

## Western Integration, German Unification and the Cold War – The Adenauer Era in Perspective

Conference at Georgetown University, Co-sponsored by  
the BMW Center for German and European Studies, Georgetown University, and the GHI  
Conveners: Jost Dülffer (Georgetown University/University of Cologne) and Bernd Schäfer (GHI)  
Washington D.C., 24. bis 25. März 2006

The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Konrad Adenauer Visiting Chair at Georgetown University, currently held by Jost Dülffer, provided the occasion for this conference. Bringing together a wide range of scholars from the United States and Germany, it offered an opportunity to take a fresh look at problems that have been central to German contemporary historiography. Yet, after decades of research on and a vast number of publications about the Stalin Notes, the Hallstein Doctrine, and the chances of reunification under Konrad Adenauer's chancellorship, are there any new perspectives to be gained?

The first half of the conference, which centered on international relations and diplomacy, suggested that many of diplomatic historiography's traditional approaches are still in place. Some of the presented studies complemented the existing knowledge, while others, by using material from newly opened archives, helped to provide a better understanding of the international framework, the role of domestic politics in shaping „Deutschlandpolitik“, and the importance of Adenauer's personal influence on the Federal Republic.

*Jost Dülffer's* introductory paper dealt with the 'Potsdam Complex,' the atmosphere of anxiety and fear that dominated West German imagery as a result of the experiences of World War II, the influence of the Cold War and the expectation of a nuclear world war. Fearing that the Allies might turn away from the FRG and opt for cooperation with the Soviet Union, Adenauer skilfully exploited West Germany's unique situation within the Cold War scenario and stressed the need to unconditionally integrate it into the West. However, his unwillingness to compromise on the issue of unification posed a burden to Allied attempts to alleviate Cold War tensions, Dülffer argued. He then underlined his view that Adenauer's rhetorical demand for reunification did not correspond to the Federal Republic's immediate interests. Keeping peace was much more important, and a divided Germany helped to achieve this goal.

*Vojtech Mastny* critically commented on Wilfried Loth's paper on Soviet policy on divided Germany and on possibilities for reunification between 1952 and 1955, which was read to the audience, by posing the question of whether the problem of German unity had really ever been central to Soviet concern, as Loth assumed. Mastny stressed that Stalin's pragmatic approach toward the German problem was grounded in his obsession with the danger of another German attack – a view that Adenauer („no George Kennan“) was not able, or willing, to take. Also, Stalin would have never accepted German unification on any other than his own terms, according to Mastny. The uprising of June 1953 and the Soviet intervention, an „investment“ in the GDR, resulted in the Politburo's decision to support the GDR's status as an independent state. Adenauer was therefore right in his decision to concentrate on the Federal Republic's western integration and its development into a prosperous democracy, which contributed to the later success of reunification along the lines of „Magnettheorie“, Mastny argued – a theme that was taken up many times over the course of the conference. The panel's discussion suggested that German historians' concentration on the question of how

likely German reunification was in the 1950s might be of greater relevance to the problem of German self-perception than to the overall situation of the Cold War and European integration.

The second panel, in which the Western Allies' policies on the Federal Republic in the Adenauer Era were presented, helped to establish a more integrated perspective on the problem of Germany's division and on efforts to achieve its reunification. The United States rhetorically supported the demand for reunification but did not take action to actually achieve it. Reunification would have implied Germany's neutralization, and with regard to the Cold War, this was not an acceptable option. Reunification therefore never appeared to be a genuine possibility in US perspective. Similar to Jost Dülffer's description of the fearful atmosphere within West Germany, *Christian Ostermann* emphasized the Americans' well-known fear of Germany and Europe turning to violence. Keeping Germany under control by integrating it into the West was the best way to keep the peace. Whereas the United States did not actively support Adenauer's reunification policy, France actively tried to prevent reunification in order to keep Germany under control, William Hitchcock argued. He described the French dilemma of keeping Germany divided while simultaneously establishing good relations with the Federal Republic. As he showed, French policy on Germany never remained static but, as a result of international and domestic developments, changed several times. Internal economic crises, international security concerns, and, not the least, the colonial dimension had their impacts on France's position on Franco-West German relations.

As *Thomas Schwartz* made clear in his comment, it is not only the role of colonialism and de-colonization that has long been neglected by traditional scholarship on Cold War diplomatic history. Much more, scholarship on the international framework of the German problem, western integration, and reunification has been recycled (too) many times, repeating well-known facts on a limited methodological basis, Schwartz argued. He therefore stressed the need to pay closer attention to the role of domestic politics and to Adenauer's role therein and, secondly, to more strongly contextualize and historicize the problems at hand. Such a historicizing perspective might help to better understand current problems of democratization, peace-making, and integration in postwar societies throughout the world, and make it possible to evaluate the relevance of Germany's and the Federal Republic's postwar problems, failures, and successes.

*Henning Hoff's* paper on the United Kingdom's position toward German reunification left no doubt that Britain's efforts to bring about détente in Europe failed in part because Adenauer, as has been shown again and again, stubbornly refused to acknowledge the German status quo. Together with the intensification of the Franco-West German relationship, this led to the deterioration of West German-British relations, which had been quite constructive until 1955, in the second half of the decade. In this situation, the British government decided to pursue a policy of pragmatic cooperation with the GDR in an effort to alleviate Cold War tensions – which was, however, ahead of its time.

*Hope M. Harrison* took up the GDR's role and politics, which had been given little attention so far, in her presentation on East German relations with the Soviet Union on the problem of unification. To do so, she focused on Walter Ulbricht and, in a rather unusual move, contrasted him with Adenauer. Apart from their diametrically opposed ideological and political positions, the two statesmen acted quite similarly strategically vis-à-vis their respective Allies, Harrison found. Both Ulbricht and Adenauer were genuinely aware of their countries' existential importance to the superpowers and succeeded in manipulating them to ensure that their countries' interests were given due attention. The Soviet Union wanted Ulbricht to practice peaceful coexistence with West Germany in order to persuade its population to turn away from the United States in favor of the USSR. But Ulbricht resisted such efforts – another similarity with Adenauer – and prioritized ensuring the GDR's status as a separate German state.

*Pertti Ahonen's* paper, presented in the author's absence, marked the beginning of the second part of the conference in that it largely left the sphere of international politics and diplomacy and turned to domestic

issues. In his paper on the role of the former German territories east of the Oder-Neisse, Ahonen gave an account of how many West German politicians, in an effort to secure votes, emphatically embraced the expellees' demands for reunification. Yet it was Adenauer and his advisors who, as „Machiavellian manipulators“, most expertly instrumentalized expellees' demands to secure support for their policy on the Oder-Neisse issue, Ahonen suggested. This official revisionism made reunification ever more unlikely (a fact that Adenauer had accepted very early on) and reconciliation with the East ever more difficult (not one of his priorities anyway). In his comment, Matthias Schulz pointed out that, while Adenauer had actively prevented unification by resisting any kind of compromise, he had simultaneously proven his pragmatism by engaging the Federal Republic in strong economic cooperation with the GDR.

Before the economic dimension was discussed in depth, *Anja Kruke*, in opening the fourth panel, presented the issue of polling and polls on Germany's reunification and the FRG's western integration. She showed how the Adenauer administration used the results of polls (most of them taken in Berlin as the 'seismograph' of West German morale) in shaping its „Deutschlandpolitik“, thereby encouraging entanglements between decision-making processes on the domestic and the international level. While Adenauer was able to secure most West Germans' support for his policy on reunification and western integration, the Social Democrats did not meet the public's expectations on the question of Germany, as *Daniel Rogers* showed in his paper. In privileging the concept of „Einheit in Freiheit“ and opposing any arrangement that fell short of their demands, the Social Democrats soon ran the risk of isolation, which was increased by their awkwardly presented 'national patriotism,' their ambivalence toward western integration and their hostility toward the CDU and the Allies. However, the Social Democrats did help to realize the FRG's western integration by supporting its rearmament as well as „Wiedergutmachung“, Rogers argued. Both his and Kruke's papers gave an impression of the impact of domestic politics on Adenauer's decision-making, and how skilfully he made use of public opinion, voters' interests, and fear of communism and war. Accordingly, commentator Ronald J. Granieri encouraged other researchers to follow their examples by taking a wider view of political decision-making processes and by more deeply integrating the cultural and social dimension.

*Hans Mommsen*, who had been one of the first Konrad Adenauer Visiting Professors at Georgetown University in 1982, gave the conference's keynote address on the origins of „Kanzlerdemokratie“ and the transformation of the democratic paradigm in West Germany. He took up the argument that discarding the idea of a German „Sonderweg“ and embracing the Western concept of democracy had been decisive in the Federal Republic's remarkable success. Emphasizing the intensity of postwar doubts about democracy, which dated back to the experience of the Weimar Republic's failure, Mommsen described the great care taken in establishing the Basic Law with its many safeguards to prevent democracy from failing once more. Although the SPD contributed immensely to the anchoring of parliamentary democracy in West Germany, it was Adenauer's personal achievement that traditional German distrust in political parties was eventually overcome, Mommsen concluded.

The second day's papers dealt with the economic and cultural dimensions of reunification and western integration. *Guido Thiemeyer* offered new insights into the process of European economic and political integration as he portrayed Ludwig Erhard's concept of „soziale Marktwirtschaft“, which Erhard regarded as a tool to functionally integrate the European economies, and, eventually, to reach European political unity without having to establish new political institutions. Although he generally supported European integration, Erhard, whose thinking was still based on 19th-century liberal internationalism, opposed the idea of giving up national sovereignty. This position collided with Adenauer's more pragmatic, institutional approach and became a burden to European integration.

The West German economic miracle, which *William Glenn Gray* dealt with in his paper, helped to cement European integration despite such burdens. Drawing on the concept of trust, Gray argued that the Federal Republic's economic success had offered a unique possibility to earn its Allies' trust. This trust allowed the

West German government to engage in economic cooperation with the Eastern bloc in the mid-1960s without the risk of awakening Western suspicion about a 'new Rapallo.' In this sense, the „Wirtschaftswunder“ provided the basis of détente with the East in the late 1960s, Gray suggested. In his comment, *James Van Hook* argued that it might be more appropriate to speak of „confidence“ than of „trust“, seeing that confidence had been the key to West German-Soviet cooperation. He also asked the participants to take into greater consideration the role of political and economic theories and the processes of implementing such theories in foreign policy making.

The West German government's efforts to create a certain image of the Federal Republic and to persuade them of the country's trustworthiness provided the topic for *Simone Derix's* paper on the politics of state visits in the Federal Republic. Derix described the government's attempts to use state visits to create support for West German demands for reunification abroad. This was achieved by showing foreign visitors around places that embodied the Federal Republic's affinity to the „Abendland“, its democratic credentials and its distance from its Nazi past, and, after August 1961, the Berlin wall. Orchestrating these state visits did not always work perfectly, however, and asking every visitor to take a stand on the issue of divided Germany proved to be counter-productive in some instances.

Like Derix's presentation, *Martin Geyer's* paper on intra-German sports competition in the Adenauer Era offered new perspectives on the cultural and symbolic elements of reunification politics. Although Adenauer, who was distinctly disinterested in sports, believed that it should not interfere with politics, sports did play a major role in „Deutschlandpolitik“. The issue of whether to have a united German team or two separate teams, and the problem of national symbols became deeply entangled with the „Alleinvertretungsanspruch“. Geyer argued that sports had helped to overcome German nationalism and to establish a postnational West German identity that became most visible at the 1972 Olympics in Munich. To the GDR, sports offered a way to establish political legitimacy, which undermined West German demands for reunification.

*Johannes Paulmann's* presentation on the Federal Republic's cultural diplomacy was closely intertwined with his successors' topics in depicting West Germany's self-conscious, painstakingly well-coordinated efforts to present itself to the world as trustworthy and democratic. In the case of the Brussels World Fair of 1958, West German planners went to great lengths to portray their country's 'normalcy' and to suggest that the Federal Republic had not only turned away from Nazism, but also from its urge to emulate Soviet totalitarianism while keeping the greatest possible distance from it. There seemed to be indications, however, that many West Germans continued to be eager to compete for national prestige, Paulmann suggested tentatively.

The lively debate this last panel resulted in showed clearly how enriching it can be to integrate new perspectives – especially the impact of 'soft power' on international politics – into international and diplomatic historiography, as *Roger Chickering* stressed in his comment. Many shared his view that the combination of historiography and ethnography might be regarded as „the most exciting recent dimension“ in international diplomatic history. Yet Chickering warned against underestimating the links between culture and power. The following discussion left no doubt that the Federal Republic's behavior during the Adenauer era cannot be understood without taking into consideration the cultural and political experiences of and continuities with Weimar and the Kaiserreich. As Paulmann suggested and others agreed, the Federal Republic's selective attitude in constructing a balanced view of modernity was key to its short- and long-term success. The conference might be credited with conveying the fact that diplomatic and international historiography needs to integrate the international as well as the domestic perspective to a much larger extent. This implies more than just 'adding some culture' to international history. Rather, it means taking on a more contextualized, holistic view that offers a more balanced image of historical problems as complex as the issues of western integration, German unification and the Cold War.

**Kontakt:**

Corinna R. Unger  
German Historical Institut  
1607 New Hampshire Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20009, USA  
E-mail: [unger@ghi-dc.org](mailto:unger@ghi-dc.org)

**Copyright**

Arbeitsgemeinschaft außeruniversitärer historischer Forschungseinrichtungen  
in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland e.V., 2006.

Kein Teil dieser Publikation darf ohne ausdrückliche schriftliche Genehmigung der AHF in irgendeiner Form reproduziert oder unter Verwendung elektronischer Systeme verarbeitet, vervielfältigt oder verbreitet werden.

AHF, Schellingstraße 9, 80799 München  
Telefon: 089 – 13 47 29, Fax: 089 – 13 47 39  
E-Mail: [info@ahf-muenchen.de](mailto:info@ahf-muenchen.de), Website: <http://www.ahf-muenchen.de>

**Empfohlene Zitierweise / recommended citation style:**

AHF-Information. 2006, Nr.053  
URL: <http://www.ahf-muenchen.de/Tagungsberichte/Berichte/pdf/2006/053-06.pdf>