

INTRODUCTION

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Is the German question once again an open one? Against the backdrop of the euro-crisis of the past few years and Germany's newly gained prominence in Europe, many scholars and pundits seem to have come to that conclusion. "There is a new German question," wrote Timothy Garton-Ash at the height of the crisis in 2013, adding, "It is this: Can Europe's most powerful country lead the way in building both a sustainable, internationally competitive Eurozone and a strong, internationally credible European Union?"¹ Two years later, with the crisis lingering, Hans Kundnani, in his much-acclaimed analysis of *The Paradox of German Power*, agreed: "The 'German question' has re-emerged in a new form," he wrote—a form that once again derives from the country's size and centrality on the continent.² This alleged reemergence of the German question has been a matter of concern in France, too; during the presidential campaigns of 2012 and 2017 a central issue was how to deal with Germany.

More than twenty-five years after Germany's unification, such concerns are astonishing. For most contemporaries, the events of 1989–90—spanning those 329 days that led from the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 to the new day of German national unity on 3 October 1990³—had been a subject of amazement. Because by the end of the 1980s ending Germany's four decades of division had come to be seen as either requiring an indefinite period or involving the risk of a major disruption of the European order, such a brisk and peaceful development had come as a huge surprise. Yet in the aftermath of the country's unification most observers believed that the German question in effect was closed, since all the sensitive issues deriving from it—for example, the country's borders or its politico-military status—had been solved, first and foremost within the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany signed in Moscow on 12 September 1990—also known as the Two Plus Four Agreement.

This was no small achievement. The German question had been central to the European system since the beginning of the modern era—in fact, since the very emergence of that system in the wake of the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. During the course of the following three centuries, the centrality of the German question was never in doubt. The French Revolution and the Napoleonic era contributed to no small extent to the process that led to the emergence of the modern German nation-state. In the wake of the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation in 1806, France became the "other" that helped forge the German national sentiment, as illus-

trated by the campaign to end French occupation and the 1813 Battle of the Nations. The creation of a German confederation by the Congress of Vienna in 1814–15 did not solve the German question, satisfying neither Prussia’s imperial ambitions nor the German bourgeoisie’s aspiration to a German federal state. Thereafter, the country’s unification remained the order of the day, whether peacefully and democratically at Frankfurt in 1848–49 or by “iron and blood” under Bismarck in 1864–71. Between 1870 and 1944, imperial and then Nazi Germany invaded France three times, leading General Charles de Gaulle to state, in the wake of the liberation of France, that Germany’s “fate” was a “question of life and death” for France and—no less—the “central problem of the universe.”⁴

The Cold War emerged at least partly from the victors’ inability, in the wake of the Potsdam Conference of July–August 1945, to reach agreement on the terms of a peace treaty with defeated Germany. By the late 1940s, the nascent Cold War opened a new and decisive chapter in the protracted history of the German question. That chapter was determined by a seemingly unescapable dialectic. On the one hand, the division of Europe and, at its center, of Germany, offered a solution (temporary at least) to the German question: German power was tamed as a result of the country’s partition and diminished sovereignty, and its territorial limits were embedded in the status quo of the bloc system, itself guaranteed by the nuclear balance of terror. On the other hand, precisely because Germany (and particularly Berlin) was at the center of the Cold War system, any calling into question of the German status quo could well lead to a major disruption of the European order, if not World War III—hence the difficulty for most contemporaries until 1989–90 to imagine a peaceful and swift settlement. “The German problem,” de Gaulle famously remarked in 1965, had become “the European problem par excellence.”⁵

This volume covers the period that stretches from the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 to the country’s unification in 1990. Although it is a relatively brief chapter—less than half a century—in the multiseular history of the German question, it is a uniquely distinctive and portentous period precisely because of the inextricability between the latter and the wider international context of East-West relations. It is distinctive because the Cold War, together with its German variation, represents a coherent and distinct phase of Europe’s international history, with a beginning and an end as well as an organizational principle running throughout it; and it is portentous because the German question, throughout this period, was the epicenter of the European and international system—and the condition of its sustainability as well as the possible cause of its collapse.

We focus specifically on France and the German question for two reasons.

First, the German question—which, for France, had been existential for decades—remained critical in the country’s European and international policies throughout the Cold War. In spite of its weakness at the end of War World II compared to the other three victors—the United States and the Soviet Union of course, but also the United Kingdom—France in 1945 was recognized as one of the four victori-

ous powers with rights and responsibilities with regard to Berlin and Germany as a whole. This, together with its status as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and as a nuclear power since the early 1960s, remained until 1990 a major component of France's claim to international rank. In fact, France's major international concerns and priorities during the Cold War were, for the most part, addressed through its relationships with the other three powers involved in the German question, whether the United States (key to the defense of France and of the West at large), the Soviet Union (central to East-West relations and European security), and—somewhat less crucially—the United Kingdom (France's alter ego and rival West European would-be Great Power). The German question, in other words, was at the crossroads of France's policies during this period.

Yet France looked at the German question and its possible evolution primarily through the prism of Franco-German relations, characterized over centuries not only by mutual occupations and wars, but also by a broad range of cultural transfers spanning multiple domains—from industry to philosophy—and involving a characteristic mixture of mutual attraction and rejection. The image of Germany as a home of philosophers and writers, an image once captured by Germaine de Staël, was partly destroyed by Prussian invaders in 1870–71, and coexisted since then with the perception of Germany as a threat.⁶ Due to this intertwined history, the German question had become a distinctly French question, even obsession. For French politicians, intellectuals, or public opinion, it was a much more complicated issue than for their British or American counterparts. The French use of the expression “German problem” (a choice of words preferred, for instance, by de Gaulle) testifies to the highly psychological dimension of that issue as well as its characteristic *longue durée*.⁷

Franco-German relations thus remained central in France's European and international policies in the second half of the twentieth century. Given its past enmity with Germany, France in 1945 was justifiably concerned with the evolution of the German question. The experience of the first post-world war period and the failure of French objectives after 1918 loomed large in the immediate aftermath of the 1944–45 victory. Yet, in spite of a public discourse that by and large remained in line with that of the earlier era, the lessons had been learned and were transformed, partly under American pressure, into pragmatic policy. The intuitions of the 1920s—that Europe's reconstruction could only happen through Franco-German reconciliation—were quickly elevated to a political principle that it fell on France to fulfill. Robert Schuman famously accomplished this at the very beginning of the 1950s; by then de Gaulle himself unequivocally characterized Franco-German reconciliation as a primary objective of French policy. In short, no country other than France had such a decisive stake in giving life to Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and his successors' notion that German unification could only take place under a European roof—echoing Thomas Mann's famous call for “a European Germany” rather than “a German Europe.”⁸

As a result of the foregoing, France's role in the German question was decisive throughout the period under consideration—this is the second reason why we focus

specifically on France in this volume. As one of the four victorious powers, France held a veto over any evolution in the German status quo. From Potsdam in 1945 to the ratification of the Bonn–Paris convention in 1955, a peace treaty proved unattainable and the country’s division became a fact of life, leading the three Western powers to devise a partial and temporary settlement involving the economic, political, and military integration of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, or West Germany) into the Western bloc while reserving their rights until a final settlement became workable. In order to preserve the leverage of the Four Powers’ rights, French diplomacy from then on nurtured a small group of Berlinologists whose task was to ensure respect for Berlin’s quadripartite status by both German states as well as by the two superpowers, who were less inclined toward this legal formalism. While throughout the following decades the Cold War status quo made any radical departure from the German status quo unlikely, France, including through its quadripartite prerogatives, kept a keen eye on possible evolutions, in particular those that might result from the FRG’s new *Ostpolitik* once it was launched in the late 1960s. And when in the wake of Mikhail Gorbachev’s coming to power in 1985 events in the East eventually led to the fall of the wall, creating the conditions for ending four decades of Germany’s division, France—eager once again to make use of its rights and responsibilities if need be—was determined to have a say on how to finally solve the German question and to contribute to shaping the definitive settlement that was reached in 1990.

Beyond the strictly legal aspects, what made France a key player in the German question from beginning to end was the country’s ability to mobilize its diplomatic resources to that effect, whether through its relations with the United States, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, or Soviet Union), or other East European countries like Poland. Yet the most important vehicle for France’s influence on the evolution of the German question was its relations with the FRG and, starting in the early 1970s, the German Democratic Republic (GDR, or East Germany). The Franco-West German relationship, throughout the four decades of Germany’s division, progressively emerged as the backbone of the European project, and the completion of that project had come to be seen in Paris—like in Bonn—as the precondition for solving the German question and Germany’s return to some sort of unity; as a result, by the 1980s France was in a position to exert considerable leverage on the German question and on the European integration process. In fact, France’s role faced with the effective prospect of Germany’s unification in 1989–90 could be summarized by a willingness to ensure that the latter would not hinder or slow down European unification. This strategy culminated in the Maastricht Treaty, signed in 1991–92 in the wake of German unification. That a unified Germany henceforth would remain embedded in European construction as well as in the Atlantic alliance can legitimately be considered as a success of more than four decades of an active French policy in search of a satisfactory answer to the German question.

France’s important role in framing and, ultimately, bringing about the final settlement of the German question in the period 1945 to 1990 has to a large extent been

neglected by the historiography, at least until quite recently. Although historians have focused in depth on specific junctures—in particular the early years and, lately, the final ones—no comprehensive study of France and the German question throughout the period under scrutiny in this volume exists so far in the otherwise increasingly rich literature that covers the Cold War and the German question. When France's role is discussed, two features characterize existing accounts. First, that role is often seen as limited compared to that of the other major players, beginning with the two superpowers and West Germany. France is usually described as a secondary player with limited influence on the evolution of the German question. Second, France's contribution to framing, managing, and eventually solving the latter between 1945 and 1990 has been, until recently, widely seen in negative terms. To the extent France is recognized in a role, that role is generally seen as one of obstruction, be it in the formative years (through its alleged opposition to West Germany's reemergence and then integration into the Western bloc, culminating in France's rejection of the European Defence Community [EDC] in 1954), in the period of the East-West and German status quo (as reflected in France's purported defiance toward the FRG's Ostpolitik and its alleged ulterior motives), and, last but not least, against the backdrop of Germany's unification in 1989–90 (as made clear by France's supposed attempt at delaying if not at obstructing it altogether).

These traits of the historiography can easily be explained. That France's role in the German question throughout the Cold War has long been dismissed reflects a historiography that has predominantly focused on, to the detriment of other actors, the role played by the superpowers and, of course, by West Germany. The Cold War has long been seen as essentially a U.S.–Soviet affair, leaving little room for European players—except for Germany itself, the central object of the bipolar confrontation. As to the predominantly negative rendition of France's role, it stems to a large extent from the foregoing: France's contribution has mostly been seen through the lenses of the other actors, creating a bias. At no juncture is this in fuller display than when it comes to German unification in 1989–90, whose accounts have mostly been written through the prism of U.S., West German, and to some extent Soviet policies—all of which differed somehow from French policy. Where the United States was predominantly concerned with German unification within NATO, France was less sanguine; and where West German leaders, starting in the early weeks of 1990, wagered on a quick unification while paying limited attention to the international setting, French leaders—in line with the doctrine formulated by de Gaulle since 1959—stressed the need for a controlled process as well as a robust international framework for solving the German question.

These differences on the best way to deal with the German question at its various stages and the fact that, in that regard too, France pursued an independent policy, explain to a large extent the negative perceptions that have long been associated with France's role—a phenomenon that is also amplified by the well-known phenomenon of source bias: France's role has most often been construed through the exploration

of U.S., Soviet, or German archives, memoirs, and other types of documents, rather than French ones. This source bias is particularly felt in the case of German sources: because German decision makers throughout the period—whether in the early period, at the time of Ostpolitik and, of course, at the time of unification—have almost systematically proved to be suspicious of French motives and objectives in dealing with the German question (an attitude that can be explained by many factors, including the reminiscence of the post–World War I period), the German negative perception of France’s role has often been seen as effectively reflecting the truth rather than an opinion, if not a prejudice.

We believe the time has come to revisit this issue to reflect the current state of the evolving historiography. Two main factors explain this historiographical evolution. First, a growing access to sources: almost three decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, archival documents have become available for the whole duration of the period under scrutiny, including its decisive, final phase. This is the case not least in France, where scholars investigating the country’s approach to the German question now have access to the foreign ministry’s archives on a normal basis and, increasingly, to the presidential archives. As a result, France’s role can now be understood on the basis of the appropriate French documentation rather than through the distorted prism of other, non-French sources. (Of course, international sources, which are also increasingly accessible, are nevertheless important to situate French policy in the appropriate multinational framework. Together with French archival sources, the available collections of documents from Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Russia, in particular, now make it possible to investigate the German question from 1945 to 1990 along a truly multinational approach.⁹) The second factor allowing historians to revisit the issue is, as always, the passage of time. By and large, this history is now closed. Whether or not a new German question has effectively emerged in recent years, the German question, as understood in this volume, is clearly over. In other words, nearly thirty years after the end of the Cold War and German unification (i.e., the time of a generation), collective memories and the political stakes associated with it are increasingly blurred, making it possible for scholars to engage in a dispassionate and de-ideologized analysis.

The result is that historians in France, Germany, and elsewhere have recently begun to change their views on France’s role in the German question, in essence both reevaluating its significance and its nature and showing that it was far more decisive and constructive than long averred. It was decisive because from the early period onward, France’s status as one of the Four Powers, its role in the evolution of the Cold War, and, even more crucially, its increasingly close cooperation with West Germany in the emerging European project in effect gave it a say over key issues or developments pertaining to the German question—be it in the formative period from the late 1940s to the early 1950s, during the long status quo from the 1960s to the 1980s, or in the final period in the late 1980s. And it was constructive precisely because all the foregoing—not least the Franco-German and European dimensions—were key

factors that throughout the period led France to understand, perhaps more acutely than other international actors, that the German question in essence did (and should) remain an open one until a final settlement had been reached—a settlement that had to be devised primarily in European terms, as confirmed by the Maastricht Treaty.

Embedding the German question in a European framework was, in other words, France's constant objective throughout the period. To the extent that there is nowadays a new German question, as Garton Ash posits, it is, ironically, to an extent the result of France's approach to solving the old question: Has the very European Germany that the French had long seen as the ultimate response to the German question now given way to a German Europe that such a European Germany was meant to prevent from emerging? Providing an answer to this question exceeds the scope of this volume. Suffice it here to remark that the mere fact of asking the question proves, in hindsight, France's centrality in the German question during the Cold War and in its final settlement.

The following contributions reflect this evolving historiography. In order to cover the key issues and junctures that relate to France's approach to the German question from 1945 to 1990, the individual chapters are both chronologically and thematically organized. In Part I "From Capitulation to Cooperation" we look at the early postwar period. From the defeat of Nazi Germany to the creation of the FRG, France was faced with a clean slate when it came to dealing with the German question. While the dominant narrative has long stressed the allegedly coercive approach evolved by de Gaulle and his immediate successors, recent historiography has largely disproved this. In chapter 1 ("France and the German Question, 1945–1949: On the Interdependence of Historiography, Methodology, and Interpretations"), Rainer Hudemann revisits the evolving historiography of the early postwar period and explains how and why the long-held view of France's punitive attitude has now been superseded by a more positive rendering of the country's attitude in these crucial years. Although France in some quarters still has the reputation of having led a revenge policy in Germany in these years, Hudemann shows that French international policies started to change as early as 1945, creating a paradigm of cooperation that has characterized Franco-German relations until the present. In a similar vein but within a more specifically economic (though equally crucial) purview, Françoise Berger, in chapter 2 ("Economic and Industrial Issues in France's Approach to the German Question in the Postwar Period"), explores the evolving historical knowledge on France's postwar economic aims and policies toward Germany, an indispensable step—given the vital character of economic issues in the occupation of Germany and the reconstruction of both countries—to understand France's evolving approach to the German question at large. By 1955 France and Germany had become each other's number one trading partner, making the Franco-German couple, from now on, the economic engine of European integration.

In part II, "The Emergence of the Bloc System," we turn to an examination of France's attitude toward the German question in the formative years of the Cold

War. With the partition of Germany and the integration of the FRG and the GDR into two opposing military blocs, the German question, against the backdrop of the emerging bipolar order, gained no less than systemic significance—acquiring the potential to degenerate into a new world war. In chapter 3 (“France, German Rearmament, and the German Question, 1945–1955”), Michael H. Creswell analyzes how France, against the backdrop of the emerging East-West military confrontation, was forced to devise a strategy to respond to the increasing Soviet threat and contribute to solving the German question. While the historiography has long described France’s reaction to West Germany’s rearmament as one of foot-dragging if not hostility, he shows that the French Fourth Republic was committed to devising a constructive response by including Germany in the politico-military structures of Western Europe, thus ensuring the “double security” on which the country would from then rely on. In chapter 4 (“Impossible Allies? Soviet Views of France and the German Question in the 1950s”), Geoffrey Roberts explores the parallel issues of Franco-Soviet relations and the German question in the formative period of the Cold War. While courtship of France—a country Moscow saw as sharing a common security interest faced with a possible resurgence of German militarism—was undoubtedly at the center of the Soviet Union’s strategy for the containment of Germany in the 1950s, Roberts observes that France consistently failed to live up to Soviet expectations, at no point breaking ranks with the British and Americans on European collective security and the German question, here again correcting a widespread belief that Paris, ever since the early Cold War, was eager to establish a *de facto* alliance with Moscow to keep a divided Germany under control.

In Part III, “The de Gaulle Factor,” we turn our attention to how the first president of the French Fifth Republic durably shaped his country’s approach to the German question. By recognizing, as mentioned above, that the German question was at the center of the bipolar system and that only its definitive and peaceful settlement—including the overcoming of Germany’s division—would bring about the possibility of transcending the Cold War status quo on the divided continent, de Gaulle, in this realm too, proved to be prescient. In chapter 5 (“An Arbiter between the Superpowers: Charles de Gaulle and the German Question, 1958–1969”), Garret J. Martin reminds us that, for de Gaulle, the German question remained a major preoccupation throughout his presidency because it fundamentally intersected with his ambitions both for enhancing France’s rank and for transforming the continent, if not the international system as a whole. For him, Germany presented both a problem to be solved and a vehicle to foster dramatic changes in Europe—hence his firm belief that its eventual return to unity was desirable in order to bring about a new European security order even though such a settlement had to be tightly controlled to reassure and address the concerns of the other countries on the continent. In chapter 6 (“The German question in the Eastern policies of France and Germany in the 1960s”), Benedikt Schoenborn further explores this theme by looking more specifically at the interplay between France and West Germany in their approaches toward the

East against the backdrop of the still looming German question. While the German leaders were intrigued by de Gaulle's approach, their suspicions of his ulterior motives impeded a common Franco-German policy. Still, the French president's sustained dialogue with Moscow clearly was one of the influences that led to a change of course in the FRG, first in December 1966 when the Grand Coalition government moved toward a more active policy to the East, and then in 1969 when the social-liberal government under Willy Brandt embarked on a new Ostpolitik.

Exploring "The Era of Ostpolitik" is the purpose of Part IV of the volume. Starting in 1969, the FRG emerged as a key—perhaps the key—actor in East-West relations in Europe and the privileged interlocutor of the Soviet Union, a role once played by de Gaulle's France. The new Ostpolitik was a potential game changer for the German question, though it was an ambivalent game changer: on the one hand, Germany's division was now recognized as a durable fact; on the other, a realistic path toward its eventual overcoming was now open. This new situation was bound to affect France's approach toward the German question as well as its role in East-West relations. In chapter 7 ("Perceptions of Ostpolitik: French–West German Relations and the Evolving German Question under Willy Brandt and Georges Pompidou"), Gottfried Niedhart explores both the French perceptions of Brandt's Ostpolitik and the way in which the FRG believed its Ostpolitik was perceived by the French government—involving mirror-imaging and inevitable distortions. While the French were concerned with some aspects of Ostpolitik (not least its impact on the rights of the Four Powers and on the FRG's Westbindung), Paris, contrary to a long-held perception that emerged early on in Bonn, was not opposed to West Germany's new course even though it came together with its rapid reemergence as a major international actor. In chapter 8 ("France, the CSCE, and the German Question"), Nicolas Badalassi looks at the interaction, in France's policies, between the German question and the emerging Helsinki process. Because Germany was the epicenter of the East-West conflict in Europe, its status was naturally at the heart of the negotiations that culminated in the drafting of the 1975 Final Act—hence the considerable interest Paris showed in the aspects of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) that involved the German question. For French diplomats, the CSCE was a way to deal with the latter in accordance with their dynamic vision of East-West relations and the objective of overcoming Yalta: beyond channeling Ostpolitik and preserving the Four Powers' rights, keeping the German question open, accordingly, was a major objective of French diplomacy in the CSCE. In chapter 9 ("The Economic and Monetary Dimensions of the German Question: A French Perspective, 1969–1979"), Guido Thieme develops the economic aspects of the German question as seen from Paris in the 1970s. In addition to the status of the two Germanys and their possible unification, there was, he argues, a second dimension to the German question in the 1970s as seen from Paris: due to its economic success, the FRG was emerging as the most influential economic power in Western Europe and within the European Economic Community (EEC), hence creating another challenge for the neighboring

countries, not least France. In response, the French government evolved a strategy that involved embedding Germany in the EEC, binding it through bilateral economic and industrial ties and, last but not least, modernizing France in order to restore an economic balance between the two states and deny Germany the exclusive leadership in economic and monetary affairs in Western Europe.

In Part V “The End Game,” we turn our attention to the last decade of the Cold War, culminating with the fall of the Berlin Wall and Germany’s unification in 1989–90—an outcome unforeseen by most players but that cannot be explained without looking at the return to the foreground of the German question throughout the 1980s. In chapter 10 (“The French ‘Obsession’ with the German Question: Willy Brandt, François Mitterrand, the German Question, and German Unification, 1981–1990”), Bernd Rother examines the ongoing conversation between French President François Mitterrand and former West German Chancellor and President of the Socialist International Willy Brandt on this matter. Before 1989 Mitterrand rightly sensed the importance of this theme for the Germans in general and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in particular—in spite of the Social Democrats’ claim to the contrary. Mitterrand had thus at least prepared himself for the possibility of German unification, but his constant preoccupation with the German question raised some incomprehension on the German side, in particular from Brandt. This, however, did not result in a real split due to Mitterrand and Brandt’s common objective of deepening European integration. In chapter 11 (“All about Europe? France, Great Britain, and the Question of German Unification, 1989–1990”), Ilaria Poggiolini looks at the reactions of Germany’s two main European partners and their interactions faced with the reopening of the German question and the prospect of German unification at the end of the 1980s. Although the dominant narrative of German unification typically equates Mitterrand’s attitude with the hostility displayed by UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Ilaria Poggiolini clearly differentiates the French approach and shows that Thatcher’s hope of a Franco-British common front were ill-founded. In the end, it was “all about Europe”: France’s commitment to Franco-German reconciliation and European integration, in contrast to Thatcher’s growing rejection of the European project, made a new Franco-British entente cordiale all but impossible. In chapter 12 (“Franco-Soviet Relations, German Unification, and the End of the Cold War”), Frédéric Bozo sees a similar pattern being played out between France and the Soviet Union. Although Soviet leaders—including Mikhail Gorbachev—had long banked on a shared Franco-Soviet interest to thwart any German unification, Bozo shows that Moscow’s expectations derived from a misinterpretation of the Gaullist design (as described above) and an underestimation of the strength of Franco-German relations. In spite of shared concerns with regard to the pace and international consequences of German unification, Mitterrand and Gorbachev did not share a common vision of the European response of the challenge, making a Franco-Soviet entente impossible.

Part VI, “Enduring Concerns: Anschluss, Borders, and the two Germanys,” concludes the volume by discussing some key themes that permeate France’s approach to the German question throughout the period at hand. In chapter 13 (“Towards a new Anschluss? France, the German and the Austrian Questions 1945–1955”), Thomas Angerer argues that understanding France’s attitude toward the German question and, in particular, Germany’s possible unification during the early Cold War and after requires taking into account the *longue durée* of France’s historical experience with the Habsburg monarchy and the more recent trauma of Austria’s 1938 Anschluss, in other words the nightmare of a pan-German hegemony at the center of Europe. (Reciprocally, France’s Austrian policies after 1945 were influenced by France’s objectives in the German question.) To prevent Austria from rejoining (West) Germany in a common state or group of states was part and parcel of French strategies for dealing with the German question after World War II as much as it had been after World War I. In chapter 14 (“France, Poland, and Germany’s Eastern Border, 1945–1990: The Recurrent Issue of the German Question in French-Polish Relations”), Pierre-Frédéric Weber reminds us that the German question during the Cold War revolved around not only the issue of Germany’s eventual return to unity, but also its territorial limits, especially to the East. In fact, the issue of the FRG’s recognition of the Oder-Neisse line was, until the very end of the period, one of the most sensitive aspects of the German question. Because Poland was in that regard the most concerned of Germany’s neighbors and because of France’s keenness to ensure a durable settlement of this issue—including, as de Gaulle had called for as early as 1959, the definitive character of the border—relations between France and Poland remained, until the very end of the period and France’s crucial involvement in the final settlement of this issue, a determining factor. In chapter 15, the volume’s final chapter (“A Surprising Continuity: The French Attitude and Policy toward the GDR, 1949–1990”), Christian Wenkel explores the continuity in the way French diplomacy dealt with the Second German state throughout the period, thus illustrating the permanence of France’s attitude and policies with regard to the German question as a whole from the 1950s to the 1980s. Even the establishment of diplomatic relations between France and the GDR in 1973 did not alter this continuity. It was a small step in a long process of normalization of Franco–East German relations that had become necessary in the context of détente and the CSCE. In fact, it was a precondition to achieve the kind of progressive and controlled return to a unified German nation that can be considered one of French foreign policy’s long-term goals during the Cold War.

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Notes

1. Ash, “The New German Question.”
2. Kundnani, *The Paradox of German Power*, 6.
3. Teltschik, *329 Tage*.
4. De Gaulle, *Discours et messages*, vol. 1, 483.
5. De Gaulle, *Discours et messages*, vol. 4, 338.
6. Caro, “Les deux Allemagnes”; Digeon, *La crise allemande*.
7. Note that this choice of words is not limited to the French: see, e.g., Rödder, *Wer hat Angst vor Deutschland?*, 15.
8. Mann, *Schriften zur Politik*, 206.
9. On the end of the period, see, e.g., Bozo, Rödder, and Sarotte, *German Reunification*.

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