CHAPTER IV
MILITARY ALLIANCE SYSTEMS
AND THE GERMAN QUESTION
1. INTRODUCTION

As discussed in the preceding chapter, in the Potsdam Conference whereas the victorious allied powers unanimously agreed upon an interim division of Germany, none of them put forth a definite timeframe in which the proposed German peace treaty, eventually leading to the final settlement of the German problem, was to be concluded. On the contrary, as we shall later analyze in this chapter, the immediate postwar "situation created a logic whereby the United States and the Soviet Union established enduring military presence in the two spheres of Europe". They tacitly accepted the division of Germany as part of the existing reality of the postwar European politics. The creation of NATO and the Warsaw Pact did bear the testimony to this fact.

In this chapter, therefore, our basic objective is to see as to how a straight-jacketed military solution to a complex political problem of postwar German settlement had naively been sought by the US and the USSR. We shall also witness in this chapter as to how the Soviet leadership tried to steer quick twists and turns to their policy towards the German Question in order to cope with the swiftly changing international scenario especially during mid-1950s.

2. DIVIDED GERMANY IN DIVIDED EUROPE

Needless to say, in peace it is dreams that decide the texture of politics and in war it is the politics that determines the canvass of dreams. The politics

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of the World War II altered the fate of the people of this planet as a whole beyond redemption. Simply because somebody was in the East or the West of Germany at a particular point of time, his future, physical existence, social relations, political convictions, and the life style were determined accordingly provided "he did not attempt to correct this accident of history by fleeing to the other part of Germany". The division of Germany was in no way predestined despite the fact that as a state it had been a divided lot for most of its history. But this time Germany as a people was divided. Politics decided their fate without giving them a choice to decide what their politics should be.


For instance, Erich Honecker who was born in the Saarland in the Federal Republic, crossed over to East Berlin in 1945 and the Federal Republic Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, a native of the nearby area of Halle, the part of East Germany, decided to move to the West. Their thinking, actions and commitments were conditioned accordingly.

3. "True Germany has been a divided country for most of its history. But nonetheless it is wrong to conclude that the present division constitutes a return to this condition, implying that the unitary state of 1871 was merely a transitory episode in German history. That unitary state was the result of a long evolution leading towards German unity. The German division of today is generally different from all other divisions in that it represents the contrast between East and West"—Rudolph, ibid., p.143.

William Pfaff, on the other hand, describes this issue as follows: "Historically seen, partition has been the normal condition of Germany. Unity was an affair of less than one century, and it was filled with catastrophes. Unified Germany caused two world wars and the moral horror of National Socialism. It caused chaos in Europe many times over because it was too large. The Basic problem of Europe since 1871 has been how to get along with the threat that a united Germany would entail. The answer was finally found in 1945 with great losses. It consisted in a new partition of Germany". Quoted in Ulrich Albrecht, European Security and the German Question, World Policy Journal, vol.1, no.3 (Spring 1984), p.581.
Germany, thus, stood divided geographically in Europe. Europe itself stood divided politically and ideologically in a postwar world. Well before the ink of the Yalta agreement and the Potsdam pledges dried up, power politics among the victorious powers heated up putting aside the tryst with destiny which Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin had made for the people of Europe in general and Germany in particular.

The Soviet Union started sealing off the part of the Europe under its command and control, both through ideological indoctrination and military might in order to make itself safe against the Western allies which were now becoming increasingly hostile to it in the wake of new rivalry known as the Cold War. For the same reason the Soviet Union was also making every possible effort, though characteristically in its own manner, to win over the loyalty and allegiance of the people of Germany as a whole by projecting itself as a true champion of peace, freedom and ultimate German reunification.

The Western Allies, on their part, started wooing West Germany in the name of Freedom, democracy and human rights by providing all sorts of help to boost its morale to fight against the menace of Soviet communism because by now Churchill had realized that the "Soviet Union had become mortal danger to the free World"4. The Western allies did everything possible to indoctrinate the West German people to the typical Western value system and capitalist way of life apart from instilling and reinforcing in them the deep rooted feelings of fear and hatred against the Soviets.

Quite amazingly, therefore, the Allied powers exhibited a schizophrenic attitude towards Germany. They were apprehensive of the German resurrection which could have been detrimental to the security of their individual nations. At the same time, given Germany's geographic location, demographic situation and industrial potential each one of them was eager to bring Germany within the exclusive sphere of influence of its own.

The Soviet Union in the postwar period displayed a greater degree of schizophrenic attitude towards Germany. It had obvious reasons to do so because it had suffered the greatest damage at the hands of the Nazis in the course of one of the most cruel wars mankind has ever been subjected to. Consequently the Soviet Union retaliated "by a policy that permitted no distinction between 'good' and 'bad' Germans". At the same time, Stalin was well aware of the fact that such a policy of revenge would, in the ultimate

5. Radio Moscow in its English bulletin of 22 June 1994 at 0630 Hrs reported: "On 22nd of June Russia marks one of the most tragic events in its history - the invasion of the USSR by Nazi Germany in 1941. Foreign historians estimate that the war death toll amounted to 50 million human lives both civilian and military. The whole country lived under a military regime for four years. There is not a single family in the former Soviet Union that did not lose its relatives during these awful years. The enormous losses could have been much less if it had not been the mistakes made by Stalin and his advisors".

Interestingly, till 1956 when Khrushchev criticized Stalin, the Soviet Mass Media had all praise for Stalin. They single handedly attributed all credit to Stalin for winning, what Russians still designate as, the 'Great Patriotic War'. For detail see, Medini Prasad Roy, *Perestroika and the Role of Mass Media in Socialism: A Case Study of Soviet Union and Poland* (New Delhi:CSEES/SIS/JNU, 1990), unpublished.

analysis, alienate Germans and force them to get aligned with the forces opposed to the Soviet Union jeopardizing thereby the Soviet security interests. It was under this strategic compulsion that well before the actual end of the war Moscow volunteered to establish the Free Germany Committee and the German officers' Union. In fact, "the Soviet Union was the first power to recognize political parties after Germany's unconditional surrender".

The contradiction in the Soviet attitude towards Germany was vividly visible at the end of the war when it pressed the Germans to pay reparations through their noses, advocated to punish Germany severely for its misadventure and pampered Poland at the cost of Germany to achieve security against the future German menace. And in the same breathe the Soviet leadership tried to win the German people's confidence by projecting the USSR to be out and out for a stable and united Germany friendly to it.

The Western allied powers, on the other hand, started competing with Russians in wooing Germany in their favour by forgoing reparations, pouring money into Western Germany and opposing the Soviet policy of German territorial settlement. Thus, while the so-called German war-criminals were court martialled at Nuremberg, the German people were being paid competitive courtship.

Strangely, indeed, the Allied powers who fought against the enemy collectively now started flirting with it individually. They took very little time to forget the pledge they made at Yalta of establishing "a world order under law,

dedicated to peace, security, freedom and general well being of all mankind” and started calculating everything in terms of crude national interest, which ultimately brought the US and the USSR face-to-face. Differences between the two coagulated to the extent that the post-war world had to learn to live in perpetual war-like situation, known in popular parlance as the Cold War, till the Soviet system itself collapsed facilitating the ultimate reunification of Germany.

3. RUPTURE IN POWER STRUCTURE

To be precise, at the end of the World War II Europe stood at a crossroad. The magic message of "peace, democracy and human rights" for which the Allied fought the war against the Fascists had already started percolating deep down to the respective colonies of the Western allied powers. The colonial powers like Britain and others were so exhausted by the just concluded war that they simply failed to stop the ongoing liberation movement in their colonies. It was at this crucial juncture that the Soviet Union captured the initiative of supporting such freedom movements taking place in different parts of the world. There started mushrooming a number of regional power centres such as CEATO, CENTO etc challenging the age-old European hegemony in the world politics.

In other words, the rupture in the traditional European power structure was vividly visible by now. In fact, the USSR took just four years, as we have

seen in the previous chapter, to match the US nuclear capability made public in 1945 during Potsdam conferences. The advent of nuclear weapon, therefore, not only deepened the existing ruptures in power relations among the European states but also caused a fundamental shift in power centres themselves. The hitherto Euro-centric international politics started getting bipolarized with the US at the one end and the USSR at the other. The Europe, too, was therefore, logically and comprehensively divided into two mutually antagonistic power blocs - one led by the United states of America and the other by the USSR, designated hereafter as superpowers.

Indeed, such ruptures in relations between Western powers and the USSR were evidently discernible as early as 1946. The Truman Doctrine of March 1947 and Marshall plan of June 1947 made the USSR all the more hostile. On 20 March 1948 the Soviet Union stormed out of the Allied Control Council. The Berlin Blockade began on 1 April 1948 producing first visible international crisis in connection with the German Question in the postwar era. The so-called European system virtually collapsed. The European powers actually lost their political autonomy. The non-European powers like the US came to be recognized as the final arbiters of fate of the people of Europe.

The conclusion of the Brussels Treaty of March 1948 institutionalized such ruptures. Liberated from the Nazis, Europe was now, in the words of Walter Lippmann, "occupied by its non-European liberators".9

The creation of NATO and later on that of Warsaw Pact somewhat concretized the bipolarity of the postwar international politics. International politics by now logically entered into an era of, what Morgenthau called, 'struggle for power'. From now on, for the two superpowers, the issue of national security became the most convenient device for manipulating domestic political climate. Consequently an average American was finding his freedom systematically curtailed. Likewise the Russian state was now getting more and more powerful instead of moving towards the the stage where the progress of its 'withering away' would have started.

International politics, thus, became the 'zero-sum-game'. "A gain for one side was by definition a loss for the other". Each side became more interested in denying any possibility of a gain to the other. The result was obviously a dead-lock in Europe. There remained no possibility of any positive negotiation as conceding concessions were conceived "as a loss in the Cold War loss-gain calculus of the superpowers". Uncertainties were preferred to stability, changes were considered as a risk.

4. FORMATION OF NATO

As we have seen the World War II left Western Europe economically exhausted, politically weakened, morally shattered and militarily marginalized. The Soviet Union, by contrast, emerged as a military power worth reckoning. The Soviet-led communists in all the states of Central and Eastern Europe started

11. Ibid.
establishing their regime by suppressing all political activities which failed to go along with the communist ideology.

The Western Alliance partners felt obviously alarmed by "the iron curtain descending over eastern Europe"\(^{12}\) as they witnessed "the large Soviet standing armies stationed in eastern Europe"\(^{13}\) threatening the very existence of the already war ravaged Western European states.

Therefore, in order to match the Soviet Union and its other Eastern European allies militarily, the United Kingdom, France and other European countries got together to conclude a collective-defense alliance in March 1948 under the Brussels Treaty. The United States join this military bandwagon in April 1949. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation came into force on 24 August 1949 with a specific objective of establishing "a military counterweight to the Soviet military presence in postwar eastern Europe"\(^{14}\).

Interestingly, although NATO was created to make Europe secure and peaceful it in itself became one of the most important stimulating factors for intensification and sustenance of the Cold War - a potential and a perpetual threat to the security of the Continent. The results thus became the causes.\(^{15}\)


\(^{13}\) Ibid.

\(^{14}\) Ibid.

\(^{15}\) Depicting this dilemma more cogently Professor Karl Deutsch in the introduction of Anatoli Rapoport's book *Strategy and Conscience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p.ix wrote: "Building a large number of air-raid shelters by one country ... may signal to its human adversary that its government is now impressed with the likelihood of war than it was earlier. This may increase international tension and make war somewhat more likely".
Because threat never guarantees security, it aggravates a sense of insecurity and thereby increases tension. This was what exactly was happening in Europe since the formation of NATO. In actual reality, NATO made the question of European security tightly intertwined to the Cold war scuffle between the two superpowers. As a result there was a perpetual military alarm in Europe.

In fact, NATO in Europe had three specific tasks to perform: firstly, it was to prevent the possibility of the Third World War. Secondly, it was to oversee the development of democracy in Germany and make the Germans to accept the consequences of their defeat in the just concluded War. The third and the basic purpose of NATO in Europe had been (till the USSR itself got disintegrated finally in 1990) to deter any possible Soviet aggression.

When NATO was founded, the Soviet Union became conscious of its own security concerns. It, therefore, decided to use the German Question as an instrument to counter the NATO alliance system. That is why when the German Democratic Republic came into being in October 1949, Stalin emphatically expressed his expectation that the newly proclaimed Democratic Republic part of Germany would become the "cornerstone of a united, democratic and peace

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loving Germany” \(^{17}\) aligned, of course, to the USSR.

As a matter of fact, Stalin was of the impression that it was the Soviet Union with Germany to its side that could drive the US out of the European Continent. For, he was well aware of the fact that a Germany firmly tied to the West would greatly circumscribe the Soviet influence in Western Europe. This was exactly what Kremlin used to think with regard to the German Question throughout the post-war period. Stalin knew that the Germans’ unflinching urge for reunification was deep-rooted in history. The division was a fiction and unity a fact. Therefore, Stalin wanted to play on the German sentiment against, what he used to call, the ‘imperialists’.

5. STALIN’S OFFER

In 1952, Stalin unilaterally offered the reunification of West and East Germany in a democratic but neutral state. He sufficiently “hinted at the possibility of free elections” \(^{18}\) that was to follow once the proposal was accepted. But he failed to sell this idea. West Germany refused this offer well before the West could reject it. Adenauer together with the Western allies denounced this offer by saying that Stalin’s offer was aimed at enticing the Germans away from joining the Western military alliance system because in no

\(^{17}\) Stalin sent a congratulatory telegram to the leaders of GDR on 13 October 1949 which read: “The existence of a peace loving democratic Germany beside a peace loving Soviet Union excludes the possibility of further wars in Europe, puts an end to bloodshed in Europe and makes impossible the enslavement of European countries by the World imperialists. Quoted in Gerhard Wettig, "The Soviet View", in Edwina, n.2, p.35.

\(^{18}\) Christoph Bertram, "Change in Moscow, Continuity in Europe?", *The World Today*, vol.44, no.8-9, Aug/Sept, 1988, p.139
case Stalin was prepared to see the FRG to be integrated to the Western military alliance system. Stalin's offer of German reunification was, therefore, a well considered compensation offered to the West Germans for not joining NATO. For the FRG joining NATO meant for all practical purposes the Western army with all their nuclear and tactical weapons reaching well below the Soviet Union's nose undermining seriously thereby the latter's national security, and also an effective check on its any future geopolitical expansion towards the West.

However, the West found Stalin's offer as highly impractical otherwise too. If Germany, they argued, was to be left neutral and disarmed then who was there to keep it disarmed? If it was to remain neutral and armed then what was the guarantee that one day it would not discard its neutrality? This was the dilemma for the West. This was incidentally also the dilemma for the Soviet Union. The then Soviet Deputy Prime Minister Anastas Mikoyan frankly admitted that "if the Germans accepted neutrality, one day they could change their minds. There would again be a tendency to have 100 million Germans in an empire, and could we then go, to war just because Germany gave up neutrality?"19 Germany, indeed, had been the source of a classic threat to the Soviet Union's security. The Soviet Union had two cruel examples to cite when a united Germany attacked it despite all pretensions of having a special relationship with it.

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The British in particular were of the opinion that the neutralized united Germany dragged out of NATO and Warsaw Pact could prove to be potentially catastrophic for peace in Europe. In fact, solution to the German problem was possible only when the power relationship between the Soviet Union and the West was altered in essence.

The East Berlin uprising of 17 June 1953 further revealed the sallowness of Stalin's venture when it became evident that the Communism was being covertly resisted to a great extent by even those who were under the Soviet control. Such slogans of German unity died down with the death of Stalin. Instead, the Soviet leadership now started trying "to influence the West Germans by means other than appeals for reunification".20

6. THE SOVIET COMPULSION

Nevertheless, the Soviet Union had its own strategic compulsion for wanting a unified but neutral Germany. First, a united Germany as a part of NATO was very likely to divulge the Soviet strategic secrets and policies to the West as the GDR as an integral part of the Soviet security system, had the privilege of sharing much of the Soviet military motives, objectives and tactics. Secondly, absence of NATO troops in the United Germany would have given the Soviets a sense of psychological security. Finally, this would have meant the marginalisation of American influence upon Germany and the Western Europe.

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The Year 1953 proved to be a watershed in the East-West approaches to the German Question. On 20 January 1953, Eisenhower became the new President of the United States. He, along with his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, launched an all out diplomatic offensive against the Soviet Union and its Communist allies. They went a step ahead of the Truman-Doctrine and advocated the much publicized 'rollback' policy of pushing the USSR to the pre-war status.

Meanwhile, Stalin died on 5 March 1953. Taking advantage of the situation the Western powers proposed for the reunification of Germany through free and democratic elections. Although the USSR did agree in principle, it reiterated Stalin's position that the reunited Germany be neutral having no pact or alliance with anyone.

7. THE SOVEREIGN FRG

The Paris Agreement of October 1954, facilitated "the West Germany's 'safe' participation in alliance" ending formally thereby the Western Alliances' occupation of Germany. Finally in May 1955 West Germany became the member of NATO which in effect meant West Germany gaining conditional Sovereignty and also becoming an integral part of the Western European Security System. The West in return pledged to find a solution to the German Question in 'peace and freedom'.

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21. McTenny, n.12, p.777
The Western allies now made commitments to seek reunification of Germany and to support FRG's claim of being the sole representative of the whole German people, although the ground reality remained quite different throughout the period under discussion. The Western powers did show their willingness to give substance to their commitments but only to the extent they coincided with their own interests. They never went to the extent of risking conflict with the Soviet Union. The Second Berlin crisis was a point in question.

8. WARSAW PACT

The Warsaw Pact as a military and political convention between the European Communist State and the USSR was signed on 14th May, 1955 as "a direct response to the West Germany's entry into NATO". The GDR joined the Warsaw pact as one of its founding members along with seven other socialist states. It was a multilateral assistance pact with the manifest objectives of cooperation in securing peace and assistance in an event of armed aggression.

Interestingly military assistance in case of aggression against one or more member countries was not to come automatic as in case of NATO member states where there existed a provision for automatic declaration of war. Rather, it was left "to the individual parties to the alliance to decide the type and extent of..."

their possible assistance".  

Nevertheless, the main reason for the creation of the Warsaw Treaty was, as the preamble of the pact itself described, to act as a counterweight to NATO particularly in a situation when the Federal Republic of Germany tied up its fate with the Western alliance system. Moreover, the pact was to provide the USSR with a politico-military-legal basis for intensifying stationing of troops in the troubled East European states, for instance in Hungary. The manifest basis of this Soviet led pact was, however, the 'collective security in Europe'.

Henceforth, the Soviet Union put forth one more condition that it would be ready for solving the German Question in conjunction with the problems of European Security.

Quite understandably, when West Germany joined NATO the Soviet leadership felt a political blow. It did manage to reconcile itself to the West German defiance of joining NATO but the Soviet diplomacy soon prevailed upon the Adenauer government in establishing diplomatic relations. The sole purpose of such Soviet overtures was to influence West German policies without making any significant concessions as regarding the German Question. Later, as we will see, Khrushchev did try to adopt a reconciliatory approach vis-a-vis the West Germans though, of course, from a position of strength and without any incentive, allurement or concession worth noting. But when he found his lenience and reconciliation not attracting any positive response "he began to

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apply pressure on the exposed outpost of West Berlin on 30 November 1958".24

Thus, the establishment of NATO and the subsequent throwing of its weight to the West by West Germany through becoming party to the NATO alliance system had decisively altered the existing circumstances. The Soviet policy regarding the German Question at this juncture did reflect such altered circumstances. The Kremlin found West Germany becoming a battle ground for the NATO manoeuvres.

9. THE SOVIET PEACE OFFENSIVE

It was around this time that the internal dynamics of the Soviet leadership was witnessing an overhauling both at the domestic front as well as on international arena. Stalin was dead. Khrushchev by now was fully in grips of the new generation of Soviet leadership. He indeed, took courage and initiative to disown much of what Stalin had established as his achievements. And disowning Stalin meant for all practical purposes, undoing much of what Stalin did in the name of socialism inside the country and abroad.

Logically, there fore, the death of Stalin facilitated the emergence of a new era in Soviet leadership. The theory of inevitable clash with capitalism was being gradually replaced by 'peaceful co-existence', of course, without losing sight of the broader role responsibility and stake of the Soviet Union in the fast changing dynamics of the international politics.

It was against this background that the Soviet Union launched its own version of peace offensive. First of all it advanced the scheme of general

European security through universal disarmament. But the Western powers were so chilled of the cold war wave that the Soviet peace proposals went off unheeded.

Nevertheless, keeping itself at par with the West militarily, Moscow put forth a fresh proposal during mid-1950s for the dissolution of military pacts "within the context of Article II of the Warsaw Treaty, which states that the treaty can be superseded only by general European collective security accord." 25

In spite of the fact that its peace-proposals were consistently rejected by the Western powers, the Soviet Union kept on putting forward such proposals one after another. In the late 1950s, the Soviets came up with one more such peace proposal of non-aggression pact between the two military alliances. It backed Polish Foreign Minister, Adam Rapacki's call for a nuclear-free zone in the two Germanys as well as in Poland and Czechoslovakia. It also sponsored the proposals for a nuclear-free zone for the entire Central Europe but the West was so suspicious about Soviet intentions that all such peace proposals were outrightly rejected by it. Thus mutual distrust overtook passionate appeal for peace.

It was in this highly volatile situation that the four power Geneva Conference was held in July 1955. At the Conference Eisenhower insisted on the establishment of an all-German government on the basis of free elections. He was also emphatic in his stand that the re-united Germany had to remain a member of NATO military alliance.

25. Albrecht, n.19, p.578,
The Soviet Union, on the other hand, now started insisting on the de-linking of the German Question from that of the issue of European security. For the West, on the other hand, the reunification of Germany and European security were mutually inter-related issues, of course, with a priority to the question of European security.

At the end of the Summit meeting the participating leaders came out with a highly generalized statement that they agreed that the final settlement of the German Question should be carried out in conformity with the interests of European security and the national interests of the German people.

10. THE KEY TO GERMAN QUESTION

Here Eisenhower, like his predecessors, failed to appreciate the fact that "the key to the European security problem rested jointly with Germany and the Soviet Union". Other European powers were to play a marginal role in this regard. The Soviet Union held the key to European security and stability. If the security requirements of Soviet Union were to be met convincingly and comprehensively, the German and European security problems were to be solved as well. The obverse was also equally true in the sense that if the division of Germany was to be accepted as the final judgment delivered by the history and the security requirements of the so divided Germany were met

comprehensively, that problems of the Soviet security were to be solved likewise.

Therefore, if the German Question was central to any long lasting and mutually acceptable solution to the European security problems, the Soviet Union was central to the settlement of the German Question.

Needless to emphasize here that security policies of any country reflect a realistic assessments of contemporary balance of power configuration as well as the sweet or sour historical experiences. The Soviet Union was a classic case of this kind. It had been invaded by Germany twice within a span of less than 50 years. Logically its foreign and security policies were to be influenced and shaped, to a large extent, by an overriding emphasis on preventing further German aggression. The West failed to appreciate this fact. They also failed to realize that it was the Federal Republic of Germany that worried the Soviet Union and not the United States. For Russians it was the German army and not the US army that was "the principal counterpart to the Soviet forces stationed in the Central Europe".  

NATO had, indeed, presented an obstacle to the long standing Soviet aims of securing a say in Europe. Stalin foresaw such a situation to arise in near future right since the end of the War. That was the reason why Stalin showed his eagerness to see American troops withdrawn from Europe the soonest.

27. John C. Keliher, *The Negotiations on Mutual and Balance Forces Reductions: The Search for Arms Control in Central Europe* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1980), p.77 For instance, the US officials while negotiating with East European military leaders were often amazed and annoyed to see that the German Army was considered as a graver threat to the Soviet Union than the US army with all its tactical nuclear weapons.
Moscow by now had apparently abandoned the reunification planks. Instead, it set about to consolidate its position in the GDR while it kept on its efforts to arouse the FRG's interest in the Soviet Union in order to wean the Federal Republic away from the Western alliance ring.

Also, by now the two German states were facts of European life and the question of reunification was to be necessarily negotiated mutually. In other words, the creation of a united Germany was to be achieved only through mutual negotiations between the two German states on equal footing. This also meant formal Western recognition of the GDR and of the 1945 frontiers in and around Germany.

Meanwhile, by mid-1950s, the Western allies, to the utter disappointment of Bonn, seemed increasingly inclined to easing out tension with the East without any reference to the German Question. Despite all justifiability and inevitability of such move of the Western allies' against the background of security situation in Europe as a whole, the West Germans were pained to realize that "a solution to the German Question was receding into a remote political future". Because in the opinion of the West Germans seeking isolated

28. Stalin is said to have apparently asked President Roosevelt during the Yalta Conference as to how long American troops were to stay in Europe. Roosevelt then publicly declared that the American troops were to be withdrawn from Europe within two-to-three years. So, Stalin seems to have concluded that the US was hardly interested in Europe any more. After all Stalin had a great admiration for Roosevelt. He must have believed him for his words. But Roosevelt's death and Churchill's defeat back home upset the immediate postwar equations in Europe.

settlement of German Question, isolated from rest of the logical chain of events happening in Europe, was not only pointless but dangerous.

Nevertheless, a marginal progress in this regard was registered in 1955 when there was an exchange of ambassadors between Moscow and Bonn following Chancellor Adenauer's visit to the USSR. Interestingly, in contradiction to the Hallstein doctrine, Chancellor Adenauer took a trip to Moscow. He had his own justification for such a visit. He wanted to keep a direct channel for dialogue with the Soviet Union open for rapprochement on national question.

By inviting West German Chancellor Adenauer to Moscow for discussing the opening up of diplomatic relations the Soviet leadership, on the other hand, wished to codify the existence of two separate German states. Also, from now on Khrushchev consistently insisted that the German Question be solved by the conclusion of a peace treaty with both the German states.

However, this lull in relations between the Bonn and Moscow was a short-lived one. Both of them soon reverted back to their respective military alliance systems. Moreover, while the Soviet Union was willing to discuss the possibility of a reunited but neutral German state, the Western powers were never willing "to see Germany reunited under a government that was not completely loyal to and supportive of the Western alliance". 30G Here Chancellor Adenauer lacked confidence in his people and decided to tie up the

fate of the West Germans with the West at the cost of a reunited and neutral German state.

The reunification prospect was further restricted in 1956 when the Adenauer’s government decided to go by the 'Hallstein-doctrine' in accordance with which the establishment of diplomatic relations with GDR by any country was to be considered as an unfriendly act toward the FRG as the later did not consider the GDR a sovereign country in full diplomatic sense of the term. Adenauer was quite hostile to the idea of a united but neutral Germany. When in 1957, George F. Kennan made such a suggestion by arguing that this would satisfy Soviet security needs and might encourage the Soviet Union to withdraw militarily from East Europe, Adenauer reacted sharply by saying that "unification could not be obtained by the neutralization of Germany".31

The irony of the age was that none of the Western statesmen of repute wanted the division of Germany be removed but they never failed to pay "pious lip service to the cause of German unification".32 The Western statesmanship was by now convinced that the only solution to the German Question was that of "integrating a part of Germany into a part of Europe".33

The Soviet Union by 1957 came to float the new idea of confederation of the two German states as an alternative to the reunification. From now on Moscow chose to seek rapprochement between the two Germanys rather than

32. Ibid., p.253.
33. Ibid., p.260.
working for unity. The Soviet leadership started prompting the GDR to go ahead in its endeavour to establish independent political identity of its own in the comity of nations so much so that the Soviet Union wanted the GDR to be fully recognized under the international law as an independent state. This was, indeed, intended to dispel any doubt that there existed two German states which by implication meant that the division of Germany was complete and permanent.

On 28 February 1958, the Soviet Union put forth a fresh proposal for German Peace Treaty at an international conference with the participation of FRG and GDR. The West Germany together with Western powers turned a deaf ear to this call, too.

Meanwhile, a serious unrest in Eastern Europe during the late 1950s forced Moscow to concentrate its attention in consolidating its position within the Warsaw Pact system rather than seeking durable solution to the German Question. Quite understandably, Moscow was so perturbed with its intra-Pact problems that it considered raising the German or the Berlin Question at that point of time as an act of provocation.

In the subsequent chapter we will see that it was in this context that Moscow issued ultimatum in November 1958 "demanding Western endorsement of the Soviet terms for a German settlement". 34 We would also notice in the same context that it was this assertive move on the part of the Soviet Union in 1958 that marked the final high tide of the Cold War wave in West German-East Europe relations which, for all said and done, persisted for nearly a decade.

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Moreover, Moscow never treated the GDR as a bargaining chip but more as a springboard for further political somersault. Stalin wanted to use this as a springboard by advocating reunification as he could foresee the relentless desire of Germans to live in a single state. But his successors, we would see later, could simply visualize the deep rooted anti-Soviet attitude among the average Germans. They discarded the hope of a neutral and united Germany. They decided to concentrate on keeping East Germany firmly under their control and Germany as a nation divided. Or at the most they would ask for a communized East Germany and a neutralized West Germany which meant for all practical purposes opting for status quo. Partition was preferable to them to the extent that Brandt's 'Ostpolitik' drive was received with cynicism rather than sensitivity.

Nevertheless, throughout the post-war period, Germany remained the Soviet Union's main source of anxiety in Europe. Keeping Germany divided, neutral and under Soviet control had been the long standing objectives of the Soviet leadership right since the end of the war. During the late 1950s Moscow had been trying not only at preventing the resurrection of its potentially hostile adversary but using it "as an instrument of divisive diplomacy in Western Europe with the ultimate goal of weakening the US position on the continent". 35

Washington, on the other hand, right since the turn of this century, had repeatedly been projecting itself as champion of freedom and right to

self-determination for the people of Eastern Europe through Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points," Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Declaration on a Liberated Europe" and John Foster Dulles's "roll-back". Moreover, the US together with other West European powers did try to use Eastern Europe as a 'cordon sanitaire' with the primary objective of isolating the Soviets from the rest of the European continent.

Therefore, the rapprochement between the two Germanys was by now logically inter-linked with the dynamics of the power politics between the two superpowers. None of them wanted the settlement of German Question at the cost of a re-birth, re-alignment and a re-enlivening of the German national feelings. For Washington never wanted West Germany to drift away from NATO in which it was natural for Moscow to foresee the obvious threat to its geo-political and ideological hegemony. Washington needed West Germany to provide the continental muscle to NATO, whereas Moscow needed East Germany to provide logistic support to the Warsaw Pact.

Quite understandably, therefore, the division of Germany proved to be a cornerstone of the post-war politico ideological-military structure in Europe. For the Soviet Union even a marginal deviation in the political allegiance of either of the two Germanys was to radically alter the balance of power not only in Europe but throughout the globe. The USSR wanted, therefore, that Germany must remain neutral and non-aligned in case of reunification. The West was never ready for a Germany reunited but neutral and non-aligned. There was obviously a deadlock here. Interestingly, this 'no-give-in' stand of the two superpowers had forestalled "a fundamental security dilemma in Europe: what to do about
Germany. 36

To conclude, therefore, the German Question by now had conveniently been postponed to not so optimistically foreseeable future as the Soviet Union and the Western powers by now found themselves so well entrenched in the Cold War logic of the East-West divide that they preferred, given the choice, status quo in Europe to any change in the power balance between the two superpowers. In fact, since Stalin's offer of the reunited neutral Germany was outrightly turned down by both the West German and the West, the Soviet leadership did not make any known serious attempt for reunification of Germany. Of course, neutrality condition with regard to any initiative for reunification of Germany became an article of faith for the Soviet leadership as far as the solution of the German problem was considered.

Moreover, the rival military alliance systems covertly strengthened the East-West divide already in place right since the end of the war - making the German Question all the more complex as the war time allied powers unsuccessfully sought a military solution of a highly complex political problem of German settlement.