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**IDEALS AND INTERESTS  
IN RECENT GERMAN  
FOREIGN POLICY**

*Ludger Kühnhardt*

THIRD

ALOIS MERTES MEMORIAL LECTURE

1993



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The lecture is named in honor of one of the most prominent members of the *Christlich-Demokratische Union* during the reconstruction of post-war Germany. It is made possible by a grant from the *Stifterverband für die deutsche Wissenschaft*.

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## Preface

IN THE SECOND ALOIS MERTES MEMORIAL LECTURE, Professor Clay Clemens of the College of William and Mary gave a brilliant analysis of the CDU's *Deutschlandpolitik* and reunification, 1985–1989. We were very pleased that Professor Ludger Kühnhardt of the University of Freiburg im Breisgau paid tribute to another central aspect of the work of Alois Mertes, recent German foreign policy, in the Third Alois Mertes Memorial Lecture. As many will remember, from the 1960s to the 1980s, Alois Mertes was perhaps the most outstanding foreign policy expert in the ranks of the CDU. He combined a keen interest in a wide range of foreign policy matters with firm ethical convictions; he knew European affairs as well as the problems of the Third World. Like Fritz Erler in the SPD in the 1950s, Alois Mertes was a key figure in the planning of German foreign policy in his time, without ever officially holding the post of foreign minister.

It is not possible to list here all the achievements and writings of Professor Kühnhardt. Let me just mention some matters that may be of special interest to an American audience. After traveling widely and writing books about his experiences, Ludger Kühnhardt began an impressive career as a political scientist. His dissertation on *Die Flüchtlingsfrage als Weltordnungsproblem. Massenzwangswanderungen in Geschichte und Politik* (Vienna, 1984) drew on the knowledge he had acquired especially in India and addressed a problem that has become ever more important in the past decade. After further travels and extensive research in Japan and the United States, he completed his *Habilitationsschrift* on *Die Universalität der Menschenrechte. Studien zur ideengeschichtlichen Bestimmung eines politischen Schlüsselbegriffs* (Munich, 1987). Before being appointed professor of political science at Freiburg im Breisgau in 1992, Professor Kühnhardt spent a year as a senior associate at St. Antony's College in Oxford and held visiting professorships at Capetown, Bonn, and Jena. For some time, he was an assistant to Bundespräsident Richard von Weiz-

säcker. In his recent publications, Kühnhardt has analyzed various fundamental problems of today's world: *Wege in Demokratie* (Jena, 1992); *Stufen der Souveränität. Staatsverständnis und Selbstbestimmung in der Dritten Welt* (Bonn/Berlin, 1992); *Europäische Union und föderale Idee. Europapolitik in der Umbruchzeit* (Munich, 1993); *Revolutionszeiten. Politische Umbrüche in geschichtlicher Perspektive* (forthcoming).

We are delighted to present Professor Kühnhardt's lecture as the tenth in our Occasional Papers series.

*Washington, D.C.*  
*June 1993*

*Hartmut Lehmann*

IT IS A PRIVILEGE INDEED to deliver the Third Alois Mertes Memorial Lecture, and I am most honored by the invitation. Some among you are old friends of the late Alois Mertes. As is the course of nature, others of you are younger. When I began my high school studies, the diplomat Mertes spent a sabbatical year at Harvard University. While my history teacher was introducing us students to ancient Mesopotamia and to the causes of the fall of the Weimar Republic, Dr. Mertes was writing a lengthy paper at Harvard's Center for International Affairs. "German policy," he stated in April 1969, "has to protect the basic interests of the German nation."<sup>1</sup> In the shadow of totalitarian experiences, of Hitler's war and Stalin's victory, Mertes gave the answer to Germany's basic interest: "The primacy of freedom."<sup>2</sup>

But Mertes was aware of the fact that freedom remains valid only in times of peace, and realized that it depends on credibility. In 1985, in the context of the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War II, President Ronald Reagan and Chancellor Helmut Kohl visited a war cemetery that happened to include the tombs of former SS soldiers. That incident took place in Bitburg, a small town situated in Alois Mertes's electoral district.

As Michael Wolffsohn pointed out in the First Alois Mertes Memorial Lecture, "[f]or the first time, West Germany seemed to be on the defensive."<sup>3</sup> Only weeks before his premature death, Mertes, then state secretary at the German Foreign Office in Bonn, visited the United States to reassure his American friends of Germany's credibility and responsibility—both in light of an unforgettable, hor-

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<sup>1</sup>Alois Mertes, "Reflections on Detente: Russia, Germany and the West" (Unpubl. paper, Harvard University, April 1969), 52.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Wolffsohn, "The World Jewish Congress and the End of the German Democratic Republic," German Historical Institute, Occasional Paper No. 3 (Washington, D.C., 1991), 12.

rible recent past and because of Germany's role as a reliable democratic partner in the North Atlantic Alliance. In his speech to the American Jewish Committee on May 2, 1985, he reassured his somewhat concerned audience that German patriotism was no longer separable from a commitment to ensure human rights and democracy. He observed that the majority of his constituents in Bitburg never voted for Hitler and were strongly pro-American after World War II. He emphasized that West Germany after 1945 had bound its interests forever to the fundamentals of the moral principles of the West.<sup>4</sup> Mertes's speech was of great benefit to me in my discussions with friends at Harvard, where I was doing academic research at the time.

From Alois Mertes we were able to learn two fundamental principles that can certainly serve as a guideline for a younger generation of Germans. He taught us not to underestimate the weight of the Nazi heritage and to do everything, as he wrote in his Harvard paper of 1969, to promote "a spirit of reconciliation and goodwill."<sup>5</sup> But, in the same paper, he made it clear that this could never "give dispensation from the basic political choice which is so vital to the future."<sup>6</sup> He analyzed offensive and defensive elements of the German interest in maintaining freedom through close ties to America and in cooperating with the East to keep the German question open without endangering the peace in Europe. The conflict of balancing pro-status quo and anti-status quo aims in German foreign policy required flexibility and, most importantly, decisions: "To be a statesman means to be able to choose between two great imperfections when such a choice becomes unavoidable."<sup>7</sup> And, in classical English, he concluded: "Gouverner, c'est choisir."<sup>8</sup>

In honoring Alois Mertes, we have every reason to follow his message: to combine the spirit of goodwill with the willingness to make choices, if necessary, without exempting ourselves from the task of examining vital interests. It is our time, full of new begin-

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<sup>4</sup> Alois Mertes, "Westeuropa—40 Jahre nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Rede vor der 78. Jahresversammlung des American Jewish Committee am 02. Mai 1985," in *Bulletin* (Bonn), no. 512, 8 May 1985, 433ff.

<sup>5</sup> Alois Mertes, "Reflections on Detente," 55.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



nings, that forces us to take up the legacy of Mertes and to reflect on the basic ideals and interests of the German nation today.

Under the roof of the distinguished German Historical Institute and as a trained historian, I will give the issue a twist. I will briefly reflect on how the two German states, which represented the one German nation for forty years, defined and applied what they considered their foreign policy ideals and interests. I will then try to analyze what has changed since unification—or, rather, what is truly new and what has only to be reconsidered in a new light with regard to basic German ideals and interests. As a political scientist, I will not only comment on the statements and actions of politicians but will also try to cast light on what the German public thinks. The interaction between the public and the leadership, as the textbooks tell us, does indeed influence the interaction between domestic and foreign policy. I will try to determine who is the chicken and who is the egg, or, in political science terms, what is the relationship between external compatibility and domestic consensus.

In viewing the foreign policy debate since German unification, one cannot but recognize irritations and irritated leaders. These problems are all the more astonishing, since the foreign policy dimension of the unification process was executed from the commanding heights of statesmanship. Chancellor Kohl's breakthrough in his talks with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in July 1990 enabled the united Germany to remain a full-fledged NATO member. The so-called Two-Plus-Four Treaty of September 1990 expressed the approval of German unification by all four of the former Allied powers and put a final mark on the seemingly endless debate over a secure and unchangeable border between Germany and Poland. Unification implied that a united Germany would continue to be a loyal partner in NATO and a participant in the European integration process. In fact, Chancellor Kohl was one of the most committed architects of the Maastricht Treaty of December 1991, which set the agenda for European unity.

Nevertheless, doubts about Germany's credibility began to develop soon. The Gulf War of early 1991 was accompanied by German checkbook diplomacy: "Taxation without representation" seemed to have become the motto of a country that concentrated on domestic problems without recognizing the dangers of atrophy. "Normality" became the new catchword. Many Germans wanted to be normal, obviously not knowing what it meant; they emphasized

this aspect to a point where some of the country's best friends wondered whether this new normalcy was nothing more than a new abnormal exceptionalism. The Social Democratic opposition, once labeled ironically the "world-power SPD," had a hard time coming to terms with reality. But the coalition government, too, was divided. When it came time to determine whether the German military would contribute to implementing flight controls over a war-torn Bosnia, the government handed the decision to the Federal Constitutional Court. This abdication of political responsibility found its analytical expression in the foreign minister's statement that he had a "stomachache," a comment that might pass as a description of a temporary political mood but certainly not as a clear-cut definition of "the basic interests of the German nation."

The Federal Constitutional Court returned the responsibility to the world of politics. "Gouverner, c'est choisir"; this principle seems to have been almost forgotten in certain political circles. And yet, the shaping and handling of foreign policy ideals and interests has always been, and still remains, a political task. This fact might have been more evident during the decades of German division, but unification has not exempted the German nation from coming to terms with its role in the world.

The Cold War decades seemed to have been easier, since they had forced clear decisions upon the two states emerging from the ashes of the Third Reich. Their ideals were clear, even while their interests were changing with different contexts and circumstances. German foreign policy began without option or so it seemed. "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet"—Rudyard Kipling's phrase appeared in new light. While both Germanies considered themselves the antitheses to Hitler's Reich, they fundamentally differed on what was the right alternative. The East German communists believed that only a communist Germany would eradicate the roots of fascism and militarism. The new West German leadership saw the only future for peace and freedom in a truly constitutional democracy with strong Western loyalties. While friendship with America became the second Basic Law of West Germany, East Germany strove to be more Soviet than the Soviets themselves so as to demonstrate its peaceloving, anti-imperialist, and anti-fascist commitments.

Both developments were largely predestined by the presence of foreign troops on German soil and the overall global strategy of the

Soviet Union and the Western Allies, who turned from friends to foes once Hitler was defeated. This consequence was as natural as democracy and dictatorship are antagonistic.

The two German states were founded on this antagonism and yet tied to each other. National and international policies were interwoven. While the German question was open, the Germans did not know how to close it peacefully. But the more difficult it became to cross the Wall, the more the Wall itself turned into a symbol of the artificiality of the division and of the natural unity of the nation. The ideals and interests of the two German states were in part divergent and even antagonistic; however, in part they coincided or mutually reinforced each other.

West Germany was looking for Western protection and recognition. Once it had turned the negative control by the Western powers into positive control through the cooperative integration in common institutions and alliances, it tried to broaden its options as to how to deal with the East. Western integration was the best *Ostpolitik* for Konrad Adenauer, the great, farsighted, first post-war chancellor. Western integration was an ideal in itself and was backed by a growing majority of the population; but it was also in the national interest in order to strengthen the foundation of the quest for national self-determination. The idea of national unification often seemed rhetorical over the years; Western integration remained the precondition for even thinking of unification on the basis of unity and freedom. It turned West Germany from an occupied enemy into a credible partner. It gave the country and its people a new sense of security and belonging. To be a good West German meant to want to be a part of Europe and to believe in America.

The maintenance of a stable and credible democratic system and of close and integrated ties with EC and NATO partners helped to resist Soviet pressure and to pursue the commitment of the national ideal of self-determination. The maximal goal was freedom and unity for all Germans in a democratic state, as indicated in the text of the national anthem and in the preamble of the Basic Law. The path to that goal, however, was controversial and became more so as the options toward the East were growing.

Public opinion always remained more stable than the political controversies seemed to imply. When West Germans were asked as to the country they would prefer to cooperate with, a clear majority answered "America": 83 percent in 1953, 90 percent in 1963, 78

percent in 1972, and 79 percent in 1983.<sup>9</sup> The number of positive replies to the question whether their country should closely collaborate with the Soviet Union depended on global political developments: 18 percent in 1953, the last year of the Korean War, 27 percent in 1963, after the Cuban Missile Crisis was dissolved peacefully; 52 percent in 1970, the year that the government of Willy Brandt signed the Moscow Treaty; and 20 percent in 1980, months after the Russian invasion of Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup>

For West German policy makers, the issue was more complicated. While it was the Christian Democratic approach in the formative decades of the Federal Republic to pursue *Ostpolitik* through stable, credible Western integration, the détente philosophy of the Social Democrats was based on the undeniable fact that the key to the future of all Germans lay in Moscow. But it was not until the 1980s that a broader consensus emerged on the notion that it was West Germany's goal to alleviate the plight of the East Germans through constructive cooperation with both Moscow and East Berlin and by credible integration into Western institutions. The CSCE philosophy was both to define West Germany's interests and somehow to follow West Germany's ideals: to overcome borders by making them permeable.

West Germany's foreign policy options broadened during the course of the CSCE process, but they still remained relatively restricted by the immutable duty to overcome the division of the nation. Dreams of a "security partnership" with the East Germans and expectations of a "partnership in leadership" with the United States were only relative and hence rhetorical programs as long as the status quo did not change. By fighting for a single German citizenship, the CDU government emphasized the need to find a solution to the unresolved national question and limited the scope of West Germany's foreign policy. The more options West Germany seemed

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<sup>9</sup> *Jahrbuch der öffentlichen Meinung*, cited in: Hans-Peter Schwarz, "Die Westdeutschen, die westliche Demokratie und die Westbindung," in *Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland und die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika*, ed. James A. Cooney, Gordon A. Craig, Hans-Peter Schwarz, and Fritz Stern (Stuttgart, 1985), 101; see also Gebhard Schweigler, *Grundlagen der außenpolitischen Orientierung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Rahmenbedingungen, Motive, Einstellungen* (Baden-Baden, 1985).

<sup>10</sup> See Schwarz, "Die Westdeutschen," note 7.

to have, the more twisted its *Deutschlandpolitik* became. But *Deutschlandpolitik* remained the cornerstone of the country's foreign and domestic policy.<sup>11</sup>

The ideal of freedom was so fundamental that the goal of unity seemed contradictory to some, unachievable to others, and simply rhetorical to many. But once the East Germans demanded unity through freedom and believed that freedom could be attained only by unity, the West German government responded positively. Clay Clemens discussed in detail the relationship between the CDU's *Deutschlandpolitik* and reunification in last year's Alois Mertes Memorial Lecture. He spoke of the CDU's "non-committal approach to the national question." To summarize: "CDU policy rested on the premise that this national consciousness would remain a positive, integrative force, and that it would be easily—indeed inevitably—reconciled with rapid movement toward ever-more supranational European structures."<sup>12</sup> So it was. And how is it now? Has the country lost the sense of its interests by achieving its ideals? Before I take up these questions, let me turn to the German Democratic Republic.

The ideals of the second German state were universal, revolutionary, and ideological: to strive for peace, build socialism, and uphold the Soviet policy of resisting any form of imperialism and encouraging world revolution.<sup>13</sup> The definition of interests was more complicated. During the formative years of the GDR, its leaders could never fully trust the Soviets; they could not be sure that Moscow would not use their state as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the Western war allies. However, the icier the Cold War became, the safer grew the existence of the GDR under Soviet protection. Accordingly, its prime foreign policy goal changed from safeguarding its own existence to obtaining international recognition.

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<sup>11</sup> See Christian Hacke, *Weltmacht wider Willen. Die Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Stuttgart, 1988); Werner Weidenfeld and Hartmut Zimmerman (eds.), *Deutschland-Handbuch. Eine doppelte Bilanz 1949–1989* (Munich, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> Clay Clemens, "CDU Deutschlandpolitik and Reunification, 1985–1989," German Historical Institute, Occasional Paper No. 5 (Washington, D.C., 1992), 24ff.

<sup>13</sup> See Institut für Internationale Beziehungen Potsdam-Babelsberg, ed., *Geschichte der Außenpolitik der DDR* (Berlin, 1984).

With growing international acceptance and the results of detente, East Germany broadened its foreign policy options.<sup>14</sup> Its scope of action became so broad that, in a paradox that led to its ultimate demise, it no longer had to follow the Soviet Union once the Eastern bloc leader embraced the principles of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. The comrades in East Berlin remained loyal to their old revolutionary principles, while the winds of change were already swirling around their communist brothers. They began changing late, too late in fact to survive. Latecomers, as Gorbachev had predicted, were punished by turn of events, all the more since the end of communism inevitably meant also the end of the artificial states it had brought about. In this sense, the demise of the GDR was only the precursor of the demise of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. While East Germany's ideals vanished, the *raison d'être* of the GDR vanished as well.<sup>15</sup> Unification was the terminal end of German communism, but, until the very end, the key for it remained in Moscow. East Berlin tried to emancipate itself without realizing that the very destiny of the GDR was dependent on the future of communism and hence of Moscow. The GDR was able to abolish self-firing machines on the inner-German border, but it was not able to truly legitimize its existence in the West nor its sovereign independence in the East. In hoping to achieve that legitimacy, the East German communists underestimated their power base altogether. In the end, the quest for democracy toppled the egalitarian dreams of communism, and, for one last time the Soviet Empire struck back by accepting German unification on Western terms.

During the unification process, the foreign policy ideals and interests of East Germany coincided with those of West Germany. The only democratically elected government of the GDR followed the lead of the Bonn government by voting "yes" to unity, "yes" to NATO, and "yes" to the EC. In this sense, the Two-Plus-Four

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<sup>14</sup> See Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, Gert Leptin, Ulrich Scheuner, Eberhard Schulz, eds., *Drei Jahrzehnte Außenpolitik der DDR. Bestimmungsfaktoren, Instrumente, Aktionsfelder* (Munich, 1979); Wilhelm Bruns, *Die Außenpolitik der DDR* (Berlin, 1985).

<sup>15</sup> See Jens Kaiser, "Zwischen angestrebter Eigenständigkeit und traditioneller Unterordnung. Zur Ambivalenz des Verhältnisses von sowjetischer und DDR-Außenpolitik in den achtziger Jahren," in *Deutschland-Archiv. Zeitschrift für das vereinigte Deutschland*, 24th year (1991): 478ff.

negotiations were actually one-and-a-half plus four. While Bonn negotiated, East Berlin agreed. Details, such as the decision not to deploy NATO soldiers directly on East German soil, served as a palliative to the Soviet Union. The key decisions of 1990 verified West Germany's interests and all-German ideals under Western tutelage, with Russian agreement.

And yet, the ideals and interests of German foreign policy, as antagonistic as they were defined and pursued by the two German states, had always hovered around Germany itself. "Germany" was the ultimate foreign policy goal of both Germanies—for the one country, it meant to make the division forgotten and to gain global recognition as providing the only answer to all contradictions of German history; for the other country, to regain international credibility through cooperative integration and to thrive for unity in freedom on the side of new Western friends and allies. Germany itself was the point of reference for Germany's foreign policy ideals and interests. The "rest of the world" seemed to exist only insofar as this situation required outer contacts: to find recognition and protection, to find political backing, and to direct political bashing. German identity was found in the pains and stresses of division. Although the Berlin Wall divided the country, it remained the symbol of the German people, its unredeemed ideals, and its tamed interests. The two states were worlds apart, and yet they mutually reinforced the self-perception of all Germans.

Since the end of the Cold War, Germany's exceptionalism has given way to an obligation of reconsidering the country's role in the world. While the political structures around and within the German nation have evidently changed, Germans seem to find it more difficult to understand what has changed and what has not.<sup>16</sup> It has become even more challenging to understand what the world expects of the "new Germany."<sup>17</sup> The German question has turned from a question concerning Germany into an inquiry for the Germans:

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<sup>16</sup> See the analysis of both East and West Germans: Martin Robbe and Dieter Senghaas, eds., *Die Welt nach dem Ost-West-Konflikt. Geschichte und Prognosen* (Berlin, 1990).

<sup>17</sup> See the analysis of the ambassadors of Germany's neighboring states in Ludger Kühnhardt and Hans-Peter Schwarz, eds., *Zwölf Nachbarn—ein Europa. Deutschland und die europäische Zukunft aus Sicht der Diplomaten umliegender Länder* (Bonn/Berlin, 1991).

How do they see their role in the world, and which role do the others expect Germany to play? As long as George Bush used the phrase "partnership in leadership" to flatter the weak self-confidence of West Germans, it was welcome. Once the united Germany was put to the test of what the phrase truly meant, it preferred to shy away from it.

With unification, the country had truly become sovereign, or so the people were told. At the same time, the European Community embarked upon a new phase under the headline "pooling of sovereignties." Not only the East Germans, who were new members of the EC, had a hard time not to consider this a contradiction. Politicians and media analysts talked about a new normalcy, ending historical pressure without opening a new Pandora's box of history's future. It was neither the past nor the future that began troubling the Germans; the present was taking its toll. The West was demanding more acts of leadership, the East expected more and more help, and the Germans had to realize that once again they were caught in the middle, that they were sitting at the center of a newly troubled Europe. Above all, the UN reminded them that the world was not made for the Germans to achieve their national ideals and interests, but that they had taken on certain responsibilities by joining the world body and committing themselves to the requirements of its charter.

The world did not play referee anymore while the Germans played tennis but expected the experienced Germans to watch over other battlegrounds. Domestically the Germans were most busy indeed, but their excuse of being overburdened was no longer considered a viable argument by a world much more troubled than both the East and West Germans together. The Germans experienced the new obtrusiveness of global reality. While they tried to relax their global profile and concentrate on domestic issues, the world imposed itself on the astonished nation. Once it was belated, then belligerent, then besieged, and now baffled.

After Hitler, the Germans wanted—and still want—nothing more than to be good guys, to be peaceloving, above all; now they had to realize that a good example alone was not enough to eradicate hatred elsewhere nor to stop bloodshed, even on European soil. After two dictatorships, the Germans wanted to build a stable democracy and enjoy prosperity, but all of a sudden they had to realize that their domestic hopes might come under pressure, both from within



and from without. The baffled nation was a new state, but it was not living in a new world.

A new profile for German foreign policy could not arise out of thoughtfully shaped grand designs or petty reflections. Rather, it was forced upon the Germans by the course of world events: war in the Gulf, warfare in Somalia, fighting in the Balkans. While Germany began to disarm and reduce its military according to the "Two-Plus-Four Agreement," world politics seemed to remilitarize. While global pressure de-escalated, small fires ignited. The new world order was a new world disorder without control mechanisms of global pressure and counterpressure. Hardly ever had the world been so oriented toward security issues and military options, war-ending strategies and peacekeeping needs—or so at least it seemed to the baffled Germans. Nobody in Germany wanted to fight wars again, but some eternal utopians found it difficult to accept that warfare continued to be a fact of life elsewhere. They tried not to accept that this fighting might demand responsible actions from a country that had been able to live in peace and security for more than forty years, certainly in its western part, through the help of others. Many Germans found it difficult to relate the protection of affluence to security needs beyond the terms of international trading regimes. Foreign policy thinking seemed to have vanished in a state that was the very product of foreign policy developments and decisions and that is still very dependent on the evolution of the international order. Germany remains a foreign policy country—a country dependent on the future of the world and its responses—but many of its policy makers are domestically oriented and domestic in habit indeed. Even then, the question was no longer whom the Germans liked as their partners and international allies but what they were willing to contribute to be liked themselves. The *Christian Science Monitor* reminded the Germans in an article of March 1993 that “a democracy is only as effective as the people's willingness to make it work.”<sup>18</sup>

The people that make a democracy work seem to be the politicians. Indeed they are the representatives of the people, bestowed with mandates to govern and to decide, to rule, and to oppose. But can they be better than the people themselves? Because of growing

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<sup>18</sup> Stephen Brockmann, "Kohl's Miscues on the Road to Reunification," in *Christian Science Monitor*, 9 March 1993.

pluralism and individualization, it is said to have become difficult to lead in a democratic system. The wavering positions of many German politicians, and even more so their wavering actions, were seen as a reflection of the difficulties of "inner unification." While the German people were considered to have a hard time finding a consensus about the new country's role in the world, their politicians were not able to lead with more perspicuity. But the problem requires a deeper analysis.

Blueprints for the definition of "the basic interests of the German nation" might emerge from think tanks, academic institutions, or planning commissions. Politics seems to deal more with on-the-spot decisions, enforced upon actors by new situations and circumstances. Even if that is the case, German citizens seem clearer about the fundamentals than some of their politicians. According to an EMNID poll of March 1993, 53 percent of the population favored German military participation in enforcing no-fly zones over Bosnia in accordance with UN decisions.<sup>19</sup> Forty-two percent disagreed; but the government, having a parliamentary majority to act and a majority backing the actions that were needed, evaded the decision. How effective can a democracy be if it does not use the majoritarian principle any longer? And how effective can one say a majority government is if it seems unwilling to act? Asked which tasks German soldiers should take up if sent to Somalia, 80 percent supported the military protection of food deliveries and 68 percent favored repair work of streets and wells. Asked whether German soldiers ought to handle police tasks, 42 percent said "yes" and 54 percent said "no." As for fighting armed gangs, 37 percent answered affirmatively, 58 percent negatively.<sup>20</sup> The Germans seem to be aware of their interests at stake and cautiously responsible of their duties. They are beginning to face facts that they do not like but cannot theorize away.

Fighting in Bosnia and starvation in Somalia do indeed affect German moral ideals and security interests. But the overall perspective for the country's role in the world arena must derive from more principal considerations. Crises come and go. It is necessary to

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<sup>19</sup> EMNID-Institut, Bielefeld, unpubl. poll of 22–24 March 1993.

<sup>20</sup> EMNID-Institut, Bielefeld, poll of 19–21 April 1993, in *Der Spiegel* 17 (1993), 21.

respond to them, but it is not sufficient simply to react. Basic interests must be defined before they are challenged and forced to be proven. Under the title "Germany's Geopolitical Maturation," the RAND Corporation presented important public opinion data in early 1993. Infratest Burke Berlin conducted a survey in late 1992 for RAND to find out the basic interests of the German nation. The results sound more stable and, for an American audience, reassuring than many headlines about the intra- and inter-party squabbles over the role of the *Bundeswehr* and over the international projection of Germany's ideals and power. In brief, the key result, as summarized by Ronald D. Asmus of RAND, was as follows: "Nearly three-quarters of Germans view themselves as pro-American. West Germans remain more sympathetic than East Germans toward the United States, but there are signs that some of the old prejudices East Germans harbored toward the United States are also starting to break down."<sup>21</sup>

The details of the findings are even more interesting:<sup>22</sup>

—Six percent of the Germans polled "believe that NATO remains essential for German security, an increase from 58 percent in 1991";

—fifty-five percent supported "maintaining a residual U.S. military presence," compared to 36 percent in 1991. Currently, 63 percent of West Germans and 24 percent of East Germans (compared to 12 percent in 1991) favor a U.S. military presence in Germany.

—Asked to specify Germany's vital interests, 67 percent mentioned France, 62 percent the United States, 64 percent Eastern Europe, and 60 percent Russia.

—Asked to name critical threats that were most likely to menace Germany's vital interests in the next decade, "Germans point[ed] to the dangers of nuclear proliferation (69 percent), Islamic fundamentalism (47 percent), as well as residual Russian military power (23 percent)."

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<sup>21</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, "Germany's Geopolitical Maturation: Strategy and Public Opinion after the Wall" (RAND Issue Paper Exploring Topics of Interest to the Policy Community, Santa Monica, CA, February 1993), 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 1ff.

—Concerning the Maastricht Treaty on European union, 47 percent of Germans said that they would vote "yes" if a referendum were held, 29 percent would say "no," and 23 percent were undecided.

—Sixty-one percent of Germans believed "that the EC members have differing interests," and only 43 percent (compared with 48 percent in 1991) favored a common European currency.

—All in all, a sound majority of 62 percent of all Germans polled "believe Germany should assume a more active international role, and even a larger majority (77 percent) believe their country is best equipped to play the leading foreign policy role in Europe."

What can be concluded from this polling data? First of all, that Germans are aware of continuous and new problems facing their country's place and role in the world. Second, that they realize the value of successful structures and institutions. Third, that they remain skeptical of quantum leaps in European integration but nevertheless feel responsible for a balanced and mutually beneficial stability in the whole of Europe, one that is integrating east-central Europe and associating Russia. Fourth, that they have continuous confidence in NATO and close German-American relations as the key to the country's stability and the expression of its sense of belonging. While it remains a political duty to define ideals and shape interests, leading policy makers tend to prefer to find a consensus on how to implement common values as norms of action. A classical formulation to this effect was Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel's speech to the German *Bundestag* on 21 April 1993, in which he recognized the need for a new consensus on foreign policy and security matters as the first priority for the "united and sovereign Germany." Consensus, he maintained, could make the country a reliable partner, one that was capable of acting in the world community.<sup>23</sup> But, one wonders, "consensus about what?"

Alois Mertes might have begun the current debate on Germany's foreign policy with a definition of "the basic interests of the German nation." Today, shapers and makers of Germany's foreign policy prefer to express hopes and visions: the foreign minister describes the

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<sup>23</sup> Klaus Kinkel, "Die Vereinten Nationen müssen zentraler Friedenshüter der Menschheit werden," in *Das Parlament* 18, 30 April 1993, 18.

"chance" to make the United Nations the central peacekeeper of mankind. Others get confused by trying to learn from history. Some consider Germany's past an argument against a more offensive global posturing of the country; others use the experiences of and against Hitler as the basis for claiming that Germany, in particular, had to get more actively involved in the protection of human rights elsewhere. Does the baffled nation continue to be torn between total responsibility and an absolutism of conscience? Do the Germans understand the difference, sometimes the conflict, between the maintenance of their welfare and their security needs, which are determined outside the country and yet affect its lifeline, both moral and material? Can they imagine that foreign policy and security needs are of a different character than domestic welfare and the aspirations for a national consensus? Certainly the time has come in Germany, most importantly in saturated West Germany, to reflect on the sense of Thomas Jefferson's ideal of "renewal" in order to preserve successful traditions.

Ideals and interests in German foreign policy tend to be defined by the minimal possible consensus among political parties. This situation might be true for all coalition governments, for which foreign policy seems to remain foremost a function of domestic policy.<sup>24</sup> Whether such a situation is inevitable is quite another question. But it is evidently not sufficient to truly define the basic ideals and interests of German foreign policy. Foreign policy constraints do arise. But are international responsibilities unpalatable constraints? UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali had to remind the German government of its duties as a UN member. The Bonn coalition government had a difficult time finding a substantial compromise that would enable the country to make a contribution that went beyond the mere sending of checks. This issue received continuous media coverage on both sides of the Atlantic during the winter of 1992/93. When the first German soldiers finally arrived in Somalia, they were wearing borrowed French tropical army fatigues. What could better demonstrate, at the same time, the integrated

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<sup>24</sup> See Ole Diehl, "UN-Einsätze der Bundeswehr. Außenpolitische Handlungszwänge und innenpolitischer Konsensbedarf," in *Europa-Archiv. Zeitschrift für internationale Politik*, 48th year, no. 8, 25 April 1993, 219ff.

approach of the new German foreign and defense policy, as well as its limited readiness to play a global peacekeeping role?

Historical studies look backwards; political science tries to use historical knowledge to better understand the contemporary political challenges. If this is the definition of academic duty, it becomes a necessary obligation for my profession to ask what Germany's basic interests of today are all about.

While Germany was divided, the ideals of both German states were by definition universalistic, and their interests according to these ideals were defined as universalist as well. East Germany stood for anti-imperialist, revolutionary universalism. It preached communism all over the globe and tried to connect its own development and, in fact, its fate with anybody who either supported its basic ideological ideals or at least tolerated them. West Germany stood for universal human rights and democratic freedoms and pursued a global policy to ensure them for all Germans. The remotest place in the Pacific Ocean was judged as good or bad according to its support or rejection of the one or the other. Not many countries remained friends of both Germanies. And, whenever the Germans became active partners in world politics, it was in line with their own national ideals, for instance, to export revolutionary spirit or developmental aid. Now the all-German state has become rather introspective, without being able to abstain from global commitments.<sup>25</sup>

The definition of ideals and interests in today's Germany has to begin with the redefinition of experienced ideals and continuing interests. No matter how homogeneous the survey results already might be, German society is still homogenizing. West Germans tend to monopolize the country, both in political positions and in the media. The political society of Germany is, at least so far, less unified and even less stable than its constitutional structures make it appear. How long will it be before East Germans hold leading constitutional positions, such as the federal presidency, chancellorship, or that of foreign minister? And how long will it take before one does not inquire whether a person is from the western or eastern

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<sup>25</sup> See Reinhard Stuth, "Deutschlands neue Rolle im sich vereinigenden Europa," in *Außenpolitik. Zeitschrift für internationale Fragen*, 43rd year, no. 1 (1992), 22ff.

part of the country? How will a new, united generation of politicians define foreign policy ideals and interests?

The debate about ideals and interests seems to be reduced to military dimensions: Should Germany participate in international military actions, yes or no? In his philosophy of law, Hegel described war as the ultimate manifestation of sovereignty.<sup>26</sup> As much as this extreme definition is true, the philosopher could not be surprised that a sovereign country reexamines its attitude toward war and peace. While the scope of the country seems broadened after unification, the options for the new state seem to be reduced again, now all of a sudden to military dimensions. In the past, the ideal, the hope, and the burden was the issue of national self-determination. Now the central issue, both as a global problem and a national concern, seems to be other people's self-determination, peacemaking and peacekeeping in foreign lands, and how to deal with it. But it is certainly incorrect to talk of a "new militarization of German foreign policy" as the country reconsiders and redefines its interests, ideals, and obligations, including the most serious ones.

What is the German willpower, what are the German aims, and what are the German means at this crossroad? Let me try to briefly summarize, without overly theorizing and generalizing, the ideals and interests as I see them deriving from the current winds of change and continuity throughout the world as well as in my country.

United Germany opted for continuous membership in NATO and in the European Community, since this membership reflects both the ideals and interests of the country. The process of European integration and close ties with the North American democracies remain the second Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany. Both communities are based on common values of our civilization, historical experiences, and profound insights into the character of relations among states and processes of integration in today's world. Both remain necessary, for they are in themselves good.

The basic values of German patriotism might have come under some pressure by xenophobic extremism and political populism. But they remain valid: constitutional freedom; a commitment to human

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<sup>26</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft in Grundrissen, §321ff.," in *Werke*, vol. 7 (Frankfurt a.M., 1970), 490ff.

rights; pride in German culture and respect for the integrative, interconnected character of all European cultures; friendship among peoples; and openness of global economic interactions in free and cooperative international trade regimes. However, the domesticized and domestic nation has to learn again to understand foreign policy and international strategy.

Germany has always been the center of Europe. Since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, Germany's place in Europe was not only the concern of Germany but also that of its neighbors. Today Germany looks toward both the West and the East, which is natural and reflects irreversible geographical facts. But Germany must make it unwaveringly clear that, although it lies in the middle, it belongs to the West. Germany will, and it has to, reach out to central and eastern Europe in order to stabilize the post-communist countries; in doing so, it brings about more stability to the continent as a whole. But Germany can be successful only if it remains a magnet, pulling the so-called reform countries irretrievably into Western integrative structures. In a way, Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republics, and Hungary have become "Western" countries. Germany is pushed further to the West by its eastern neighbors and their desire to join the integrative structures. It is in the national interest of Germany to favor the membership of Poland, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, and Hungary, both in the European Community and in NATO.

Germany is said to be the most powerful nation between Washington and Moscow. But power is always relative and remains, without exception, contextual. Germany does not have *the* power "to help Russia" become a successful democracy and develop a stable economy if the Russians are not able to change themselves and their way of life. Germany cannot try to dominate the continent without overestimating its power potential vis-à-vis Russia and without losing its friends and allies in both the EC and NATO. Germany's role in Europe is to orchestrate, not to dominate. To give the adequate answers to this challenge is the daily duty of political leadership. It does not call for politicians to square the circle but merely to lead a ready people.

Germany believes in universal human rights and self-determination as strongly as all freedom-loving democracies. But this belief alone cannot shape a sound foreign policy. Political realism must recognize limits to the idea of progress: not every country is by



nature progressing toward Western values of human rights; not every claim of self-determination can be justified without provoking conflicts of interests and new injustices, as we have seen in the former Yugoslavia. Germany and all its Western partners have to reconsider the relationship and hierarchy between individual human rights, ethnic and minority rights, autonomy, national self-determination, and cultural differences. To find a middle ground between moral politics and power politics and between universal aspirations and local considerations remains a key challenge to enlightened Western leadership.

As much as external factors might turn into a threat to German security interests, the country has to interact with others to cope with the problems at stake. Dealing with weapons proliferation, uncontrolled migration, organized international crime, and threats from radical political factions in North Africa or the Middle East demands international cooperation. The United Nations and other international bodies are the appropriate places in which to pursue the debate, underlining the fact that German security remains tied to the actions and inactions of others. Protecting the interests of the country from external uncertainties requires defensive as well as offensive foreign policy measures. These uncertainties have to be addressed according to specific situations. Germany has every reason not to act unilaterally if possible; but it also has every reason to explain its interests all the more so if these interests collide with those of its partners.

The ultimate option for an offensive foreign policy consequently touches on the issue of war and peace. Warfare remains part of the human experience. Even the most peaceloving nation is forced to take a position on how it would react to violence elsewhere. As for Germany, this has nothing to do with a new "militarization of foreign policy," as some critics argue. Peace-enforcement, peacemaking, and peacekeeping are the new terms for possible forms of humanitarian intervention. But, to put it dialectically, they are limited for the same reasons that they might be necessary.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See Michael Stürmer, "Globale Aufgaben und Herausforderungen: Die schwierige Suche nach Weltordnung," in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 15–16/93, 9 April 1993.

Eternal peace remains a transcendental, metapolitical, and indeed religious hope. The world lies between hell and heaven. Mankind can and has to try as much as possible to balance hopes and fears, human insufficiencies, and trust in political techniques. Turning the UN into a global state with police and army will remain a utopian desire as long as sovereign nationhood is legitimate and does actually exist. This ideal does not exempt us from trying to achieve as much peace, freedom, stability, and justice as possible. Progress in international politics remains tied to human imperfections; Alois Mertes reflected on that topic a great deal. The more Germany—in fact, every nation—realizes that normalcy in world politics is not normal, it will become normal itself and can act responsibly. The future of freedom remains tied to the degree of responsibility with which it is exercised, both domestically and in foreign policy. In this sense, the Federal Republic of Germany is normalizing as the debate over the country's foreign policy ideals and interests becomes focused. In a democracy, many persons and groups contribute to and try to influence the political process. Only political decisions in responsible institutions can be of binding nature. Neither polls nor professors can take their place. Alois Mertes truly believed that the primacy of freedom can only be maintained through the primacy of politics. Once democracies need to be reminded of this basic duty, they have reached a critical stage. That is the timeless message of Alois Mertes, and we honor him by reminding ourselves on both sides of the Atlantic of this inescapable truth.