

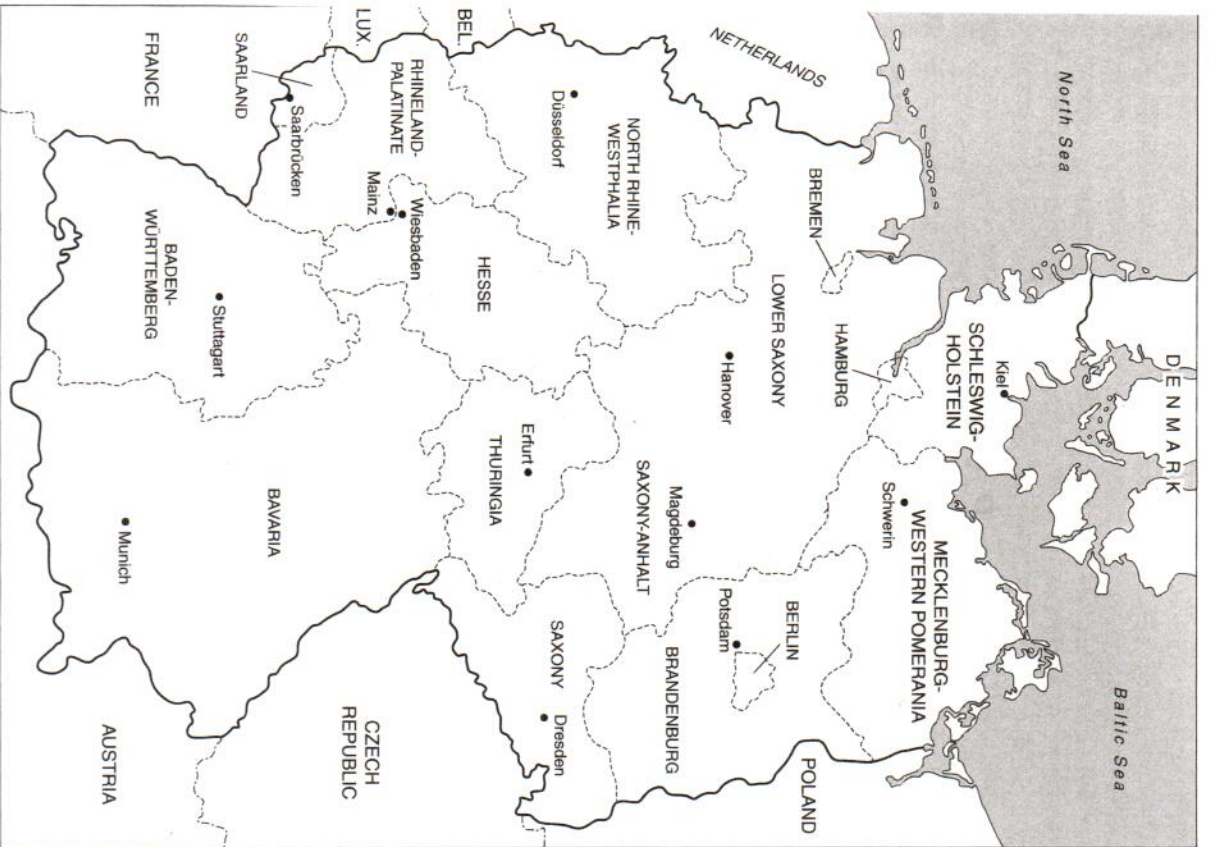
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Map 4 Contemporary Germany

Source: Martin Kitchen, *A History of Modern Germany, 1800–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), xvi.

CHAPTER 33

ANNUS MIRABILIS: 1989  
AND GERMAN  
UNIFICATION

DAVID F. PATTON

In 1989–1990, the two Germanies underwent a series of remarkable changes that would signal the end of the postwar division of Europe. East Germans peacefully toppled the hard-line Socialist Unity Party (SED) that had ruled with an iron fist for forty years. In so doing, they staged the first successful democratic revolution in modern German history and opened the door to national unification. Those that challenged the communist regime in 1989 had little in common with those that crafted unification the following year. The East German citizen movement operated at the grass roots in the dilapidated cities and towns of East Germany; West German political leaders conducted high politics behind the scenes in the chancellery and in the grand halls of international conferences. After the Berlin Wall was breached on 9 November 1989, a gradual shift occurred toward national unification. The familiar call at East German demonstrations ‘We are the people,’ in essence an appeal for democratic self-determination in a dictatorship, increasingly gave way to a new slogan, ‘We are one people,’ underscoring the right to national self-determination. The debate over unification would dominate politics in East and West Germany in the months to come. The GDR’s peaceful revolution, at least according to many of its protagonists, had prematurely run its course.

33.1 THE TRANSNATIONAL CONTEXT

In 1989, popular movements brought down communist governments throughout eastern Europe. How ‘German’ was the peaceful revolution, or, as it came to be

known, the turning point (*Wende*)? There is little question that the broader context of waning Soviet dominance in the region set the stage for fall 1989.

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union asserted its hegemony over eastern Europe by maintaining security (Warsaw Pact) and economic (COMECON) pacts for itself and its satellites. In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev assumed power in the USSR and embarked on ambitious reforms. At home, he sought to reinvigorate an ailing economy through *perestroika* (i.e. economic restructuring and decentralization) and *glasnost* (i.e. greater openness). In foreign relations, Gorbachev no longer enforced the Brezhnev doctrine by which the USSR had come to the rescue of its client states at times of domestic upheaval. Soviet military intervention had preserved hard-line regimes in the GDR in 1953, in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Yet Gorbachev, the reformer, not only kept Soviet troops in the barracks in the late 1980s, even as rising domestic opposition threatened unpopular communist regimes, but he implicitly urged his allies to begin domestic reforms of their own. The importance of the Soviet Union's newfound reluctance to police its sphere of influence in eastern Europe cannot be overstated. Suddenly, falling governments faced, without the cover of Soviet tanks, an emboldened domestic opposition.

In the United States, the Reagan Administration's military build-up in the 1980s, including its Strategic Defense Initiative, may have convinced Soviet leaders to pursue accommodation with the West since they struggled to keep up in a high-tech arms race.<sup>1</sup> Writing in 1987, Paul Kennedy described the dilemma facing the Soviet Union: 'it must also try to keep up with the United States in rocketry, satellite-based weapons, space exploration, and so on. Thus, the USSR—or, better, the Marxist system of the USSR—is being tested both quantitatively and qualitatively in the world power stakes; and it does not like the odds. However, those odds (or "correlation of forces") would obviously be better if the economy were healthier, which brings us back to Russia's long-term problem.'<sup>2</sup> The Soviet retreat from east-central Europe stemmed in part from the consequences of imperial overstretch, whereby the country's military commitments could no longer be sustained by its economic capabilities. This was a fate common to great powers throughout history.<sup>3</sup>

The Helsinki Accords (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, CSCE process) served to hollow out the moral authority of communist regimes in eastern Europe that signed a treaty to which they did not adhere. These governments committed themselves to basic human rights and civic rights, such as free speech, open airwaves, and freedom of travel. 'What this meant,' according to the historian John Lewis Gaddis, 'was that the people who lived under these systems—at least the more courageous—could claim official permission to say what they thought.'<sup>4</sup> Throughout the eastern bloc, dissidents, such as the Charter '77 movement in Czechoslovakia, justified their actions, and embarrassed their governments, by pointing out the gap between what the regimes claimed and what they actually allowed. Moreover, by reducing tensions and encouraging cultural and economic exchange, the CSCE process arguably set the stage for a reformer such as Gorbachev to come to power with a vision of a 'common European home' that was very much in the spirit of the Helsinki

Accords. Dissidents in the GDR and throughout the eastern bloc in turn looked to Gorbachev's *glasnost* to legitimize their own demands on their governments.

In the early 1970s, a new West German *Ostpolitik* resulted in Bonn's de facto acceptance of the GDR and postwar central European borders, increased inter-bloc trade, and non-use of force agreements. Its critics claimed that the policy would stabilize communist dictatorships and harden the postwar division of Europe, while its proponents argued that theirs was a policy of change through rapprochement' (*Wandel durch Annäherung*) that created more favorable conditions for liberalization in eastern Europe. Egon Bahr, an architect of the new *Ostpolitik* and close associate of Chancellor Willy Brandt, proposed 'overcoming the status quo by not changing the status quo in the short term.'<sup>5</sup> The new policy promised to dispel lingering concerns about West German revanchism that had helped knit together the eastern bloc countries, many of which had experienced German expansionism first hand in World War II.

As trade with the West grew, so did the appetite of eastern consumers and producers for high-quality western goods. To meet this demand, Warsaw Pact countries increasingly borrowed from the West and, in so doing, amassed enormous debts that added to their considerable economic and political woes. Excessive planning, bloated welfare states, and rigid political structures proved inefficient at managing the transition from heavy industry to emerging knowledge-based industries. Fateful decisions in the 1970s contributed to the systemic failure of communism in eastern Europe by the late 1980s. Whereas advanced industrial societies in East and West both confronted a difficult international economic environment in the early 1970s, Western economies, gradually adjusted to the logic of the changing global market economy. In contrast, the eastern European states, among them the USSR, Czechoslovakia and the GDR, rejected limited market reforms and instead returned to a rigid communist orthodoxy that offered no solution to a worsening situation.<sup>6</sup> Under Erich Honecker's leadership, the East German regime promoted the unity of economic and social policy, which had the effect of greatly increasing spending for social programs. This was something that the GDR could ill afford by the 1980s.

In short, the long-term roots of the 1989 crisis in the GDR—whether economic stagnation, political immobility, or lacking legitimacy—closely resembled those throughout the Warsaw Pact. Developments in the USSR, Poland, and Hungary shaped the GDR's peaceful revolution as communist regimes fell like dominoes in 1989. As Timothy Garton Ash observed at the time, what took approximately ten years to transpire in Poland, took ten months in Hungary, ten weeks in the GDR, and might proceed in but ten days in Czechoslovakia.<sup>7</sup> The triumphant return of Solidarity in 1989 emboldened democrats throughout eastern Europe and disproved the theory that totalitarian governments—in contrast to authoritarian ones—were incapable of gradually transforming themselves into democracies. In Hungary, reform communists began dismantling their country's heavily fortified border with Austria. This in turn opened a hole in the Iron Curtain through which vacationing East Germans fled en route to West Germany in summer 1989. The resulting exodus set in motion events that culminated in the end of the GDR.

Forms of protest and conflict resolution, as practiced throughout east-central Europe, appeared in the East German context in 1989. For instance, civic groups in the GDR invoked the spirit of Helsinki as they demanded peaceful, democratic change. They spearheaded a mass movement that mobilized hundreds of thousands in an impressive display of non-violent people power. In this regard, they resembled civic groups that had formed in Hungary, such as the Hungarian Democratic Forum and the Alliance of Young Democrats (HIDESZ), and in Czechoslovakia, such as Civic Forum and Public Against Violence. As had the Catholic church in Poland and Czechoslovakia, the East German churches played an important role in the *Wende*. Lutheran churches provided a sanctuary for pro-democracy activists; civic group leaders were often pastors; and some scholars went so far as to describe fall 1989 as a 'Protestant revolution'.<sup>8</sup>

The East German revolution, like others in east-central Europe, eschewed violence and instead demanded, and eventually commanded, the cooperation of communist authorities. In the GDR, the autumn protests led to round tables, an institutional innovation used in Poland in early 1989, and inclusive governments, as practiced in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, that brought together reform-minded communists and the opposition during the democratic transition. Garton Ash coined the term 'revolution' to describe an approach in Poland and Hungary that mixed peaceful reform with revolutionary change. 'There is, in both places, a strong and essential element of voluntary, deliberate reform led by an enlightened minority (but only a minority) in the still-ruling Communist parties. . . . Their advance consists of an unprecedented retreat: undertaking to share power, and even—*mirabile dictu*—talk of giving it up altogether, if they lose an election.'<sup>9</sup> While revolution required the removal of the SED old guard in fall 1989, the communists that followed them did reach out to the opposition. In this regard, the GDR also experienced a brokered transition away from communist dictatorship toward representative democracy.

### 33.2 PECULIARITIES OF THE EAST GERMAN REVOLUTION

Vladimir Lenin famously mocked the Germans' inability to effect revolutionary change: 'If the Germans staged a revolution at the train station, they would buy tickets for the platform first,' he once remarked.<sup>10</sup> Yet hundreds of thousands confronted a repressive regime in 1989 and brought it to its knees in non-violent fashion. While the East German revolution bore striking similarities to those in neighboring countries, several features, such as the relationship between intellectuals and workers, the size of the opposition, and its politics, set it apart.

Unlike in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, where intellectuals and industrial workers joined forces within Solidarity, pro-democracy groups, and Civic Forum, the

masses and intellectuals largely worked apart in the GDR. In August 1989, vacationing East Germans managed to cross from Hungary into Austria on their way to West Germany, while others bided their time in provisional camps in the hope that they would be released to the Federal Republic. Despite East Berlin's demands that they be sent back to the GDR, the Hungarian government eventually sided with the Federal Republic, rather than its Warsaw Pact ally, and allowed thousands to leave for the West. Others crowded into West German embassies in Budapest, Czechoslovakia and Poland. In late September, the Federal Republic arranged with East Berlin for those camped out in its Prague embassy to travel through the GDR by train en route to a safe haven in West Germany. Upon word of the arrangement, desperate East Germans stormed the Dresden train station on 4 October in an attempt to board the westbound trains; violent clashes with police ensued.

The mass exodus plunged East Germany into crisis by creating acute labor shortages in key sectors, such as health care. Frustrated citizens, unable to get out of the country, took to the streets to demand a relaxation of travel restrictions, which had been further tightened after the GDR closed its border to Czechoslovakia and barred travel to Hungary. 'We want out of here!' was a common refrain as angry East Germans demanded that they be allowed to leave. At the Nikolai Church in Leipzig, which later became known as the city of heroes for its part in the revolution, weekly Monday evening demonstrations grew in size throughout late summer and fall. On 4 September, an estimated 1000 citizens took part in the first Monday demonstration. In the coming weeks, participation at the rallies soared despite efforts by the secret police, the Stasi, to hinder the movement. On 25 September, 6,500 people took to the streets and by 2 October, it was approximately 20,000. Prior to 9 October, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* ominously warned of a crackdown: 'We are prepared and willing to actively protect what we have created with our own hands in order to eliminate finally and effectively these counter-revolutionary activities. If necessary, with gun in hand!'<sup>11</sup> Notwithstanding such threats and a massive police presence, more than 70,000 citizens courageously gathered in Leipzig to call for freedom of travel and democratic change. In the end, the SED chose to allow the demonstration, rather than impose a 'Chinese solution' (i.e. blood bath). This 'day of decision' eased the way for the spread of democratic protests throughout the country.<sup>12</sup>

As East Germans fled in summer 1989, pro-democracy activists formed civic groups calling for reform. The first, and arguably most important, was New Forum, which was founded on 9 September by a group of doctors, natural scientists, clergy, and other intellectuals. Its most prominent co-founder was the artist and dissident Bärbel Bohley who has been described by a fellow activist as the 'Joan of Arc of the German Democratic Revolution.'<sup>13</sup> A New Forum co-founder, the Berlin molecular biologist Jens Reich explained, with passing reference to Lenin, why the group chose to register as an association rather than as a political party: 'We wanted to act legally (revolutionaries who first buy a platform ticket) and there was only a law for associations, but not one for parties.'<sup>14</sup> In its opening manifesto, New Forum linked the GDR's crisis to the faulty communicator between state and society that stifled creative solutions to the country's problems. New

Forum underscored its commitment to democracy, justice, peace and the environment and called upon East Germans to join its ranks to reshape the GDR.<sup>15</sup> By late October, around 200,000 had signed the founding proclamation, even though the state had declared New Forum illegal on 21 September. New Forum attracted disproportionately middle-class professionals, the middle aged, and women.<sup>16</sup> Other civic groups, such as Democracy Now and Democratic Awakening, soon formed. The burgeoning citizen movement (*Bürgerbewegung*) showed the vitality of East German civil society and provided protesters with an agenda for non-violent transformation.

In contrast to Solidarity and Civic Forum, the East German civic groups generally lacked close ties to the East German working class, many of whom were more interested in leaving the country than reforming it. As a challenge to both hardliners in power and those running away, demonstrators asserted that 'we are staying put!' The economist Albert O. Hirschman highlighted the crucial coincidence of interests among those choosing 'exit' (We want out of here!) and those activists exercising 'voice' (We are staying put!). Whereas the East German regime had allowed more emigration (exit) in the 1980s as a way to weaken the opposition (voice), the two were now 'confederates' in a 'joint grave digging act.'<sup>17</sup> The "Vacation Revolution" [*Urlaubsrevolution*] from without was accompanied by the "After-Hours Revolution" [*Peterabendrevolution*] from within the GDR.<sup>18</sup> Together, those leaving the country and those rallying to reform it presented the SED with a powerful challenge. Over 120,000 East Germans left the GDR for the Federal Republic between July and October, with an additional 133,000 refugees in November.<sup>19</sup> All the while, many more demonstrated for reform.

This one-two punch left the GDR's leadership reeling. On 18 October, Egon Krenz replaced the aging Erich Honecker as general secretary of the ruling party and promised reforms. His credibility was limited, though, since he had faithfully served the SED and even praised the Chinese government crackdown in Tiananmen Square. On 8 November, Prime Minister Willi Stoph and the entire GDR government resigned as the country's crisis deepened. Hans Modrow, a more credible reform figure, was nominated to head the government. On 9 November, Günter Schabowski, a Politburo member, had conveyed to journalists at an international press conference the mistaken impression that the GDR had decided to allow East Germans to travel directly and without delay to the West. That very evening, amidst a good deal of confusion at border crossings in East Berlin, the Berlin Wall was suddenly opened, allowing millions of East Germans to visit the Federal Republic in the coming days. This was a moment of great joy and happiness for East Germans and West Germans alike.

In the GDR, the organized opposition formed later and was smaller than in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. This stemmed in part from the highly repressive character of the SED-regime, whose feared secret police, the Stasi, tracked potential dissidents through a vast network of informants. The GDR allowed very little in the way of independent civil society, encouraging disaffected citizens to focus on their private lives in what has been described as a 'niche society.' Under pressure from the state, even the Protestant church would call itself the 'church in socialism' as it came to terms with communism to a far greater degree than had the Catholic church in Poland.

The GDR further held the opposition in check by expelling dissidents and allowing others to leave. Together, repression, expulsion, and emigration kept the East German opposition fragmented and weak. Nonetheless, dissidents did manage to oppose the regime at great personal risk prior to fall 1989. In spring 1989, for instance, they documented clear evidence of fraud in local elections.

Unlike Solidarity and pro-democracy movements in east-central Europe, the East German civic groups had not broken as decisively with socialism. Instead, they envisioned a democratic, socialist GDR that charted a third way between communism and capitalism. Democracy Now declared that 'Socialism must now discover its true, democratic form if it is not to be lost forever. It cannot be allowed to disappear because humanity, faced with its extinction and in the search for lasting forms of co-existence, needs alternatives to western consumer society whose prosperity is paid for by the rest of the world.'<sup>20</sup> Democratic Awakening indicated that although it 'takes a critical view of much in real-existing socialism, this does not mean that it rejects in principle the vision of a socialist social order.'<sup>21</sup> Jens Reich later reported that well-known intellectuals had refused to sign New Forum's founding proclamation because it did not refer to socialism.<sup>22</sup>

Why were East German dissidents, on the whole, less critical of socialism than their counterparts elsewhere? According to Freya Klier, a former GDR dissident, the earlier exodus of 'critical intelligentsia' to West Germany had thinned the ranks of the 'Vaclav Havel generation of the GDR.'<sup>23</sup> Many intellectuals that did stay in the GDR in the 1990s and early 1960s, at a time when they could have moved to the FRG, either supported, had made peace with, or hoped to reform East Germany.

A related peculiarity of the East German *Wende* was that nationalism did not comprise as central a component of the democratic movement. In Poland, Solidarity promised democracy, a functioning market economy and liberation from Soviet hegemony. At the start of the Velvet Revolution, students, who had gathered to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the killing of a Czechoslovakian student by the occupying Germans, then proceeded to lead a protest against the communist party, a longstanding ally of the USSR, which, like Germany in 1939, represented foreign domination. The Velvet Revolution asserted national self-determination rights that the Soviet Union had denied brutally in 1968. In Hungary, over 100,000 people attended a funeral service in 1989 for the former Prime Minister Imre Nagy, who had been secretly executed in 1958 after the Soviet-led quelling of the 1956 uprising. In so doing, they laid claim to national sovereignty at a time when Hungary was trying to break free of the Soviet sphere of influence.<sup>24</sup> Yet in the GDR, pro-democracy groups refrained from presenting their cause as part of a broader national movement. They initially declared 'We are the people,' rather than 'We are one people,' a rallying cry that resounded only after the fall of the Berlin Wall. As Christian Joppke notes, 'National symbols and sentiments fueled and accompanied the victorious revolutions in eastern Europe. When the German flag appeared in the streets of Leipzig, the East German revolution had reached its inglorious end—or so it seemed to the leaders of the citizen movement.'<sup>25</sup> Intellectuals in particular avoided nationalist appeals. This had to do with the Third Reich's discrediting of German nationalism and with the civic groups' project of renewing East

Germany from the bottom-up rather than having someone else unify it from the top-down. Some felt betrayed by calls for unification that grew louder at Leipzig Monday marches in late 1989.<sup>26</sup>

The prominence of western actors represented another distinctive feature of the East German revolution. While developments in Moscow provided the backdrop for the 1989 uprising in the GDR and elsewhere, a western country, the Federal Republic, had a major effect on the *Wende*. Prior to November 1989, it was not the federal government in Bonn, which had been caught off guard, but rather longstanding West German policies that conditioned the peaceful revolution. While the Federal Republic had come to terms with the second German state, and even supported East Berlin with financial credits and *de facto* recognition, it was constitutionally committed to unification. To some, the Federal Republic was living a lie (*Lebenslüge*), since it had grown comfortable with the postwar territorial status quo in central Europe. All the same, West Germany still extended automatic citizenship, as well as offered considerable assistance, to East German refugees entering the country. This open door encouraged East Germans to try to resettle in the Federal Republic—a country that was at once much freer and richer than the GDR—and contributed to the 1989 crisis.

The West German media played its part as well. Except for those living in remote areas, East Germans received and watched West German television broadcasts. As a result, they knew about Hungary's decision to remove fortifications along its border to Austria, the summer exodus, and the chaos at the Dresden train station in early October, when crowds of East Germans desperately tried to board overfilled trains heading for the west. They also knew about the Monday evening marches in Leipzig, and the pro-democracy groups. Knowledge of the exodus prompted others to leave as they witnessed the successful flight of fellow citizens on television. Knowledge of the citizen movement made it easier for reform-minded East Germans to participate in demonstrations and to join civic groups. Following Schabowski's muddled press conference, West German television reported on 9 November that the wall was opening, leading East Berlin residents to gather at the border and demand from perplexed border guards permission to cross. Without access to western television and radio broadcasts, East Germans would have experienced fall 1989 through the lens of GDR propaganda to a greater degree.

By early 1990, the federal government in Bonn was directly involved in East German affairs as Chancellor Kohl actively pursued unity. Unification, for which there was nothing comparable throughout eastern Europe, save perhaps the nascent and soon aborted attempt to unify Moldova with Romania, would set the East German experience apart from those of its neighbors.

### 33.3 UNIFYING GERMANY

By February 1990, something like a consensus was forming in the two German states in favor of unification. Several factors brought the issue to the fore. After the Berlin Wall

opened, the Monday evening demonstrations revealed a changed GDR. Whereas intellectuals and young people had disproportionately taken to the streets in the early demonstrations, it was now workers and older East Germans that predominated.<sup>27</sup> 'We are one people' and 'Germany, United Fatherland'—a verse taken from the GDR's national hymn, but banned once it no longer matched official East German policy—became rallying cries. Protesters angrily denounced the privileged lives that the leaders of the 'worker and farmer state' had secretly led in the Berlin suburb of Wandlitz and demanded retribution for the regime's crimes. They waved the West German flag and showed little interest in the citizen movement's project to salvage the second German state.

For the most part, it was not a chauvinistic nationalism, but rather a pragmatic one.<sup>28</sup> Timothy Garton Ash described the mood at a Monday evening demonstration in Leipzig in November: 'Yet one already felt, instinctively, that the voices for reunification would prevail. Not because of the power of nationalism. Just because of the power of common sense.'<sup>29</sup> A speaker at the rally received much applause when he pointed out that socialism had not delivered on its promises, and a new socialism would fall short as well. 'We are not laboratory animals' and 'Our compatriots in the Federal Republic are not foreigners.' Loud chants of 'Germany, United Fatherland' resounded.<sup>30</sup> To the chagrin of civic group leaders that held out hope for a democratic, socialist GDR, East Germans increasingly favored unification as the surest path to prosperity. As one historian observed, 'When they regained their voice, the silent masses spoke out against the Third Way.'<sup>31</sup>

On 1 December, the leading role assigned to the communist party was struck from the GDR constitution. Two days later, Egon Krenz resigned as party general secretary, while the SED's entire central committee and politburo stepped down, not to be replaced. On 7 December, the central round table convened for the first of many times in East Berlin with the SED, former 'bloc' parties that had faithfully served the SED (but were now hastily distancing themselves from the ruling party), church representatives, and opposition civic groups. Despite high hopes on the part of the civic groups, the round table did not stabilize the GDR. Although Prime Minister Modrow reached out to the opposition, agreed to hold democratic elections, and appealed to West Germany for financial assistance, he was unable to halt the ongoing exodus. In December, 43,000 East Germans left for the Federal Republic; by January the number had risen to more than 73,000, adding to the GDR's economic plight.<sup>32</sup> By December, East German industry was losing eighty million GDR marks a day, while the GDR economy posted a balance of payment deficit of nearly 2.5 billion dollars and an overall debt in hard currency of over 20 billion dollars.<sup>33</sup> In the first quarter of 1990, GNP dropped by 3.4 percent, while unemployment shot upward.<sup>34</sup>

By early 1990, concerns were mounting that a power vacuum would leave the GDR ungovernable. Civic groups had shown great courage in confronting the communist regime in the fall, but demonstrated neither the will nor the ability to lead the country. All the while, the discredited SED was struggling to reinvent itself as hundreds of thousands quit its ranks. Eventually, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) arose out of the wreckage of the SED, yet lacked broad appeal. The Modrow government lost

public trust by mishandling the issue of East Germany's secret police, the Ministry for State Security (MfS or Stasi). The Stasi had committed countless human rights abuses, overseeing a massive espionage network that ruined careers, relationships and in many cases the lives of those deemed to be hostile to the regime. The Modrow government proposed transforming the Stasi into a smaller Office for National Security (ANS), yet its efforts were met with deep suspicion on the part of the opposition and public. On 15 January, despite Modrow's reversal on the ANS, angry crowds stormed the former MfS headquarters in East Berlin, signaling that neither the civic groups nor the government had control of an increasingly volatile situation. The deteriorating situation strengthened the hand of those calling for unification.

Pro-unification sentiment grew in West Germany as well. Chancellor Helmut Kohl delivered his 10-point plan for overcoming the division of Germany and Europe on 28 November. While it proposed a gradual unification process embedded in international institutions, the plan was widely viewed as the start of the federal government's push to unify the two German states. Unification was now on the policy agenda at home and abroad. By early 1990, West Germans noted the deteriorating situation in the GDR and worried about the consequences of unchecked refugee flows. Just as many East Germans viewed unification as a practical solution to the grave problems that they faced, West Germans, concerned about prolonged crisis in the GDR, saw it as potentially effective crisis prevention.

### 33.4 FORGING UNITY: RIVAL CONCEPTIONS

The growing support for unification did not however produce anything resembling a consensus on how to achieve it. By February 1990, there was fundamental disagreement on both its 'national' and 'social' dimensions.<sup>35</sup> The national question revolved around when and how to unify. Should formal unity be achieved rapidly or should it follow a more gradual process? Should unification extend the institutions of the Federal Republic eastward, or should the two German states come together to draft a new constitution? West Germany's Basic Law laid out two paths to unity. Article 23 listed the federal states where the jurisdiction of the Basic Law applied and stated that 'in other parts of Germany it shall be put into force upon their accession.'<sup>36</sup> This held open the option that eastern federal states would accede to the Federal Republic. This is how the Saar region, a western territory that had been separated from Germany after 1945, joined the FRG in 1957. In contrast, Article 146 foresaw a new constitution for unified Germany: 'The Basic Law shall cease to be in force on the day on which a constitution adopted by a free decision of the German people comes into force.'<sup>37</sup>

Chancellor Kohl and the center-right government in Bonn favored Article 23 as their preferred path to unity. Kohl's East German allies, such as the Christian Democratic Union (East-CDU), and West German business, also favored this approach. Its proponents pointed to the advantages of extending the stable and prosperous West

German model to the east, rather than possibly ending up with something much worse. They maintained that the East German exodus demanded a fast process and that favorable international conditions might not last forever. The speedy accession of eastern Germany to the Federal Republic further promised to check the influence of SED cadres in the eastern bureaucracy, industry and universities since they would have less time and opportunity to become entrenched.

Proponents of a gradual process warned of *de facto* annexation and subordination of the east. They reasoned that two sovereign states should negotiate a common future after so many years apart. This would in theory allow positive features of both systems to be adopted and new reforms to be incorporated. Some critics of a rapid unification believed that Helmut Kohl was driving the issue in order to win re-election in fall 1990, while others worried that a rush to unify might endanger stability in Europe. The West German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and its chancellor candidate Oskar Lafontaine, the churches, the trade unions, East German civic groups, and the East German reform communists, urged a more deliberate pace than the one favored by Kohl and his allies.

How would the burdens of unification be distributed? This social component represented a further contested dimension. The Kohl government deemphasized costs and focused on how unification would benefit everyone. Kohl promised that neither higher taxes nor extra sacrifice would be needed. He argued that the center-right West German parties were best equipped to achieve economic success since they had presided over the economic miracle of the 1950s. 'The coalition of FDP, CSU and CDU has already achieved great things in the formative years of the Federal Republic. . . . We are determined to draw upon these experiences and upon this spirit in the time ahead.'<sup>38</sup> West German industry representatives generally downplayed concerns about costs and argued that currency union would bring prosperity to the east.<sup>39</sup>

Oskar Lafontaine, in contrast, demanded a frank and open appraisal of unity's costs and warned against unifying on the backs of the economically vulnerable. 'This tapped into West German fears about costs. The trade unions and churches also voiced concern about how the burdens of unification were shared. In the GDR, the reformed communist party (Party of Democratic Socialism) and the civic groups warned of the damaging social consequences of unbridled market capitalism. They too viewed unification as a social issue as well as a national one.'

### 33.5 CHANCELLOR DEMOCRACY AND THE INTERNAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNITY

To unify Germany in 1990, Chancellor Kohl would need domestic and international backing. In fact, these two processes—building domestic support and securing external approval—were tightly interconnected. External support was predicated on the assumption that the Germans wanted unity, while domestic support was conditional on

the good will of Germany's allies and neighbors. Without strong international backing, most Germans would have viewed an aggressive unification policy as too risky.

How did Chancellor Kohl forge the necessary domestic and international coalitions to effect rapid unification? After all, he was operating within a domestic political system well known for policy incrementalism. In 1983, Kohl had come to office as the head of a center-right coalition after promising a 'spiritual-moral change' (*eine geistig-moralische Wende*) in the Federal Republic. Yet with its ample institutional checks and powerful societal interests, the political system hindered sweeping changes and policy incrementalism prevailed. In 1990, however, Kohl did implement a bold new course in a manner that bore little resemblance to the gradual, consensual policy-making that had often defined West Germany.

While the Basic Law grants chancellors authority to determine the overall policy direction of the federal government (*Richtlinienkompetenz*), leading some political scientists to describe the political system as a 'chancellor democracy,' chancellors are restrained by federalism, powerful parapublic institutions, coalition governments, and influential, well-organized interest groups.<sup>40</sup> On occasion, however, chancellor democracy has flourished in the Federal Republic, with chancellors dominating the political process and spearheading far-reaching policy changes. This pattern arose at times when international change created an opening for a new foreign policy.<sup>41</sup> As controversial foreign policy debates emerged, and cut across established partisan lines, the chancellor has been in a position to transcend politics-as-usual and rally support behind a major policy revision. In the early 1950s, as cold war tensions mounted, Konrad Adenauer actively pursued West German membership in the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Defense Community. While critics feared that the Federal Republic's *Westbindung* would deepen the division of Germany, Adenauer took full advantage of the powers of the office of chancellor to implement his foreign policy. Twenty years later as cold war tensions eased, Chancellor Willy Brandt embarked upon a controversial Eastern policy (*Ostpolitik*) to normalize relations with the eastern bloc and the GDR. Like Adenauer, he demonstrated that the chancellor held a strong hand in foreign policy making, even when confronting strong domestic opposition.

In 1990, Chancellor Kohl took a page from his two predecessors' playbook and pushed ahead with rapid unification. Much like the cold war's rise in the late 1940s and thaw in the late 1960s had created opportunities for Adenauer and Brandt, respectively, the coming end of the cold war made possible a bold unification policy (*Deutschlandpolitik*) that was inconceivable just months earlier. Like Adenauer and Brandt, Kohl dispensed with well-established policy-making practices, such as broad consultation, and instead dominated the unification process in 1990. He defined the debate along national, rather than social lines; he relied upon informal committees that planned and oversaw the unification process; he excluded the domestic opposition at key junctures; and he impressively managed the external aspects in a way that not only reassured international skeptics, but also went far to allay domestic fears that rapid unification would damage the Federal Republic's foreign relations. At three key moments, Kohl triumphed: in parliamentary elections in the GDR on 18 March; in determining the

timing and terms of currency union; and in the '2 + 4' negotiations between East Germany, West Germany, and the four wartime allies.<sup>42</sup>

In early 1990, the East German government moved forward the date for parliamentary elections to 18 March in the hope of stabilizing the country. In February, the Kohl government began planning a currency union to extend the *Deutschemark* to the GDR. The promise was that if the DM flowed eastward, East Germans would no longer stream westward. Since the next East German government would likely be negotiating currency union and unification with Bonn, much depended on the outcome of the Volkskammer election. Unification was the overriding concern of parties and voters alike during the historic election campaign.

In the GDR, three conservative eastern parties—the East German CDU, the citizen group Democratic Awakening, and the CSU-backed German Social Union—formed the center-right 'Alliance for Germany' and called for speedy unification by way of Article 23. They favored rapid currency union with West Germany, a popular position among East Germans whose own currency, the GDR mark, plummeted in value on the open market, while their appetite for western goods, especially cars, increased. The leading center-left party, the East-SPD, also supported unification, yet cautioned against too rapid a course. An early electoral favorite, the SPD struggled to combat conservative attempts to link it to communism. The heroes of fall 1989, New Forum, Democracy Now, and the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights, banded together as 'Alliance 90' and opposed any 'annexation' of the GDR by West Germany. They instead favored a gradual unification process. While many of its members rejected unification outright, the PDS in principle favored a slow process, provided that unified Germany incorporated the virtues and values of East Germany.

During the 1990 Volkskammer campaign, Helmut Kohl threw his full weight behind Alliance for Germany, a partnership he had helped forge. Alliance for Germany had a solid organization, a clear electoral strategy of calling for rapid currency union while tying the SPD to socialism, and the formidable presence of Helmut Kohl on the campaign trail. At six rallies, Kohl addressed nearly a tenth of the East German electorate.<sup>43</sup> He was introduced as a modern-day Bismarck: 'Once so far, some 120 years ago a German chancellor—Otto von Bismarck—brought about the unity of Germany. Today it is Helmut Kohl who will bring us unity.' The chancellor stirred crowds, amidst a sea of black-red-gold flags, by invoking the benefits of national unity: 'We are one Volk and one Fatherland and we belong together!'<sup>44</sup> He pushed hard for unification via Article 23 and promised prosperity ('blossoming landscapes') in the east. At a campaign rally in mid-March, Kohl said that small savings would be swapped at the highly favorable rate of one DM for one GDR mark. The announcement came after polling showed the SPD poised for victory.<sup>45</sup> 'The chancellor brought his authority,' the historian Manfred Görtemaker observed, 'and the financial power of the Federal Republic, into play in order help his party win the election.'<sup>46</sup>

On 18 March, the center-right Alliance for Germany won a decisive victory. The CDU alone received over 40 percent of the vote, while the Alliance fell just short of an absolute majority. Despite high expectations, the SPD stumbled badly to finish a distant

second with 21.9 percent. The post-communist PDS received 16.4 percent of the vote after warning against rapid unification and capitalism. An alliance of three liberal parties won 5.3 percent. Alliance '90 and the Greens, which had rejected Kohl's unification course, settled for 2.9 and 2 percent, respectively. This stood in stark contrast to the triumphant performance of Solidarity in the 1989 parliamentary elections in Poland and that of Civic Forum in the 1990 democratic elections in Czechoslovakia, and it provided further proof of the relative weakness of the East German civic groups. After the Volkskammer election, a grand coalition of Alliance for Germany, the SPD and the liberals, elected Lothar de Maizière (CDU) minister president. Henceforth, the Kohl government would have a friendly negotiating partner in East Berlin. The SPD emerged divided with its eastern party in government and its western party in opposition.

The powerful allure of the DM on favorable terms had helped the East-CDU to victory. Yet West German economic experts questioned the wisdom of a parity exchange rate in light of inflationary pressures and rising eastern unemployment, as labor costs, augmented by currency union, outpaced productivity. The Bundesbank's president, Karl Otto Pöhl, emerged as an outspoken critic of parity exchange and instead favored a 2:1 rate for wages and pensions, while exchanging small savings at 1:1. Its board of directors recommended 2:1 as the general rate, a position broadly shared by the leading economic research institutes in West Germany.<sup>47</sup> As the Kohl government weighed its options, East Germans took to the streets to demand parity exchange. Sensing an opening, the West German opposition criticized the chancellor for breaking his word, while Kohl's political allies in East Berlin pressed for parity conversion. With eastern opposition swelling, the Kohl government in late April settled on a compromise that would exchange wages and pensions at 1:1, while converting most savings beyond 4000 Marks at the less favorable 2:1 rate. East Germans generally were satisfied with Kohl's offer and handed the CDU victory in local elections in May.

In implementing the state treaty establishing monetary, economic and social union, the Kohl government had bypassed established policy-making practices, relying instead on informal teams of experts. The SPD complained in late April that it had no meaningful role in drafting the historic policy, while the leading trade union federation, the DGB, lamented the Kohl government's minimal consultation.<sup>48</sup>

Currency union bolstered Kohl's reputation in the east, but did little to reassure West Germans about unification's costs. On 14 May, the SPD won a state election in the populous western region of North Rhine-Westphalia, and thereby acquired a majority in the Bundestrat, the upper house that would have to approve the state treaty. Lafontaine, the designated SPD chancellor candidate, now urged his party to oppose a treaty that he regarded as a grave mistake. Yet Lafontaine himself admitted that it was too late to block the treaty. In subsequent negotiations with the SPD, the Kohl government made changes to the treaty that ensured greater Social Democratic support and the treaty's subsequent passage in parliament.

On 1 July, the state treaty establishing economic, monetary, and social union went into effect. Much like the currency union of 1948, which had preceded West German statehood the following year, it set the stage for German unification. This pattern of

economic union preceding political union had antecedents in the 19th century *Zollverein* in Germany. Oskar Lafontaine later put forth another model, betraying his Saar roots. The region, after being separated by France in 1945, rejoined Germany in 1957, yet kept the weaker Saar franc as its currency for nearly two and a half years while its economy adjusted.<sup>49</sup> However, by spring 1990, the deteriorating eastern economy and growing calls for the DM made this approach difficult and politically unattractive.

The state treaty awarded West Germany effective control of economic and social policy in the east, stripping the GDR of sovereignty in key policy areas. It also mandated the establishment of a functioning market economy in the GDR. To this end, East Berlin passed a law in mid-June 1990 that empowered a Trusteeship (*Treuhandanstalt*) to privatize state-owned industries. After unification, this agency would struggle to find buyers for unproductive eastern firms and, as it grappled with whether to continue to subsidize or to shut them down altogether, became a focal point of eastern opposition to unification policy.

The East German economic crisis deepened once the coveted new currency arrived. East Germans spurred GDR-made products in favor of western ones; eastern labor costs and unemployment spiraled upwards; and the country's trade with eastern bloc neighbors collapsed. Pressure for a speedy political unification mounted.

In summer 1990, West Germany and East Germany negotiated a second state treaty that regulated key aspects of the GDR's accession. The 'unification treaty,' for instance, incorporated and clarified a recent agreement on the issue of contested property in the east. While not reversing land expropriations undertaken in the Soviet occupational zone, it asserted the general principle of 'return over compensation' of private property that had been seized in the GDR after 1949. This principle, strongly supported by the West German FDP, allowed former owners, many of whom had fled to West Germany prior to the Berlin Wall in August 1961, to file claims for the return of property.<sup>50</sup> This added to regional tension as it was often westerners attempting to recover houses in which easterners lived. While in principle it upheld ownership rights, the settlement had the practical effect of increasing uncertainty over property rights and complicated efforts to privatize state-owned businesses and attract investment. In the words of the economists Gerlinde Sinn and Hans-Werner Sinn, 'Natural restitution has brought not clarity, but uncertainty, ambiguity, and confusion. It has manacled the invisible hand.'<sup>51</sup>

The unification treaty allowed for the dismissal of redundant or politically compromised eastern public workers after unification.<sup>52</sup> Newly formed eastern federal states would have the option of closing university departments, such as sociology, economics, philosophy, history, and Marxism-Leninism, and establishing new ones, with new personnel, modeled after West German counterparts. While arguably necessary to create a uniform public administration at short notice, the forced retirement, demotion and in some cases purging of SED cadres, who were often replaced by incoming westerners, left eastern elites numerically underrepresented in unified Germany.

Under time pressure, the negotiating partners put off a final decision on the controversial matter of abortion. In the GDR, women had a general right to abortion during the first trimester of the pregnancy, while in the Federal Republic women had

access to abortion when specific circumstances, such as health concerns, social hardship, or rape or incest, were present. The unification treaty allowed the former West Germany and former GDR to maintain their current practices until a new law was passed. The treaty also left undecided the fate of Berlin or Bonn as governmental seat. Despite these issues, which when later resolved resulted in tangible change, the unification treaty overall reaffirmed the general direction of the Kohl government's unification policy that extended the western political, economic and administrative model eastward. Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU), the West German interior minister who led the unification treaty negotiations, had left little doubt about this: 'my set speech went as follows: Folks, it is about the accession of the GDR to the Federal Republic, not the reverse operation. We have a good constitution that has proven itself. We will do everything for you. You are heartily welcome. We do not want to ride roughshod over your wishes and interests. However, a union of two equal states is not taking place. We are not beginning afresh with equal starting positions.'<sup>53</sup>

East Germans soon enjoyed the benefits of the functioning administration that the Federal Republic had transferred eastward. This 'ready-made state' provided a smooth bureaucratic transition and was a privilege that the GDR's neighbors in east-central Europe did not have.<sup>54</sup> Since institutions, such as the legal code, court system, and public administration, were extended to a region where residents had scant direct experience with the Federal Republic, incoming western civil servants, experienced in public administration, were arguably better suited to promote eastern interests than were less seasoned homegrown actors. The Federal Republic had ample civil servants able and willing to assume leadership in the former GDR until a new, less compromised generation had arisen. Yet this came at a cost that became apparent once the afterglow of unification dimmed. Easterners took less pride in something that was handed to them by others rather than achieved on their own. Lothar de Maizière, the first and last democratically elected prime minister in the GDR, later explained: 'The Czechs designed their new system themselves, and they feel personally responsible for both its failure and its successes. Here it is different. Everything is imposed from Bonn. Even if the end result looks better on paper, people have the sense that they were not and are not the masters of their own destiny.'<sup>55</sup> This contributed to a widespread feeling among former East Germans that they were second-class citizens in the Federal Republic.

### 33.6 CHANCELLOR DEMOCRACY AND THE EXTERNAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNITY

While Helmut Kohl skillfully forged a domestic coalition in favor of rapid unification in 1990, he also played a central role in securing international support. By mastering the diplomatic challenges of the process, Kohl and the foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher allayed concerns at home that rapid unification would damage the Federal

Republic's international standing. In late November 1989, Horst Teltschik, a foreign policy advisor to Kohl, had noted that 'the chancellor's lofty international reputation must be better utilized, and that the German Question could serve as a bridge to an improved [domestic] image for the federal chancellor.'<sup>56</sup> In the coming months, Kohl managed just this feat by deftly overcoming foreign policy obstacles on route to national unity, while enhancing his domestic reputation in the lead-up to national elections in late 1990. To do so, he took full advantage of the opportunities that foreign policy-making may offer a chancellor. On 28 November 1989, Kohl placed national unity on the policy agenda with his 10-point plan, which he had drafted unbeknownst to Hans-Dietrich Genscher and West Germany's closest allies.<sup>57</sup> While Genscher played a key part in regulating the external dimensions of unification, Kohl assumed the more prominent position as the process advanced, culminating in his landmark meeting with Gorbachev in the Caucasus in July 1990.<sup>58</sup> Yet because Kohl took the lead on foreign policy, and proceeded without meaningful opposition involvement, he would be held responsible for setbacks.

One miscue involved the issue of when and how the Federal Republic would formally recognize the Oder-Neisse line as its eastern frontier. What was not at issue was West Germany's commitment to the postwar German-Polish border. In late 1989 and early 1990, however, Kohl balked when pressed by Poland and others to settle the matter conclusively and without conditions. A border guarantee had been the missing 'eleventh point' in Kohl's 10-point plan of November 1989.<sup>59</sup> The chancellor maintained that only a united, fully sovereign German state possessed the legal authority to relinquish definitively former German lands in the east. West Germany had accepted the Oder-Neisse line in the early 1970s and Kohl had no intention of challenging the existing border. However, he did hope that final recognition might be coupled with issues such as Polish reparations claims and the treatment of the ethnic German minority in Poland. Kohl also hesitated out of concern that refugees and German nationalists would abandon the CDU in the coming federal election once it signaled closure on the border issue. Eventually, the chancellor yielded as domestic and international opposition mounted. On 21 June, the Bundestag and the Volkskammer passed a joint resolution recognizing the eastern frontier and backing a border treaty with Poland following unification. On the issue of its border, Poland took part in the international negotiations that preceded German unity. After unification, the Federal Republic and Poland concluded a formal treaty that established the Oder-Neisse line as Germany's eastern boundary, thereby settling the matter once and for all.

As German unification became a real possibility in late 1989, leaders in Israel, Poland, the United Kingdom, France and the Soviet Union all showed initial misgivings through either words or diplomatic actions. The former wartime allies' reservations were especially serious, since they retained rights regarding Germany as a whole and Berlin. In late 1989, François Mitterrand traveled to Moscow, Warsaw, and East Berlin in what was widely seen as a sign of French opposition to unification. Margaret Thatcher expressed concern that a precipitous German unification might upset the balance of power in postwar Europe and destabilize the region. The United States, in

contrast, emerged as an early backer of unification, yet indicated that the Federal Republic should remain part of NATO, a position that the USSR strongly rejected. With its commanding economic, military, and political position in the GDR, the USSR posed the biggest threat to quick unification. Not only did this former wartime ally have a formal say in matters relating to Germany as a whole, but its boots on the ground—i.e. approximately 380,000 stationed troops in the GDR—lent it added weight.<sup>60</sup> Without Soviet backing, a rapid unification was effectively a non-starter. It was therefore significant that Gorbachev in February signaled to Kohl that the Soviet Union would respect the Germans' right to self-determination in peace.

The two German states and the four wartime powers soon settled upon a framework of meetings, the so-called 2 + 4 talks, to regulate unification's external dimension. The Federal Republic did its best to reassure Moscow that the USSR stood to benefit from unification and the easing of inter-bloc hostilities in Europe. Kohl and Genscher were careful to embed unification in the CSCE process and the European Community, while avoiding a settlement that would punish or humiliate the USSR as the cold war's loser. The primary stumbling block to a settlement remained the USSR's opposition to a newly unified Germany remaining in NATO, which on the surface would erase the strategic gains made by the USSR, and paid for at great cost, in 1945. The Federal Republic, backed by the United States, sought to make its continued NATO membership as palatable as possible for the Soviets. In the London Declaration, the NATO summit in July stressed East-West co-operation in Europe and conveyed a less adversarial approach toward the Soviet Union, anticipating that 'in a transformed Europe, they [the Allies] will be able to adapt a new NATO strategy making nuclear weapons truly weapons of last resort'.<sup>61</sup> By adjusting its military doctrine, and underscoring common purpose between the blocs, the NATO summit helped Soviet reformers sell Germany's NATO membership to party hardliners at home.<sup>62</sup> (Years later, Russia would assert that the West had broken its word by admitting former Warsaw Pact countries into NATO. Mary Elise Sarotte has concluded however that while the United States at no time gave the USSR any official assurance that NATO would not subsequently spread eastward, Helmut Kohl had in fact intentionally cultivated ambiguity on this matter in a critical meeting with Gorbachev in February 1990.<sup>63</sup>)

In July, Kohl, Genscher and other West German officials traveled in July to Moscow in an effort to settle outstanding business. After talks in the capital, Gorbachev and Kohl then flew to the Soviet leader's hometown region of Stavropol in the Caucasus and continued negotiations there. In dramatic fashion, they proceeded to reach agreement on a number of key points. The USSR would accept unified Germany's NATO membership and its full sovereignty, while the Federal Republic agreed to limit its troop totals to 370,000, not pursue atomic, biological or chemical weapons, and not extend non-German NATO troops or nuclear weapons to the former GDR. West Germany would provide financial support to the Soviet Union for troop withdrawal from the former GDR, which was to be completed within four years. The Federal Republic offered the USSR a bilateral pact on good neighbourly relations, partnership, and co-operation.

The Caucasus breakthrough cleared the way for a successful conclusion of the 2 + 4 talks. On 12 September 1990, the two German states and the four powers signed the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany (2 + 4 Treaty). Even though the treaty had not yet been ratified, the four powers agreed to suspend their reserved rights and responsibilities on the day the two German states formally unified. This unfolded on 3 October 1990 when the five newly-constituted eastern states acceded to the Federal Republic under the terms of article 23.

The following month in Paris, the CSCE conference praised unification as 'an important contribution to a just and lasting order of peace for a united, democratic Europe aware of its responsibility for stability, peace and co-operation'.<sup>64</sup> In late 1990, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, Eduard Shevardnadze, underscored the historic nature of the settlement: 'The German question, this great and classical problem of world politics that yesterday seemed insolvable, was solved peacefully and with satisfaction on all sides.'<sup>65</sup> Chancellor Kohl earned accolades at home and abroad for his handling of the external aspects of unity. Even Oskar Lafontaine acknowledged that 'the result from the Caucasus was a great success for your government because it laid the tracks to the benefit of the people in Germany'.<sup>66</sup> On 2 December, voters went to the polls in the first democratic, all-German national election in nearly six decades. Although the costs of unification were already becoming apparent, voters in east and west generally remained optimistic and returned the governing CDU/CSU-FDP to power. This was Kohl's triumph; in just over a year after his 10-point plan, he had overcome domestic and international opposition to unify the country, and win an election, on his terms.

While many had feared a return of the German Question—with a newly unified and resurgent Germany upsetting the balance of power in post-cold war Europe—the events of 1989–1990 in fact conclusively settled, in a peaceful, democratic and internationally recognized manner, previously contested and potentially disruptive business. No longer would Germans argue over the number of legitimate German states, Germany's eastern frontiers, or its western commitment. Unification ended an era that had commenced in the 19th century when Germans began debating the boundaries of a future nation state. Some demanded that Germany house all ethnic Germans, while others accepted more than one state within the nation. Whether in the Kaiserreich, the Weimar Republic or the Federal Republic, Germans did not agree on the answer to a most basic question: What is Germany and what are its final frontiers? In 1990, unification answered the question in its cold war iteration and established a long elusive consensus.<sup>67</sup>

## NOTES

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## CHAPTER 34

# GERMANY AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION SINCE 1945

KIRAN KLAUS PATEL

FINDING its place in Europe and defining what its Europe should be is a *leitmotif* of Germany's history. Long before the twentieth century, its central position and size raised the question of how both Germany and Europe could be organized in a constructive stable, and peaceful way that would work for Germans, as well as for their neighbors. Following national unification in 1871, the *Kaiserreich* was tempted to pursue a policy of competitive penetration and expansion, particularly vis-à-vis its eastern neighbors and non-European territories. After initial failure and the ambivalent interlude of Weimar Nazi aggression further radicalized this policy. At its zenith, Hitler's empire spanned most of Europe, bringing terror, war, and genocide to the continent and other parts of the world.

In a basically chronological manner, this chapter analyzes the sea-shift in Germany's relationship to Europe since 1945, understanding 'Europe' not as a vague cultural or geographical entity, but rather as institutionalized forms of political and economic integration with a European focus. I argue that German history in the course of the second half of the twentieth century has been inextricably linked to the creation of such Europe(s) and their subsequent changes. To fully capture its history, these integrator steps and their Europeanizing effects on the political and legal realm, as well as on society, have to be taken into account.

## 34.1 DIVIDING GERMANY, MAKING EUROPE(S), 1945–1968

By 1945, the most important attempts to define Germany's relationship to Europe and the world had utterly failed. Internationally, there was a consensus that no successo