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Author(s): Karl Kaiser

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*Karl Kaiser*

## GERMANY'S UNIFICATION

**T**he division of Germany disappeared along with the Cold War that created it. Unification occurred with surprising ease and swiftness and, most important, without major bloodshed. Thus it contrasted strikingly with the dramatic origins of Europe's division, brought about by the devastating war unleashed by Hitler's Germany and the global confrontation that Stalin's Russia forced upon the world.

A change of such a tectonic magnitude as the breakdown of the entire postwar international order can only result when longer-term developments create the necessary preconditions, and when an unusual confluence of forces triggers the decisive events. Both elements came together to bring about the *Zeitenwende* of 1989–90 that altered the political map of the northern hemisphere.

Historic opportunities are often wasted, however, or turned into disasters when the leaders of important countries lack necessary qualities or fail to cooperate. In the case of Germany's unification, the opposite happened. The constellation of leaders was truly exceptional, both in their qualities as statesmen and their capacity to cooperate in what became the most intensive phase of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy in European history. All key personalities were politicians of unusual experience, having previously cooperated and developed personal relationships, in some cases approaching friendship. But not even the wisest leaders could have produced German unity less than a year after the fall of the Berlin Wall had it not been for the truly gigantic effort of the officials working in individual nations and in the European Community. German unification, brought about by a multitude of bilateral and multilateral negotiations and arrangements, represents one of the greatest triumphs of leadership and diplomatic professionalism in the postwar period.

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Karl Kaiser is professor of political science at Cologne University and director of the Research Institute of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik in Bonn. The author is grateful for the research assistance of Klaus Becher.

A president of the United States in office in 1989–90 was unusually well prepared for international politics. He knew what he wanted with regard to German unity and the ending of the Cold War. He provided the right mix of discreet and public leadership, and he used America's resources wisely in responding to the dilemmas of his partners. In the Soviet Union a president was in power who was determined—against much internal opposition—to overcome traditional communism, to withdraw from an unsustainable empire and to construct fundamentally new relations with the West.

In Germany a chancellor with an astute sense of strategic opportunities, and a knack for timely and decisive action, steered the process in symbiotic cooperation with a foreign minister with a keen tactical sense in the context of the long-term design that he had helped fashion for many years. In Britain and France, after initial reservations about the prospect of a powerful united Germany, two experienced leaders grasped the opportunity and gave their constructive and indispensable support to the various arrangements leading to unification. In the European Community, President Jacques Delors quickly realized the dangers and opportunities of the moment by providing decisive leadership and placing unification within the EC framework, giving new momentum and direction to both. Finally, after several decades of totalitarian rule in East Germany, it was remarkable that the revolution produced a political leadership able to provide support and legitimacy to a complex settlement on issues with which it had only a few weeks to familiarize itself.

Another characteristic gives a rare and possibly unique quality to the events of 1989–90. All the important elements of the collapse of the postwar order corresponded exactly to the visions and grand design formulated in the early postwar period. The international structures initiated by statesmen like Dean Acheson, Konrad Adenauer, Alcide de Gasperi, Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman finally achieved their ultimate goals: the collapse of traditional communism, the rise of democracy in eastern Europe, the mellowing of Soviet power and its retreat from the external empire, the end of Europe's division, the success of west European integration as the decisive force for change on the continent, and Germany's unification as a democracy integrated into the structures of the West. The overcoming of Europe's division, though unimaginable without the contribution of the reformist leaders and

democratic movements in the East, owes much to the far-reaching vision of the early postwar leaders.

## II

Unification was the goal of West German foreign policy since the first days of the Federal Republic. Chancellor Adenauer argued that German and Western policy should first concentrate on the rebuilding of German democracy, the revival of the economy and the full integration of Germany into structures of European and Atlantic cooperation. In the end, he claimed, success of this policy would produce the unification of Germany. Adenauer's policy, pursued with Western support, was successful in his lifetime in every respect except one: German unification. In fact, unification seemed to become an ever distant possibility. As the division of Europe deepened in the 1950s and 1960s, the two German states and their societies appeared to move further and further apart.

A conceptual departure appeared necessary to bridge the dividing line and introduce political change. Between 1966 and 1969, some steps were taken by the Grand Coalition of the Christian Democratic Union and the Christian Social Union working with the Social Democratic Party. But real change only occurred in 1969 after Social Democrats allied themselves with the Free Democratic Party and formed a coalition under Chancellor Willy Brandt. The new policy complemented, not replaced, Adenauer's record. Building on the Federal Republic's firm integration into the West, successive German governments from Brandt through Helmut Schmidt to Helmut Kohl pursued a policy that accepted the status quo in order to change it. Each settled open issues with the East and initiated cooperation through bilateral treaties and the multilateral process of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). These governments transported the seeds of change and Western values into East German and East European societies, and supported arms control and disarmament. All of these policies were pursued in cooperation with the West.

Complemented by the *Deutschlandpolitik* and *Ostpolitik* of Brandt, Schmidt and Kohl, and sustained by the Free Democrats and their two foreign ministers Walter Scheel and Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Adenauer's policy in the end did help to produce German unification. It was, in fact, part of the general revision of the European order through internal change in the

East and the negotiated Final Settlement that officially produced unification in 1990.

The three major political forces in Germany can therefore claim contributions to Germany's unification and the circumstances surrounding it. The Social Democrats, after strongly opposing Adenauer's policy of Western integration, endorsed and developed it after 1960. The Christian Democrats did the same after 1982 with the Social-Liberal coalition's bilateral and multilateral Ostpolitik. The Free Democrats had always been a force supporting the new policies. The major elements that produced German unification reflect the consensus of Germany's political parties. Germany thus reenters international life and assumes its new responsibilities with a better domestic foundation than at earlier phases of its history, when its political parties were deeply split over basic elements of foreign policy.

Unlike Bismarck's unification of 1871, the developments of 1989–90 occurred without "blood and iron." The surprising political maturity of the East Germans—considering they had last experienced a free election in 1932—found its counterpart in the restraint and caution of the major powers. Another difference from 1871 was that this time unification was brought about not against the will of other countries but with their consent and, indeed, active support. Unlike at the Versailles conference of 1919, the major powers were not divided but in agreement. The sorry lessons of Versailles helped the major powers push aside the temptation to discriminate against Germany and produce a settlement to which it, as well as they, could agree. Although this outcome is no guarantee against future conflict, it provides an infinitely better starting point for the policy of a united Germany in Europe than did the ignominious and inherently destructive settlement at Versailles.

### III

Of all the forces that brought about the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the East German regime, none was as important as the change in Soviet domestic and foreign policy under Mikhail Gorbachev. By 1989 these changes not only resulted in significant advances in East-West relations, but the logic of internal reform had an increasing impact on Russia's European allies. Gorbachev's December 1988 U.N. speech proclaiming "freedom of choice" was bound to set free the

forces in these socialist states that had been striving over the years for greater autonomy. The unilateral withdrawal of 50,000 soldiers from central and eastern Europe, announced in the same speech, gave credibility to Gorbachev's renunciation of the Brezhnev Doctrine. Soviet military power would no longer guarantee the continued monopoly of power of communist parties in eastern Europe. Moreover, after Moscow demonstratively accepted the results of Poland's first free elections in 1989, which produced a government headed by Solidarity activist Tadeusz Mazowiecki, it was only a matter of time until opposition forces in the other countries would also challenge communism.

In early 1989 Soviet policy toward Germany still seemed to be on its traditional track. During West German Chancellor Kohl's visit to Moscow in October 1988, Gorbachev relegated a solution to the German problem to the timetable of history, but expressed a strong desire to improve relations with the Federal Republic. By June 1989, however, the potential for change was implicit in the joint declaration signed by both governments on the occasion of Gorbachev's visit to Bonn after six months of negotiations. That declaration not only mentioned "the right of all peoples and states to determine freely their destiny," but the "unqualified recognition of the integrity and security of every state and its right to choose freely its own political and social system as well as unqualified adherence to the norms and principles of international law, especially respect for the right of peoples to self-determination."

The declaration thus used language in a context that referred to the possibility of German self-determination through free elections. The declaration constituted an affront to the East German regime and thus heightened the insecurity of the state's political class. After all, according to its leading ideologues, communism was the main reason for the existence of a separate East German state.

The true weakness of the East German regime was revealed when the flight of its citizens turned into a mass exodus late in the summer. Hungary, already having made the best of the new margin for maneuver provided by Gorbachev, made the momentous decision to allow East German refugees to move to the West, thereby breaching the Berlin Wall on the flanks. Collapse was imminent by the time Gorbachev attended the G.D.R.'s 40th anniversary celebration in early October. Gor-

bachev personally contributed to the collapse by making it understood that East German leader Erich Honecker was unable to implement his own version of perestroika. The refusal of the East German regime to engage in some process of controlled reform had become an increasing problem for Moscow. In all likelihood, Gorbachev did not want to take initiatives that would result in German unity. But he probably preferred the risks of a process of reform, which he hoped could be controlled, to the potential chaos of an explosive reaction to an ossified ideology. His provocative public reminder—"He who is too late will be punished by life"—was not lost on the East German Politburo. Moreover Gorbachev made it clear that he was unwilling to support a repetition of the Tiananmen Square massacre, for which East German security forces had made preparations.

Early in November mass demonstrations forced the withdrawal of the old leadership and the opening of the Berlin Wall and, indeed, the Iron Curtain. The dismantling of the most visible symbol of the postwar order brought home the fact that the situation in Germany, as well as that between East and West, was fundamentally changing. Inside Germany the flow of refugees assumed catastrophic proportions. During the month of November 133,000 people fled from East to West, i.e., projected at an annual rate, a tenth of the entire East German population. A continuation of the exodus would soon have led to a collapse of the G.D.R.'s social and economic system, and ultimately threatened that of West Germany.

In this situation, Kohl surprised everyone on November 28 by proposing a 10-Point Plan to deal with the German Question. The plan was based on the view, still prevailing in Bonn, that further progress on unity could only be achieved on the basis of integration between two separate states. The plan therefore stressed the necessity of a "contractual community," increasing cooperation at all levels between the two German states, slowly moving toward confederated structures. The plan mentioned the need to place the process in the context of cooperation within the European Community, the CSCE and East-West disarmament. German unity was mentioned only as the ultimate outcome of such a gradual process.

Kohl thus attempted to regain the initiative in a situation of growing disorder and to develop a framework to guide policy. The plan was designed to be flexible, to move in stages and

formulate conditions for cooperation, notably with regard to strengthening democracy and human rights in East Germany. The plan also sought to reassure both the Western allies and the Soviets by stressing the linkage to multilateral processes and using the two existing states as the foundation for further cooperation. Finally, it was intended to project vision and the hope of progress into a rapidly disintegrating East German society, in an effort to induce East Germans to stay home and preserve a minimum of stability.

But Kohl's plan could not fulfill its goals for several reasons. It was quickly overtaken by events; popular pressure for speedy unity in East Germany was much stronger than anticipated. The strength of these sentiments became increasingly visible in East German demonstrations. Within weeks both German governments were forced to scrap all concepts based on two separate states. Moreover the outside world was surprised by the plan, because foreign perception of events inside Germany was more accurate than that of planners in Bonn. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and related developments in East Germany, the world's attention focused not on the ideas of cooperation between the two states but on the one point in the plan that referred to unity. This was the main reason London and Paris were perturbed over not having been consulted prior to the plan's publication, though this reaction dissipated as events proceeded. Finally the plan made no reference to German borders and thus created the impression that unification would reopen the territorial issue.

#### IV

Since the late 1960s the Federal Republic's foreign policy pursued unification first by accepting the status quo of regimes and borders in the East, and then by contributing to a lowering of East-West tensions and increased cooperation, something which inherently served the interests of the divided nation. To preserve the essence of a common *nation*, West German policy inevitably had to deal with an East German *state*. But Bonn insisted on two points: it did not recognize the legitimacy of the eastern regime, nor was it willing to jeopardize Germany's option for unification. The "Letter on German Unity," addressed to the Soviet Union at the conclusion of the 1970 Treaty of Moscow, and acknowledged by Soviet authorities, stated that the "political objective of the Federal Republic of Germany [is] to work for a state of peace in Europe in which

the German nation will regain its unity in free self-determination.”

Given the obvious difficulties of unification, West German policy and political rhetoric concentrated on preserving humanitarian links and human rights. Freedom, as was often said, was more important than unity. The impact of Gorbachev's policies did not at first significantly change these priorities. The events at the turn of 1989 transformed the long-term perspective on unity into a strategic opportunity to be quickly grasped. In East Germany the accelerating collapse of the *ancien régime*, the growing exodus and the popular groundswell for unification made necessary innovative operating policies. For the first time since the creation of the Federal Republic, a genuine chance for unifying Germany appeared within reach.

Under great pressure of time, West German Chancellery and Foreign Office officials developed a strategy. It did not emerge in one single act but through a series of internal discussions and bilateral and multilateral negotiations between December 1989 and March 1990. At the intra-German level the option for a new common constitution was discarded in favor of East Germany's accession to the Federal Republic under Article 23 of the Basic Law, which a freely elected East German parliament later approved.

As to the external conditions of unification, the strategy addressed four questions. First, how could the concerns about the power of a united Germany be assuaged? Second, how could unification be achieved while also assuring Germany's continuing participation in Western structures of integration, notably NATO? Third, how could unification be accomplished without discrimination and legal restrictions on German sovereignty? Finally, how could there be an international settlement resolving all open questions left from World War II, while avoiding a general peace conference with all of Germany's wartime adversaries?

It became clear from the very beginning that these questions could be resolved only by acting on various multilateral and bilateral levels simultaneously. The art of diplomacy would have to tie a number of well-tested approaches to new ideas reflecting the changed circumstances of East-West relations and Germany's increased resources.

—A strengthening of European integration, in the framework of common policies and further pooling of sovereignty,

was the most appropriate approach to accommodate increased German power. Consequently Bonn increased its support for the Economic and Monetary Union, and Chancellor Kohl and French President François Mitterrand joined forces in proposing an intergovernmental conference on political union.

—All-European security structures would have to be strengthened or created through the CSCE: first, to supplement the NATO framework and, second, to provide a legitimate basis for a continued Soviet role in Europe after the release of its Four Power rights.

—Guarantees would have to be given to East and West in order to eliminate concerns about the military strength of Germany. They would require limitations on German forces, a confirmation of Germany's nonnuclear status and assurances to the Soviet Union to make the loss of G.D.R. territory militarily tolerable.

—Transitional arrangements would have to be found for the stationing and withdrawal of Soviet troops from East Germany under dignified circumstances. Further NATO reform—an increased political character and a changed conventional and nuclear strategy—would also make continued German membership more acceptable. Multilateral disarmament in Europe would create a more favorable framework for accommodating a united Germany.

—Qualitative improvements in Soviet-German relations should end the postwar enmity.

—A firm recognition of borders would remove any perceived potential for territorial revisionism due to unification.

Finally, it should be noted that no separate East German strategy on the external aspects of unification emerged. The initiative rested with the Bonn government as the old forces in East Germany lost power in a disorderly retreat. After the March 1990 elections, parties came to power in East Germany that were essentially extensions of West Germany's political system, with those of Bonn's governing coalition in a clear majority. Although the ideas of those who had engineered the revolution were represented in the government, most energies in East Germany turned toward the problems of democratic transition and the internal aspects of unification. Consequently the pacifistic and anti-alliance orientation of East German political activists soon ceased to interfere with Bonn's strategy.

The United States responded as a world power that had decisively shaped the structure of postwar Europe. It found the potential of a united Germany less of a problem than did Germany's neighbors. Washington carried the major responsibility for helping the western part of Germany to develop into a successful democracy and economy, and it was less hampered by historical memories than Britain and France.

For Britain and France, German unity was foremost a question of accommodating a new power. For the United States it represented, above all, the prevalence of American-supported values in Europe and the success of the postwar struggle against Soviet expansionism and its imperial hold over central Europe. Consequently American statesmen could support German unity in terms rarely heard from their counterparts in Europe, including Germans themselves.

When the East German regime collapsed in October and November of 1989, Washington perceived the events as the beginning of the demise of the postwar system. Every step taken was thus considered a building block of the new order and was guided by long-term considerations. Any mistake resulting from shortsightedness or tactical maneuvering could be costly in decades to come. With remarkable speed, Washington worked out its strategy prior to the December 2–3, 1989, U.S.-Soviet summit in Malta, which immediately followed Chancellor Kohl's November 28 announcement of his 10-Point Plan. The most momentous U.S. decision was to give forceful support to German unification, to throw all American resources behind it, and to place it in the context of a larger vision of a "Europe whole and free." The few negative voices in public opinion never had any noticeable impact on the administration's policies.

American policy was also based on the realistic assumption that it served U.S. interests to support a unification process that would produce western Europe's most powerful country and a potential partner in this future order. Here existed an even stronger prospect for the "partnership in leadership" that Bush offered the Federal Republic in his May 1989 visit. Moreover unequivocal support for unification would draw the proper lessons from Versailles, undercut any basis for right-wing revisionism in Germany and eliminate the temptation—

remote though it appeared—for Germany to seek unity through a bilateral deal with the Soviets.

Beginning with the December 4 NATO summit, American policy attempted to apply consistent priorities to the process of unification. It insisted foremost that unity mean the full restoration of German sovereignty; the Germany to emerge should not be subject to further controls. In this respect, American policy corresponded to the wishes of Chancellor Kohl; it helped to push aside notions such as that proposed by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze that unification be “decoupled” from sovereignty. American policy consistently provided encouragement to a Bonn government that at times appeared more hesitant than necessary. This was particularly evident in Bush’s letter to Kohl prior to the chancellor’s decisive February 1990 meeting with Gorbachev. Bush wrote that Kohl had the West’s full confidence, that America was with him and that Kohl should act to achieve unity if he could.

The determination to restore German sovereignty was also reflected in Washington’s attempts to structure the process of negotiations leading to unification—the “two plus four” talks. An orderly procedure obviously had to be found to relinquish the Four Power rights gained by the United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union with their victory in World War II. But the negative German and European public response to the December 11, 1989, meeting of the Allied Control Council in Berlin, convened at Soviet request, demonstrated that any impression of reviving the anti-Hitler coalition of half a century earlier would deny the rebuilding of democracy, possibly damage the trust and friendship established between the Federal Republic and the West, and jeopardize a new European system at its very outset.

London, Paris and Moscow were tempted to organize the negotiations as Four Powers negotiating with the two German governments. Preventing this required the personal intervention of President Bush in bilateral meetings with French President Mitterrand and British Prime Minister Thatcher, and intensive negotiations among U.S. Secretary of State Baker, Shevardnadze and other foreign ministers at the CSCE’s February 1990 “open skies” meeting in Ottawa.

Strongly supported by Bonn, an agreement was reached on the next steps: the two German states would jointly develop their view on the external aspects of unification, and then communicate it to the Four Powers. This ensured respect for

Germany's right to self-determination as well as its established relationship of cooperation with the West. The formula, moreover, implied that Germany's unification was to be achieved not as the result of a peace conference but in the form of what would eventually become the Treaty on the Final Settlement, signed by the six parties on September 12, 1990, in Moscow.

American policy also consistently tried to accommodate the concerns and interests of the Soviet Union. The Soviets held the most important cards and would have to make substantial concessions in order to meet Western conceptions of the future European system. In approaching Moscow President Bush built on the new Soviet-American bilateralism begun in President Reagan's second term, including a willingness to reduce the U.S. military presence in Europe. At the Malta summit Bush assured Gorbachev that the United States would not exploit growing Soviet weakness and that both sides had an interest in preventing ongoing change from turning into chaos.

As the "two plus four" process advanced, Bush decisively influenced the course of events. He reassured Gorbachev at their May 31-June 1 summit by formulating a number of points on which he had previously consulted the German chancellor, including a reform of NATO strategy, German commitments on its future non-nuclear status and transitional arrangements for Soviet troops in East Germany. Gorbachev then responded positively that Soviet approval of unification under CSCE rules in fact meant Germany was free to choose its alliance. The final quid pro quo thus offered a Western pledge to revise the security environment in return for a Soviet agreement to an option of German unity in NATO.

Finally American policy acted on the assumption that the historic opportunity to restructure Europe might be short-lived. In fact, turmoil in the U.S.S.R. grew, and the U.S. administration accelerated the proceedings. No one knew how long the cooperative Soviet leadership under Gorbachev—and the opportunity to strike a constructive deal—would endure.

## VI

The Gorbachev revolution in foreign policy was sooner or later bound to have a profound effect on the German Question. The time finally came in 1989–90. That question became the greatest challenge to Soviet foreign policy of the postwar

period, given the psychological burdens of relations with Germany and its importance in the collective memory of the Soviet population. A solution had to be found to reconcile the Soviet retreat from untenable positions in Europe with the construction of a new order that served the long-term political and economic interests of a Soviet Union undergoing basic reform. No other actor was faced with similar problems in making the outcome of the "two plus four" process acceptable domestically. The perception of the Soviet military and other parts of the *nomenklatura* had been totally distorted by decades of propaganda and isolation.

An increasing awareness of the threatening destabilization of the G.D.R. initially led the Soviets to cling to the traditional two-state solution.<sup>1</sup> Their reaction to Kohl's 10-Point Plan was negative because Soviet attention focused not on the stages of progressive cooperation between the two German states but on the passing reference to eventual unity. The official Soviet rhetoric during December 1989 thus condemned "the dangerous irrationality of destroying the postwar realities" in the name of German self-determination.<sup>2</sup> But the collapse of the communist regime in East Germany led to a relatively quick reassessment of the Soviet position. Just how far Gorbachev's thinking advanced can be derived from his remarks to Mitterrand at their meeting in Kiev on December 6, 1989, when Gorbachev said that it would be counterproductive to humiliate Germany, that Germany had a right to unity and that the time had come to work on a framework to accommodate this process. By the time the G.D.R.'s new prime minister, Hans Modrow, visited Moscow at the end of January 1990, the Soviet leadership had agreed to the principle of unity, but apparently only under conditions of neutrality. The decision came about under the tremendous pressure of events.

The internal Soviet debate finally began to address long-term options. The turn must have been brought about by the realization that it was counterproductive to oppose what had already begun to look like an inevitable process toward unification. It was not in the Soviet interest to jeopardize relations

<sup>1</sup> See the internal document prepared by Valentin Falin, quoted in *Die Welt*, Sept. 15, 1989, and the report by Vyacheslav Dashchichev, reproduced in *Der Spiegel*, Feb. 5, 1990, pp. 142-148. I have also learned that in the summer of 1989, at a conference of the Soviet foreign ministry, academics discussed the prospect of a threatening collapse of the G.D.R.

<sup>2</sup> Shevardnadze, in a speech before the Political Committee of the European Parliament, Dec. 19, 1989.

with what would be Europe's most powerful economy and an indispensable partner both for Russia's economic recovery and its political reconciliation with western Europe.<sup>3</sup>

When Chancellor Kohl and Foreign Minister Genscher went to Moscow on February 10–11, the Soviet Union agreed to German unity more readily than expected. Gorbachev, moreover, agreed that unification should take place according to the principles of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, thus implying Germany's freedom to preside over the process itself and to choose its alliance. As if to underscore its preparedness for radical change, Moscow announced the same day that it would be willing to withdraw all troops from central Europe if satisfactory arrangements could be made between East and West in talks on Conventional Forces in Europe and concerning the stationing of foreign troops in the two parts of Germany.

The Soviets nevertheless advanced a "plethora of proposals . . . in rapid succession and often with no compatibility among them," including the dissolution of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact, German military status in NATO similar to that of France, the formation of a center in Berlin to control all military forces in Germany, and German membership in both alliances.<sup>4</sup> The fact that Soviet pronouncements and policies were in constant flux, and often contradictory, reflected the enormous burden of a society in profound crisis, as well as internal disagreements and the tremendous problem of coming to grips with what was objectively a new and inherently difficult policy question.

## VII

As the Federal Republic's most important allies in Europe, Britain and France followed strategies similar to each other. Yet some differences emerged. A few voices in the public sphere of both countries responded negatively to the prospect of unification, perhaps somewhat more spectacularly in Britain, where one Cabinet member, Nicholas Ridley, verbally attacked both Germany and France and was forced to resign.

<sup>3</sup> Such a turn of thinking toward stressing the positive potential of relations with a united Germany was already evident in the Academy Institutes on the occasion of Foreign Minister Genscher's visit to Moscow on Dec. 4–5, 1989. This and other information included in this section are based on interviews with officials by the author.

<sup>4</sup> Hannes Adomeit, "Gorbachev and German Unification: Revision of Thinking, Realignment of Power," *Problems of Communism*, July-August 1990.

But both governments formally respected and endorsed Germany's right to unify. The general character of official French pronouncements, however, was more forthcoming and markedly different from the long row of skeptical remarks by Prime Minister Thatcher, who saw outright dangers in unification.

French public debate as well as government thinking revealed a certain degree of confusion on how to respond to German developments. This confusion was demonstrated, for example, in President Mitterrand's decision to visit East Germany in December 1989, as if to breathe life into the dying *ancien régime*. From the beginning, Mitterrand set two priorities that he consistently followed throughout the unification process. First, he attached particular importance to a definitive settlement of the border issue. Second, he tried to tie German unification to a strengthening of the European Community, extracting a firmer pledge on Economic and Monetary Union from Bonn, which he suspected of being not as forthcoming as its rhetoric suggested.

Prime Minister Thatcher, however, who had developed an increasing allergy to the supranational dimensions of European integration, followed a different course. She stressed the necessity of placing German unification in the larger context of all-European political and security arrangements and an adequate solution to Four Power rights. She frequently emphasized the necessity to slow down the process and to be mindful of European stability and Gorbachev's position. The British government also expressed concern that East Germany's integration in the European Community would jeopardize the EC's proper functioning.

Though both Britain and France endorsed the overall arrangements that included a united Germany's membership in the Atlantic alliance, their policies on NATO differed. Throughout the process the British government was an advocate of German NATO membership and of preserving as much of the existing alliance structures as possible. France, on the other hand, had serious conceptual difficulties in reconciling its old vision of "overcoming the blocs" with the new propositions that NATO should become a building block of the post-Cold War order and take on a more political character, which French policy had traditionally resisted.

In the end grand gestures in the Great Power tradition—like Mitterrand's trip to Kiev in December 1989—simply demonstrated the limits rather than the possibilities of French influ-

ence. French policy pursued at the level of the European Community and exploring well-established relations with Germany provided the best avenue for influencing the unification process. Britain's impact on the process was jeopardized by Thatcher's apparent inability to play the "EC card," her personal idiosyncracies and insufficient exploitation of the professionalism of British diplomacy. While Thatcher tried to activate Britain's "special relationship" with the United States, daily cooperation between the Bush administration and Germany, as the main party concerned, was a clear American priority.

Both Britain and France initially even played with the idea of retaining elements of the Four Power rights. But once the "two plus four" formula was established in Ottawa, and the talks began, both countries unequivocally supported the concept of a fully sovereign Germany and constructively contributed to that outcome. Initial British and French hesitations did not have any lasting negative effect on their relations with Germany. This testifies to the strength of the relationships built up in the postwar period, but may also be due partly to the fact that many Germans themselves were initially skeptical, or even opposed, to unity.

#### VIII

The policy and allegiance of Germany, the center of Europe, was always a decisive factor in European history and a major stake in the Cold War. The definition of the security status of a united Germany was, therefore, bound to be the most important question to be resolved. Security issues were at the heart of the various national strategies interacting throughout the process that culminated in the Final Settlement. For the first time since the Geneva conferences, the German Question, with all its political, economic and military ramifications, was again the subject of international diplomacy.

This process was a complex interaction of negotiations resulting in a number of legally binding multilateral and bilateral agreements and a multitude of political arrangements. The "two plus four" process served as the strategic pivot. The first ministerial meeting in Bonn in May 1990 defined the multilateral or bilateral forums in which each of the various issues would be addressed.

For the West continued German membership in NATO was the cornerstone of the new European security order to be

constructed along with unification. Gorbachev's reform program and foreign policy revolution notwithstanding, the Soviet Union or a future successor would remain a formidable conventional and nuclear military power. Should the Soviet Union reverse its policies, the Atlantic alliance and the American commitment to Europe would remain an indispensable reassurance. It was also argued that after the Cold War the alliance would remain necessary to prevent a renationalization of defense policies. It would provide the framework within which a united Germany could be integrated, a better alternative to a nonaligned status reminiscent of the interwar period. The conviction grew as well that the continuation of the Atlantic alliance served the security interests of the new democracies in central Europe, which desired an American commitment to the European status quo and the integration of Germany's potential.

For the Soviet Union acceptance of a united Germany's membership in NATO was inherently difficult. It not only represented the ultimate and most dramatic consequence of Gorbachev's retreat from unsustainable Soviet positions but implied the advance of Western values and structures into a region held at great cost throughout the postwar period. No other point would be of such sensitivity to the internal opposition to Gorbachev's new policies.

From the first moment of Bonn's internal discussions about the arrangements of unification, continued membership in NATO was considered essential.<sup>5</sup> German membership could not be, and indeed was not, the subject of any explicitly formulated agreement between East and West. Soviet recognition of Germany's right as a sovereign state to choose its alliance was at stake.

Western policy ultimately succeeded in inducing the Soviet Union to reconfirm Germany's right under CSCE principles to freely choose its alliance. Soviet willingness to do so was first signaled in Gorbachev's acceptance of German unity in his February 1990 meeting with Kohl and Genscher, and reconfirmed at President Bush's request at the U.S.-Soviet summit in May-June 1990. But ultimate certainty of Soviet approval was

<sup>5</sup> Some Social Democrats initially held different views, e.g., Egon Bahr and chancellor candidate Oskar Lafontaine, but by April 1990 the opposition endorsed the government position. See the SPD position paper, "Von der Konfrontation der Blöcke zu einem Europäischen Sicherheitssystem," April 25, 1990.

attained only in July 1990 at the final meeting between Gorbachev and Kohl in the Caucasus, when the totality of arrangements surrounding unification appeared satisfactory enough for Gorbachev to close the deal.

Among these arrangements the details of the military status of a united Germany within NATO were particularly important. To make the Soviet retreat from the G.D.R. militarily and politically more acceptable, Bonn proposed a special military status for eastern Germany, a proposal then endorsed by the U.S. administration and included in June 1990 in the nine "assurances" given to Gorbachev.

Special arrangements also had to be made for a transitional period to withdraw 380,000 Soviet troops and 220,000 civilians. The "two plus four" Final Settlement stipulated that a united Germany would arrange with Moscow the conditions for a Soviet presence and the schedule for its withdrawal, to be completed by the end of 1994. Such a treaty was indeed negotiated and signed after unification. It stipulated that, until the completion of the Soviet withdrawal, only German territorial defense units not integrated under NATO command could be stationed on the territory of the former G.D.R. During this transitional period, other allied forces could not be stationed there either, or carry out any other military activities, except in Berlin where American, British and French units could remain on the basis of bilateral agreements with the united German state.

After the withdrawal of Soviet forces, the special status of eastern Germany would end with regard to the German forces which could then be deployed under NATO command. But the special status of this territory would remain in so far as the stationing or deploying of foreign forces, nuclear weapons or their carriers is permanently prohibited. Germany could deploy aircraft and artillery in its eastern territory which, although nuclear-capable, would be equipped and designated only for conventional roles.

Due to Western, particularly American, influence the agreement reached in the Caucasus between Gorbachev and Kohl conceded less than the German government had envisaged in a February 1990 understanding between West German ministers of defense and foreign affairs. At that time, they had agreed that no units and installations of the Western alliance should be moved forward into the territory of the G.D.R. and that this would also "apply to the armed forces of the

Bundeswehr, whether assigned to NATO or not.”<sup>6</sup> A last-minute difficulty arose on the final day of the “two plus four” talks in Moscow, when the British insisted that the prohibition of deployment of foreign forces in eastern Germany should not rule out certain military activities, such as participation in maneuvers. The issue could only be resolved by adding an Agreed Minute to the Settlement, which left the application of the clause to the discretion of the German government, “taking into account the security interests of each contracting party.”

The bilateral Transition Agreement on Soviet forces of October 9, 1990, dealt with a number of sensitive questions. The Red Army now had to adapt nearly overnight to living in a sovereign country on the basis of a freely negotiated agreement. The treaty had to settle details such as German financial and material support for the Soviet forces, and jurisdiction and administrative cooperation. Probably more important was Germany's agreement to contribute to the cost—13.5 billion Deutsche marks—of the stationing and withdrawal of Soviet troops.<sup>7</sup>

The psychology of withdrawal was no less important. Germany and the West had every interest in creating dignified conditions for the Soviet retreat. Germans committed themselves therefore to an acceptable transition period, to creating reasonably decent conditions for the departing soldiers and to preserving the Soviet war memorials on German soil.

In order to make German NATO membership acceptable to the Soviet Union, it had to be linked to the redefinition of the alliance's role in a post-Cold War order. At the North Atlantic Council meeting on June 7–8, 1990, the “Message from Turnberry” stressed NATO's determination to build a European order based on freedom, the rule of law and democracy, and offered to extend “the hand of friendship and cooperation” to the Soviet Union and all other European countries. The formula was incorporated into the London Declaration of the July 6, 1990, NATO summit, along with a number of other

<sup>6</sup> *Bulletin der Bundesregierung*, no. 28, Feb. 28, 1990, p. 218.

<sup>7</sup> Bonn pledged to contribute to the costs of stationing (3 billion DM until 1994), transportation of armed forces to be withdrawn (1 billion DM), retraining of soldiers for civilian jobs (200 million DM), and construction of housing in the Soviet Union for the redeployed Soviet troops and their families (7.8 billion DM). An additional interest-free loan of 3 billion DM (cost to Bonn: 1.5 billion DM) could be used by the Soviet Union for its own share of the stationing costs.

proposals expressing the alliance's new orientation. These proposals included a joint declaration by the members of both alliances expressing their commitment to nonaggression, an invitation to the Soviet Union and east European countries to address the North Atlantic Council and to establish regular diplomatic links with NATO, as well as a revision of strategy that deemphasized nuclear weapons and moved away from "forward defense." All of these proposals were crucial to a Soviet Union that would have to live with a united Germany in NATO. If one is to believe Gorbachev and Shevardnadze, who publicly deemed it "constructive" and "a step in the right direction," the London Declaration, based largely on an American draft, significantly affected future developments.

A limitation on the size of German forces, originally conceived as one step in the second round of the negotiations on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), now had to be dealt with as an element in the overall arrangements leading to unity. The military potential of a united Germany was of particular importance to Moscow. The matter was also settled at the Kohl-Gorbachev meeting in the Caucasus with an agreement to limit German forces to 370,000 soldiers. To avoid discrimination against Germany, a unilateral declaration to this effect was made by the two German foreign ministers at the Vienna conference on conventional forces and then placed in the text of the Treaty on the Final Settlement.

A second constraint was the reconfirmation of Germany's renunciation of the manufacture, possession and control of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. Germany's continued adherence to the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons was also expressed at that time. The reduction of German forces by 40 percent and Germany's commitment to a continued non-nuclear status were meant to create in the eyes of the other powers a reasonable certainty that, even if political circumstances changed, Germany would not be able to reestablish itself as a great military power.

The successful conclusion of CFE talks and negotiations on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures in Europe, as well as the signing in November 1990 of the resulting documents, represented important elements in defining the framework for the security status of Germany. The CFE agreement envisages important reductions in armaments, common force ceilings and appropriate verification procedures. Once implemented, the agreement will profoundly change the European

security environment and significantly enhance its stability. In the "Charter of Paris" the 34 CSCE member states declared an end to "the era of confrontation and division of Europe" and promised "a new era of democracy, peace and unity" for the continent.

The establishment of a new order in Europe would have been incomplete, perhaps impossible, without a redefinition of the Soviet-German relationship. That relationship had to be rebuilt in such a way as to signal the definitive end of enmity and the beginning of a new era of cooperation. It was imperative that Bonn itself, as a responsible member of the West, define that new role vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and to see itself as a guardian and promoter of the Western interest in progress and stability in eastern Europe. Surely, Bonn was acting in its own interest when it decided to invest considerable economic resources in the process associated with unification. But these measures also benefited the West as a whole, by contributing to the withdrawal of the Red Army from the center of Europe under tolerable conditions and by supporting perestroika.

After his meeting in the Caucasus with Gorbachev, Kohl surprised many by making and announcing important decisions that paved the way for the Final Settlement. Although these issues had all been the subject of prior consultation with the West, his style appeared to signal, at least symbolically, that Germany had become a fully sovereign country. Both Germany and the U.S.S.R. had previously agreed to express the qualitative change of their relationship in a bilateral treaty of cooperation, a draft of which was exchanged at the Caucasus meeting. The bilateral treaty, signed after the "two plus four" Final Settlement, envisions intensified cooperation, regular meetings on all levels and consultation in case of crises.

Outside attention focused on Article 3 of this treaty, which not only reconfirmed each nation's commitment to nonaggression but stipulated that "if one of the two states should become the target of aggression, then the other side will give the aggressor no military aid or other support." Contrary to concerns expressed in France, Germany did not consider this clause to affect its existing commitments to the West, since the treaty refers to their continued validity. Moreover, since NATO is a purely defensive alliance, the neutrality clause could apply only to aggression by a nation outside the alliance. Britain,

France and the United States all received a treaty draft, and none raised objections at that time.

The vanishing of the G.D.R., the Soviet Union's most important trading partner in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon), created a multitude of problems for which the Federal Republic had to assume responsibility. To minimize the negative consequences for the Soviet Union, in a separate Treaty on Economic Cooperation Bonn guaranteed contracts and spare parts, and made arrangements on debt, payments and property issues. In doing so Bonn tried to convey to Moscow its determination to develop economic partnership after the demise of the G.D.R. As in the case of German contributions to financing the Soviet troop withdrawal, Bonn tried to find generous, sometimes quite costly, solutions for these issues, using the resource that Gorbachev most needed: economic support to facilitate unification.

## IX

Germany's eastern borders were an issue not because of German territorial revisionism, though some such voices were to be heard, but because it was one of the important unresolved issues of World War II. Only a "final peace settlement," as stipulated by the Potsdam conference, could bring about the definitive recognition of borders by consent of the Four Powers, a united Germany as a sovereign actor, and Poland as the remaining party concerned. Therefore the actual outcomes—two treaties, one between Germany and the Four Powers, the other between Germany and Poland—would have looked roughly similar, even if the border issue had not become the object of domestic controversies and intense international attention. Once the "two plus four" process started, all participants agreed that the results would include a settlement of the border issue and that Poland would be invited to the July 1990 ministerial meeting in Paris where, in fact, a basic agreement was reached.

The Final Settlement described the existing borders of a united Germany, asked Poland and Germany to confirm their border by treaty and stipulated that a united Germany remove any formulations from its constitution that could be interpreted as questioning the definitive character of its borders. On November 14, 1990, Germany and Poland signed a border treaty, to be ratified after the Polish elections in 1991, in

conjunction with a general treaty on bilateral relations, which both governments started negotiating in October 1990.

Legally the separate treaties the G.D.R. and the F.R.G. concluded with Poland in 1950 and 1970 could provide only an interim *modus vivendi*, even though overwhelming majorities in both German states regarded the territorial issue as historically settled on the basis of the Oder-Neisse line. The 1989 developments in Germany and Europe gave new political topicality to the German Question and the border issue. The sudden surge in right-wing votes in regional and European Parliament elections in 1989 prompted some conservative politicians to argue that, if the German Question was back on the international agenda, the border issue was inevitably included.<sup>8</sup>

Those who were against reopening this issue argued that the rise of democracy in Poland could be threatened by such a debate. Moreover even an implicit link to reopening the territorial issue was likely to create a European coalition against unification. Foreign Minister Genscher intervened in the debate in September 1989 with a clarifying statement at the United Nations: the Polish people "shall know that its right to live in secure borders will not be called into question by us Germans now or in the future through territorial demands." The West German parliament took up this formula in a resolution on November 8, 1989. But when Chancellor Kohl conspicuously failed to reiterate this position during his official visit to Poland in the following days, the Polish side became concerned that this ambivalence might suggest a hidden agenda.

The absence in Kohl's 10-Point Plan of an "eleventh point" addressing the border issue turned the matter into an international issue and triggered a host of statements from various governments stressing the final character of the border as a condition for unification. Moreover German concerns about a number of open questions to be settled with Poland, notably the rights of Poland's German minority, were often interpreted as proof of continued territorial revisionism. It took the German government some time to clarify that its legal position

<sup>8</sup> The Republicans reached 7.5 percent in West Berlin city elections and 7.1 percent of the F.R.G. vote in the elections to the European Parliament, with 14.6 percent in Bavaria.

did not imply any intention to change the existing border.<sup>9</sup> The international debate about German intentions only ceased with the signing of the Final Settlement and the German-Polish border treaty.

Kohl's ambivalent handling of the border issue may have favored the final demise of the extreme right wing in the 1990 German elections and the marginalization of remaining opposition to an acceptance of a territorial settlement. But it created additional difficulties outside Germany with the process of unification. In the end, however, even the territorial issue could not slow down the momentum toward an outcome of historic proportions. Germany received its unity earlier than expected. All of its essential hopes and wishes have been fulfilled. Writing off in a credible manner one quarter of the former Reich's territory, lost in World War II, did not represent an obstacle to a settlement of the German Question within the larger context of European arrangements.

x

The four victorious powers of World War II retained special rights throughout the postwar period derived from the assumption of supreme authority over a defeated Germany in 1945. They held Berlin under military occupation and reserved the ultimate power of decision on all matters concerning Germany as a whole, its borders and a peace settlement.

These rights, therefore, represented the legal basis of the special role of the Four Powers in the negotiations leading to unification. The actual policy of each of the Four Powers was also influenced by additional factors deriving from decades of relations with the two German states and considerations about the future. Since the Four Powers agreed that the Germany to be created must enjoy unrestricted sovereignty from the moment of unification and that the existing borders would be reconfirmed, successful negotiations had to lead to the termination of their rights as well.

The Four Powers effected this in a declaration made in New York on October 1, 1990, at the conclusion of the "two plus four" talks. In order to ensure a timely transition to the new order, the Four Powers declared that, even prior to the ratification of the Final Settlement, they would suspend and

<sup>9</sup> Chancellor Kohl's speech in Paris on Jan. 17, 1990, *Bulletin der Bundesregierung*, no. 9, Jan. 19, 1990, p. 61.

cease to apply their rights from the moment of Germany's unification on October 3, 1990.

XI

At midnight on October 2, 1990—in the final minutes of a divided Germany—the crowd in front of the Berlin Reichstag heard the local copy of Philadelphia's Liberty Bell ring out: a symbolic act intended to express political debt and gratitude. But many observers inside and outside Germany still must have asked themselves, is the German Question finally resolved?

To the outside world, at least, the German Question always had two meanings: ensuring the future of democracy in Germany and coping with a common German state. The absence or weakness of democracy in Germany had always posed a problem for neighboring European democracies, particularly in combination with the second aspect of the German Question, unity. Since Germans are more numerous than any other peoples in Europe except Russians, and given their dynamic and highly developed industry, the sheer weight of a unified Germany represented a problem. From the historical perspective of the outside world, the worst imaginable combination was a powerful united Germany under a nondemocratic regime. Such a configuration was responsible for two major catastrophes this century. The problems of democracy in Germany and of a unified German state have, therefore, always been European questions, *par excellence*.

The Cold War found a provisional answer to both concerns. The problem of democracy in Germany was handled by the two victorious camps in their own way: a liberal democracy along a Western model emerged with the support of the Western allies in the Federal Republic, and a socialist "democracy" according to the Soviet model developed with the help of Moscow and its repressive G.D.R. apparatus. The problem of a common German state was eliminated by the East-West partition of Europe that cut Germany into two states. Neither was sufficiently powerful to be perceived as a threat by others.

The Federal Republic of Germany as it existed between 1949 and 1990 was thus a product of the Cold War, a "twin sister of NATO" that regained its sovereignty in a carefully managed international process and emerged first within Western structures and later *vis-à-vis* the East and on a global

level.<sup>10</sup> The Federal Republic therefore was not a regime that created a foreign policy, but a foreign policy that created a regime.<sup>11</sup> The united Germany of 1990 is, in turn, the product of a transition to a new European order and could not have come about without a number of fundamental changes in the international environment replacing the Cold War.

The new united Federal Republic of Germany is as much an outcome of an international constellation as the old Federal Republic of 1949. Neither, however, came into being as the product of an outside diktat. Rather each emerged in conjunction with legitimizing domestic forces, contested in Adenauer's day, but endorsed in 1989–90 by a consensus of the major political parties. As for the future, one can assume that the international circumstances that brought about the unification of Germany are likely to influence and shape the foreign policy of a united Germany as decisively as they did after the creation of the Federal Republic in 1949.

## XII

When German unification appeared as a possibility on the horizon, an international debate started about the power of the new state that would come into being. "A united Germany: the new superpower" was a description that summed up the views of many commentators in 1989–90.<sup>12</sup>

But what does "German power" mean in the modern world? If it is understood as economic power, it does not represent a potential easily available for governmental action. German economic power represents, above all, the combined resources of a predominantly private market economy, consisting of countless independent economic actors, many not even German, but foreign or internationally controlled. To be sure, the weight of this economy, or of its specific sectors or companies, is considerable; but it plays its role in a larger, international arena characterized by competition, constantly shifting coalitions of economic actors, and hierarchies of influence.

Germany is part of the European Community. German action in many crucial areas has become part of European decision-making, thus circumscribing German national auton-

<sup>10</sup> Alfred Grosser, *Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Bilanz einer Entwicklung*, Tuebingen: Wunderlich, 1967, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> See Karl Kaiser, *German Foreign Policy in Transition*, London: Oxford University Press, 1968.

<sup>12</sup> Title of a special issue of *Newsweek* (Paris edition), Feb. 26, 1990.

omy through the involvement and voting power of other governments, the Commission, the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice. Germany's unification has given impetus to a strengthening of the EC by initiating further moves toward economic, monetary and political union.

A united Germany also inherits the burden of a totally run-down region in the east, which will absorb enormous resources in years to come. The number of states united in the German federation has increased from 11 to 16, thus complicating Germany's decision-making process to a degree that is likely to affect its relations with the outside world. Moreover, if a capacity to exercise power relates to military instruments, it should be noted that the united Germany has voluntarily agreed to an upper limit on its armed forces and reconfirmed its non-nuclear status as well as the integration of its forces in the multilateral structures of the Western alliance.

Power requires the willingness to exercise it. In this respect Germany continues to live under the profound impact of the excesses of power in its own twentieth-century history. The resulting *Machtvergessenheit* (obliviousness to power) was sufficiently strong during the controversies over nuclear weapons deployments in the early 1980s to be criticized by the same European countries concerned about German power in 1990.<sup>13</sup>

As Germany enters the international arena, its policies and predispositions reflect lessons from the past and are based on a commitment: to multilateralism, to a further strengthening of European integration, to continued friendship with Western partners, to a new relationship of cooperation with the Soviet Union, to special concern for the fate of the young east European democracies, to a successful management of the international economy and to progress in the developing world. A united Germany, free of the East-West confrontation on its soil and now one of the world's wealthiest democracies, must face a novel and difficult task: to reconcile its postwar foreign-policy traditions with the new responsibilities that inevitably accompany its enhanced position and require the—sometimes unpopular—use of its political, economic and military resources in partnership with others to preserve peace on an unstable globe.

<sup>13</sup> Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Die gezähmten Deutschen: Von der Machtbesessenheit zur Machtvergessenheit*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1985.