

Walter Hallstein and Europe (October 24, 1966)

Abstract

Walter Hallstein, president of the EC Commission from 1958 to 1967, gave this speech at a time when France was following its own path both within the EC and in relation to NATO and the U.S. Addressing the German delegation to the International Chamber of Commerce, Hallstein underscores the importance of European integration to the Federal Republic of Germany, arguing that it was crucial not only for cementing ties to the West but for resolving the German Question.

Source

The Political Conditions of German Foreign Policy toward Europe Today

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I think it is only possible to understand the development of the European Economic Community, which has assumed central importance, when it is viewed in the context of the network of treaties through which German foreign policy attempted, immediately after the founding of the Federal Republic, to reenter the family of nations as a reasonably respected member and to become so integrated in it that useful connections in our own interest have emerged. In the process, two types of treaties have been concluded, treaties of a more classical style, that is, of a looser type: not organized, without an individual personality, represented through organs. I am referring to the OEEC [Organization for European Economic Cooperation], the Council of Europe, the Western European Union, and NATO. All of these alliances were time-limited from the outset and belong to the more traditional type of alliance. The true innovation in postwar development was another type: the integrated communities. First, there was the trailblazing coal and steel community (ECSC), the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), which concerns a special case in energy and scientific policy, and the European Economic Community (EEC).

These were set up for the long term, with irreversible structures; or to use more dramatic language, they were supposed to constitute a lasting bond of the federal kind. They were made up of only six members, because no more than six countries were prepared to embark upon the great adventure that this was at the time. All six of these countries had been pushed by the war to the limits of their survival. This also explains why in these countries, and only in these countries, men who were determined to try radical new solutions stood up. This association was also helped by the fact that the economic interests of the six countries were relatively homogeneous. To the extent that they were not, they were still sufficiently complementary to give the project as a whole enough chance for lasting stability. On top of this came the awareness that a modern political economy can prosper in the long run only as a larger regional economy or by being embedded in a larger regional economy. In Europe, not a single country remained that would have been more than a middle power, that would have had a sufficient power base to assume the role of superpower. In contrast, there were two powers of continental dimensions: the United States of America on the one hand, and the Soviet Union on the other. It did not take all that much imagination to recognize that it was only possible to survive if one successfully attempted to follow suit. At the center of all this was—and is and always will be—Franco-German reconciliation.

These were the internal reasons; to this was added an external situation that helped greatly and without which, let us say it openly, it would have been impossible, in the very short period of eight years (1949–1957)—at the peak of the market value of the German political potential—to establish the treaty network of the postwar era. These were the years of the Cold War and thus of a greatly pronounced need

for security in the free world, a need that also wanted to seize the support of this German potential. Therefore, the numerous reservations that appeared everywhere were waived.

These times have come to an end. The new situation, which does not carry with it the guarantee of permanence, has been on the horizon since the Kennedy administration, since the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, since Cuba in 1963. The old situation (i.e., 1949–1957) stopped the moment people started, I would not say *recognizing* the end of the Cold War, that would be erroneous, but *anticipating*^[1] it in a kind of foreign-policy wishful thinking. Some refer to what has emerged as polycentrism; they have finally discovered that the East Bloc is also made up of different states. And the others, less scientific in their terminology, simply refer to it as *détente*.

What are the repercussions of these changes for us, for Germany and for its policy toward Europe? Are they of a kind that would question the existence of the European Communities? Well, we must be cold and merciless to ourselves in our scrutiny of this. We have to look at the entire structure of the postwar treaties to see whether it still holds or has become brittle. We also have to account for what is actually behind what others think and conceive of as polycentrism and *détente*. Even insofar as we do not comply with them, these subjective facts are indeed givens in political events, and we have to account for them. In conducting our review, we have a decisive and wholly legitimate criterion for distinguishing between what is useful and what is not, and that is the question of whether—and to what extent—these treaties still serve our interests today. This includes the question: what then are our goals? Unfortunately, it is a question that is often neglected.

[...]

Let me now come to the integrated communities. Today, everyone knows that the coal and steel community treaty is limited casuistically to material regulations for certain situations. Therefore, it has less of a constitutional nature. The two new communities based on the Treaties of Rome have greater political substance, because they place their own further development in the hands of constitutional organs that have already been established. That is the definitive progress that we have made since the [1951] Treaty of Paris. Even Euratom is in a crisis for various reasons that I do not wish to go into here.

And now to the European Economic Community: economically, it surpassed all expectations. If someone were to tell me that he had predicted in 1958 where we would be today, I would question the quality of his memory. From an economic standpoint, the community has become a profitable and indispensable business venture for everyone involved. Its indispensability was proven when the crisis of 1965 was brought to a partial end by the Luxembourg Conference, for this brought to light an insight shared by all the national capitals: that the destruction of the community would bring all partners significant economic losses that could not be compensated for elsewhere. Anyway, this project has not yet been completed. In the second part of my talk, I will go into what still has to be done, and I will try to show that a particularly active Europe policy, which will have to be set up for the long term from the very outset in order to be correct, will continue to be necessary for Germany in the future. That is the economic part.

From a political standpoint, and this is receiving far too little attention, the integrative treaties—and that goes for all of them—are the only postwar treaties in which absolutely no discrimination against Germany, either explicit or implicit, can be found. That is the great political value of these alliances. As I have already mentioned, they are political in nature, which also serves as a guarantee for equal German participation in this—probably—large power center of economic policy in Europe. It is therefore totally logical that the adversaries' attacks on this alliance, which originated here on this continent, are directed primarily against the institutions. The greatest significance of the Luxembourg Conference is having saved these institutions, and besides that let it be mentioned that it was the first time after the war that several countries formed a limited alliance with Germany with regard to a major political issue. A further political effect of these events is that through ties to its neighbors and the political influence it has within

the institutions of this community, Germany has gained political clout not only within but also outside of the community. It is no exaggeration to say that a Germany embedded in a flourishing and powerful community has greater weight—in Washington and London and Moscow—than an isolated Germany in a middle-power format. And finally, and this of foremost importance from a German perspective, economic integration in Europe is not an obstacle but a prerequisite for the reunification-in-stages that is emerging as a new style of reunification policy. Only as part of a pan-European rapprochement between the Europeans of the East and the West do we have a chance to see the satisfaction of this great national desideratum. The success of this solution depends on the trust that people in the East also place in us, and this trust will perhaps, somewhat paradoxically, be determined in part by the trust that we put into the community of our partners through the good example that we set in our dealings with them. For this trust will turn them into actors and advocates for our own national cause. That is the respectable list of political effects of so-called economic integration.

[...]

To sum up, what are the consequences of this necessarily summary and somewhat sketch-like analysis for German policies, specifically for Germany's policy toward Europe?

1. In terms of economic policy, the European Economic Community is an essential achievement, which must be further developed through all available forces. The problems of the sister communities are problems with their treaties and their fusion.
2. The integration of the six is not an obstacle to reunification, but instead the prerequisite, with no alternatives. The same applies for other goals of German policies: security, peace, and a role for Germany throughout the world as a respectable ally and partner.
3. The so-called political union is not achievable at the present time but remains a medium-term objective of Germany's policy toward Europe. It is not the condition for, but rather the result of economic policy integration, which is already the social and economic partial-realization of the political integration of Europe.
4. The political linchpin of successful, long-term integration continues to be Franco-German relations. Consequently, they must be worked on, despite all adversity. Dialogue with Paris must never be broken off. London is unsuited to serve as a referee between Bonn and Paris, just as Bonn is not an appropriate referee for London and Paris. That is not to say anything against the mutual Franco-German efforts regarding the issue of Great Britain joining the European Communities.
5. Integration in the EEC is an essential precondition for constructive *Ostpolitik* [policies toward Eastern Europe], which in turn is one of the conditions for a realistic reunification policy. I understand this to mean an *Ostpolitik* with which the results of Yalta can perhaps be corrected, step-by-step, in a long-term, evolutionary process.
6. NATO remains crucial for the security of Western Europe and the Federal Republic, especially since the French position unfortunately rules out joint defensive efforts on a European scale for the foreseeable future.
7. The European Economic Community has not been completed. There are many problems that still need to be resolved, and Franco-German tensions tend to make it even more difficult. But all these problems can be solved if the stable policy toward Europe of past years is continued. Among those problems is also the geographical expansion of the Community.

So, policy toward Europe is today perhaps the most likely means by which to serve all Germany's legitimate national interests. In any case, Germany's policy toward Europe cannot be separated from

reunification policy or *Ostpolitik* or security policy. And for that reason, a constructive policy toward Europe should be a main focus of German policies.

NOTES

[1] Italics added in both cases for the sake of clarity—eds.

Source: “Die politischen Bedingungen der deutschen Europapolitik von heute” (October 24, 1966); in Thomas Oppermann, ed., with assistance from Joachim Kohler, *Walter Hallstein. Europäische Reden*. Stuttgart, 1979, pp. 641–49.

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