegates reportedly intimated in private to the Communist spokesmen that abandonment of the nonrecognition policy was impossible for the time being, because of the realities of West German domestic opinion. In a public comment of the same time, de Gaulle coupled a strong endorsement of German unity with explicit reference to existing borders. More generally, the now familiar conviction had grown in some Western circles that undue deference to the Adenauer government's preferences granted Germany a veto on all efforts to reduce East-West tension. These Western observers saw only a dangerous mixture for perpetuating the division of Europe and its accompanying tensions in the lack of clear statements from West Germany to the Czech and Polish governments on border claims, in Bonn's resistance to separate Berlin and disarmament agreements, and in continued German pursuit of integration into NATO's nuclear defenses.

The Federal Republic's allies, America under Dulles foremost among them, did not make such judgments public. But it does seem that they had come, in the years between 1955 and 1960, to defend Bonn's positions less in the conviction that these would someday bring about the ideal settlement proposed than in the interest of preventing German disaffection from the Western camp that was feared if the options theoretically necessary to hold open the possibility of that settlement were foreclosed one by one. This was, surely, one of the original
motives for accepting Germany into the alliance and the European communities: to prevent the country from ever again desiring an independent course in external affairs. Bonn’s Western orientation was never held to be an end in itself, however, but only a means to a reunification agreement that would create a truly stable, because more just, basis for European order. Now, after fifteen years of fruitless argument with the Soviets over this issue, five of them with the Federal Republic as an ally, the temptation had grown for the Western powers to view the interim solution to the German problem as a satisfactory one, and to render rhetorical support for the ideal solution primarily in order to preserve the prevailing arrangement. After all, the West Germans themselves seemingly asked for little more than ritualistic reaffirmations of increasingly empty slogans.

That there was a certain amount of hypocrisy and self-delusion in this development, has been commonly remarked. And yet, given the unchanging need to keep the Federal Republic a satisfied and friendly power in the interests of long-term balance and stability in Europe, some hypocrisy was unavoidable, since the division could be neither overcome nor legitimized. The 1955 theses on Germany’s right to national unity could, for a time, be ignored in practice, but never repudiated in public. Despite their excessive formality, and, in some respects, almost aggressive ring, the theses still stood for the principles of sound statesmanship that the Western allies felt should be applied in determining a great nation’s political future. Even more candid and concerted efforts in the 1960’s to reach agreements with the Russians in Central Europe proved this point:
GERMAN REUNIFICATION

Three diplomatic assaults from the West on the German division and its related armament and security problems, led by Dulles, Kennedy, and de Gaulle, each with differing degrees of West German support, still leave the continent with what must be termed a provisional situation.