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Two States, One Nation (October 28, 1969)

In this inaugural address to the Bundestag, Chancellor Willy Brandt recalls the division of Germany and heralds a new era in West Germany's relations to East Germany and Eastern Europe. Even so, his new policies were to remain firmly anchored in NATO principles. The phrase "two states, one nation" signaled both a new phase in policy towards East Germany and in the normalization of relations between the two German states.

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### Policy Statement by Willy Brandt, October 28, 1969

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Ladies and Gentlemen! This government proceeds from the assumption that the questions that have arisen for the German people as a result of the Second World War and the national betrayal by the Hitler regime can only be conclusively answered in a European peace order. No one, however, can dissuade us that the Germans have a right to self-determination, just like all other peoples.

The job of practical politics in the years lying ahead of us is to maintain the unity of the nation by **easing the current tensions in the relationship between the two parts of Germany**. Germans are not only linked by their language and their history – with all its glory and its misery; Germany is home to all of us. We also have common duties and a common responsibility: to secure peace among ourselves and in Europe. Twenty years after the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR, we must prevent a further drifting apart of the German nation; in other words, we must try to progress first by way of orderly coexistence to togetherness. This is not only a German objective, for it also has significance for peace in Europe and for the East-West relationship. Our attitude and that of our friends toward the GDR's international relations depends, not least of all, on the position of East Berlin itself. Incidentally, we do not want to diminish the benefits our compatriots get from international trade and cultural exchange.

The federal government is continuing the policy started by Federal Chancellor Kiesinger and his government and is renewing its offer to the Council of Ministers of the GDR for mutual and non-discriminatory negotiations at the government level leading to cooperation based on treaty agreements. Recognition of the GDR according to international law by the federal government cannot be considered. Even if two states exist in Germany, they are not foreign countries. Their relations with each other can only be of a special kind.

Continuing the policy of its predecessor, the current federal government declares that its readiness to enter into binding agreements on mutual renunciation of the use or threat of force also applies to the GDR.

The federal government will advise the USA, Great Britain, and France to continue energetically the discussions that are underway with the Soviet Union on **easing and improving the situation of Berlin**. The status of the city of Berlin under the special charge of the Four Powers must remain untouched. This should not hinder the search for ways to ease traffic within and into Berlin. We will continue to secure the viability of Berlin. West Berlin needs to have the opportunity to contribute toward improving political, economic, and cultural relations between the two halves of Germany.

[ . . . ]

Ladies and Gentlemen, the **North Atlantic Alliance**, which, in its twenty-year existence, has stood the test of time, will also guarantee our security in the future. Its tight cohesion is the precondition for the common effort toward détente in Europe. Whichever side of the security policy we consider – whether it is our serious and persistent attempt at simultaneous and evenly matched arms limitation and arms control, or whether it is guaranteeing an adequate defense for the Federal Republic of Germany, the federal government regards its security policy, from both points of view, as a **policy of equilibrium and for safeguarding peace**. And, in the same way, it understands both aspects of our state's external security as a function of the alliance to which we belong, and as part of which we will contribute to the equilibrium of forces between West and East.

[ . . . ]

The federal government, together with its allies, will consistently support **reducing military confrontation in Europe**. Together with them, it will work toward simultaneous and balanced arms limitation and troop reduction in East and West.

[ . . . ]

Our national interest does not permit us to stand between the **West** and the **East**. Our country needs cooperation and coordination with the West and understanding with the East.

But against this backdrop, I say emphatically: the German people need peace in the full sense of the word with the peoples of the Soviet Union, and with all the peoples of the European East.

We are ready for an honest attempt at understanding, so that the consequences of the harm inflicted on Europe by a criminal clique can be overcome.

We are not abandoning ourselves here to any deceptive hopes: interests, power relations, and societal differences can neither be dialectically dissolved, nor hidden beneath a cloud of smoke. But our partners also need to know this: the **right to self-determination** as laid down in the Charter of the United Nations also applies to the German people.

This right and the will to assert it cannot be subject to negotiation.

We are free from illusions that the work of reconciliation will be easy or quickly accomplished. We are dealing with a process, but it is time to move this process forward.

Source: Willy Brandt, "Policy Statement from October 28, 1969," 6. Deutscher Bundestag, *Stenographische Berichte*, Bd. 71, 5. Sitzung, S. 21, 31-32; excerpts also reprinted in Bernhard Pollmann, ed., *Lesebuch zur Deutschen Geschichte [German History Reader]*, vol. 3, *Vom deutschen Reich bis zur Gegenwart [From the German Reich to the Present]*. Dortmund, 1984, pp. 255-57.

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