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German Unification, Western Order, and the Post-Cold War Restructuring of the International System

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Introduction

The Berlin Wall fell in November 1989 and less than a year later a treaty was signed that formally united the German Democratic Republic (GDR) with the Federal Republic. Just months before, most American and European observers thought that German unification was still only a distant possibility. Surprisingly, although the Soviet Union initially preferred other outcomes, it ultimately acquiesced in these unsettling developments. Soviet leaders conceded not only the integration of their former ally into West Germany but also that the newly united Germany would remain fully a part of the Western alliance and European Community. The balance between East and West shifted abruptly in favor of the West, but this did not trigger a new Cold War crisis. Instead, Germany was quickly and quietly reunited. As Chancellor Helmut Kohl remarked at the time, this "was the first unification of a country in modern history achieved without war, pain or strife."[1]

These remarkable events were not preordained. Germany's European neighbors initially resisted a quick move toward German unification. After all, as Chancellor Kohl depicted the coming drama to Secretary Baker at a breakfast meeting shortly after the Berlin Wall fell,

[1] Serge Schmemann, "A Historic Moment Slips By, Overshadowed," The New York Times, 13 September 1990, p. A6.

"change in Germany means change in the math of Europe, and that means change in the structure of Europe and the world."[2] The leaders of France and Britain indicated serious reservations about the implications of German unification for European peace and stability and its impact on Gorbachev, Soviet reform, and the unwinding of the Cold War.[3] British Prime Minister Thatcher said at a December 1989 meeting with EC leaders and President Bush that German unification should not occur for another ten or fifteen years. The stakes were high because if European leaders broke with Germany on such a fundamental issue the fate of the Western system would be thrown into doubt. Moreover, Moscow could have thwarted German unification – at least for a time. Its immediate leverage were the more than half million troops and dependents that remained stationed in East Germany. Beyond this, it also had leverage to the extent that its consent – and the legitimacy that consent would confer on German unification – was necessary for a stable outcome. All of these moving parts were in play in November 1989. But in the end, on 12 September 1990, the four allied victors in World War II met in Moscow to sign the Treaty of the Final Settlement, restoring full sovereignty to a united Germany and relinquishing their "rights and obligations" to Berlin and Germany. Two weeks before the German settlement, at a summit between President George Bush and Soviet President Gorbachev in Helsinki, the issue of German unification was not even on the agenda.[4]

The quickness and seeming ease of this historical passage from division to unification was surprising. But it was also important in world historical terms. It spelled not just the end of the Cold War but also the grand settlement of Germany's relationship to and position within Europe – a geopolitically fraught question that had consumed European and world politics for

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2 James A. Baker, III, The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War, and Peace, 1989-1992 (New York: Putnam, 1995), p. 172.

3 See reports based on the release of Soviet archive records. Michael Binyon, "Thatcher told Gorbachev Britain did not want German unification," Times (London), 11 September 2009; and James Blitz, "Paris feared new Germany after unification," Financial Times, 9 September 2009.

4 Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 1-2.

over a century. Beyond this, the unification of Germany was also a moment when the terms of the wider global system were also on the table, at least implicitly. That is, this was a "constitutional" moment when the rules and architecture of relations among the great powers were debated and a settlement was reached. Politicians and diplomats were not just struggling over the specific issues of Germany's polity and relations with NATO, the Soviet Union, and Europe, they were struggling over the basic structure of great power relations.

This paper looks at this remarkable moment and asks three questions. First, how was unification accomplished, that is, accomplished in the world of power politics and diplomacy? How were fears, insecurities, and disagreements overcome? Second, what does the unification of Germany – its relatively quick and peaceful accomplishment – say about the wider postwar Western and international order? Third, what is the future of the "Cold War settlement" of which Germany unification was a part?

I argue that the most striking aspect of the 1989 moment was how the institutions of the West – NATO, the European Community, and the wider liberal international order – shaped and facilitated the flow of events. There were several possibilities for how the collapse of East Germany and the crisis in the Eastern bloc could have unfolded. Resistance existed on both sides of the Cold War divide to a unified Germany and to its quick and definitive integration in Western institutions. Alternative pathways were proposed, including a German federation that would exist outside of NATO and the reintegration of Germany within a wider pan-European security structure that would also include the Soviet Union. Various alternatives were proposed and all of them ultimately failed.[5] So the questions are: why did Gorbachev and his colleagues finally agree – if grudgingly – to a unified Germany within NATO and the European Community? And why did this architectural structure of Western institutions operate as it did to trump alternative options and facilitate the quick integration of a united Germany?

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[5] For a superb detailed account of these alternative institutional proposals and their eventual fate in the unfold events, see Mary Elise Sarotte, 1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

My argument is that the West has had important characteristics as a political order that make it unusually "user friendly." These are institutions that are accessible, integrative, and vehicles for the restraint of power. They are a complex set of institutions that facilitate integration of transitioning states. The West is "easy to join and hard to overturn."[6] At the same time, these Western institutions are also capable of signaling geopolitical restraint. To have a united Germany inside NATO – tied to other countries and restrained in its independent military capacity – helps reassure worried neighbors about the threat of a more powerful Germany. The Western states tied themselves together during the Cold War in a set of institutions. These same institutions proved to be a functional vehicle for post-Cold War integration, consolidation, and power restraint. In the diplomatic buying and selling of institutional solutions to problems generated by German unification, the coin of the realm was commitment and reassurance.[7]

I will develop this argument by looking at the 1989 moment from four perspectives. The first looks at German unification as a diplomatic process, as a grandly sprawling negotiation. Here we can appreciate the extraordinary process of consultations, exchange, reassurance, and alliance building. The heart of this was the coalition that emerged between West German and American leaders, led by Chancellor Kohl and President Bush and their delegations. But the wider diplomatic process – a rolling sequence of bilateral and multilateral meetings and summits – was also extraordinary and critical to the outcome. The ability of the political leaders and their deputies to negotiate, compromise, and offer assurances – doing so at first over the Two-plus-Four formula for settlement and later about the actual status of Germany within European and Atlantic institutions -- brought the traveling diplomatic process to a successful ending.

The second perspective on the 1989 moment is the "grand strategy" that the United States and West Germany pursued in the give-and-take over how unification was to take place within

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6 See G. John Ikenberry, "The Rise of China and the Future of the West," Foreign Affairs (January/February 2008).

7 This paper builds on Ikenberry, After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major War (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

the Euro-Atlantic system. At the heart of this process was the strategy of binding and reassurance. The Soviets had to be convinced that a unified Germany would not present a new threat to the East. So too did American and West German allies need to be convinced that a unified Germany would not unseat President Gorbachev and explode the fragile process of ending the Cold War. The strategy of binding and reassurance was the cutting edge of this process. The so-called "nine assurances" that the American side produced for the Bush-Gorbachev summit in June 1990 is emblematic of this strategy. The process of closing down alternative institutional pathways for German unification – which played out in late 1989 and 1990 – was fundamentally a story of reassurance, conveying signals that the West would not exploit the East German collapse and the wider implosion of Soviet power in Europe.

The third perspective on the 1989 moment involves stepping back from the diplomacy to see the ways in which the West itself – as a complex structure that tied the United States and Europe together during the Cold War – operated to shape the ways in which the Cold War ended. Paradoxically, this Western system was both more dynamic than its Soviet counterpart, capable of producing more wealth and power at a lower cost, but also remarkably capable of establishing restraints and commitments as well. It was this blend of power and restraint that ultimately tilted the Cold War struggle in the West's favor and that shaped how it actually ended. The Soviet Union found reassurance in the complex institutions of the West. Gorbachev saw opportunities to engage the West. But he also saw in the West a sufficiently restrained alliance that would not exploit Soviet weakness as it sought to reform and reorient the Soviet system.

Finally, a fourth perspective on the 1989 events is the bigger "constitutional moment" that presented itself at the end of the Cold War. The United States, Europe, and the Soviet Union were all struggling to define a new world order. World politics does not ordinarily rise to this level of vision and discourse. States ordinarily define and pursue their interests within a system of rules and relationships. But once in a while, particularly after great power wars or upheavals, an opening emerges when leaders see that they are playing for bigger stakes. They have an opportunity to "lay down the tracks" for a generation or more of international relations.

Woodrow Wilson saw himself making decisions "for a hundred years" of world politics. The rules, institutions, and expectations that guide the play of great power relations are put in place. These "constitutional moments" generate interesting ideas and surprising politics. The relationship between Reagan and Gorbachev was infused with the stuff of constitutional conversation. Gorbachev clearly wanted to transform the way in which his country and the West operated in the world system. It was not simply a story of collapse and surrender. It was a story of both superpowers seeking a new plane on which to operate. This was an important aspect of the politics of the moment as it surrounded the events of 1989 and 1990 and it critically shaped the hopes and dashed aspirations of what has followed.

The international politics of the 1989 moment was a politics of reassurance, restraint, and commitment. All parties to the diplomatic drama were compelled to offer and seek reassurance – and to offer and seek restraint and commitment within the swirling events triggered by the collapse of East Germany. In searching for ways to reassure and signal restraint and commitment the leaders relied on institutions – and this was how the struggle was ultimately settled over what institutions would emerge in post-Cold War Europe to form the framework for regional and global order. In this struggle, Western institutions – the European Community and NATO – proved most adaptable and useful, and the contours of the Cold War settlement followed.

The Cascade of Diplomacy

The great turning point in the Cold War was the dramatic shift in Soviet policy signaled by Gorbachev in his famous speech before the UN General Assembly in December 1988. It was on this stage that the Soviet leader announced a unilateral reduction of five hundred thousand Soviet troops with close to half coming from Eastern Europe and the western parts of the Soviet Union. With this declaration, Gorbachev was proposing to end military competition with the West – but he was also indicating a new Soviet tolerance of political change within Eastern Europe, declaring that the "use of force" should not be an "instrument of foreign policy" and

indicating that “freedom of choice” was a principle of politics in and throughout the Soviet bloc. It was this grand shift in Soviet policy that set the stage for the collapse of East Germany and the unification diplomacy of 1989.

What followed, of course, was the unraveling of political order in Eastern European countries, with the crisis in the GDR leading the way. The flow of refugees out of East Germany to Hungary and the appearance of opposition groups revealed the impotence of the Erich Honecker regime in East Germany. The country was also in a financial crisis, in debt to the West and struggling under a current account deficit. On Gorbachev’s visit to the GDR in October 1989, he encouraged domestic reform and expanded integration with the West. The official hope was that East Germany could put itself on a path of socialist modernization. But when the Berlin Wall fell, this view became untenable.

In the midst of the East German crisis, Chancellor Helmut Kohl began pressing for early German unification – and this unsettled not just Gorbachev but Germany’s other European neighbors. What followed over the course of the next year was an elaborate, multifaceted, and evolving diplomatic dance. The leaders and foreign ministers of all the major states began an extraordinary process of consultation and bargaining. The diplomacy was both about whether and how Germany would be unified and how it would fit within the larger European and world order. The diplomatic struggle played out in two ways: one was over alternative institutional configurations for German unification and European order, and the other was over the terms of commitment and reassurance. And ultimately the two were deeply related. Different leaders proposed different pathways and institutional solutions to German unification and the ending of the Cold War. The viability of these institutions solutions, in turn, hinged on their ability to be used as mechanisms to establish restraint and commitment.

In the search for ways to manage Germany’s push for unification, leaders were quickly drawn into intense and elaborate diplomatic communications. This is a story of diplomatic process, consultations, signal-sending, negotiations, and the forging of political alliances. What is striking about the months of diplomacy after November 1989 was the density of the

interaction. From the beginning, the presidents and foreign ministers of the leading countries found themselves in evolving combinations of bilateral and multilateral encounters – making representations and compromises along the way. Indeed diplomatic consultations began almost immediately after the Berlin Wall fell. Only a little more than a week later, on November 18, French President Mitterrand hosted a quickly-called dinner meeting of EC leaders in Paris. As Mary Sarotte argues, Kohl realized immediately from this "tempestuous dinner" that his task of proving Germany's commitment to European integration was a daunting one. It was less than a week later, on November 22, at a special session of the European Parliament, that he was again in a European diplomatic forum undertaking just this sort of commitment-making and reassurance.[8]

Observers of this diplomacy have noted the ease with which the political leaders and their deputies worked, particularly the American, German, and Soviet officials. Stephen Szabo notes that the "diplomacy of German unification was typical of diplomacy in the late twentieth century – i.e., conducted by politicians, not diplomats, and done via telephone and private conversations facilitated by jet travel."[9] This was not settlement diplomacy conducted around a grand table in an ornate palace ballroom. It was a movable feast of political leaders working through issues and making deals along a quickly moving arc of geopolitics. Szabo observes that these were talented politicians, rich in experience, and capable of negotiating within a rapidly changing environment. "They were all able to manage, or circumvent, the enormous bureaucracies of their governments and to move these gigantic and often lethargic ships of state with dazzling skill."[10]

This ability of the leaders to compromise and make decisions without going back to their governments gave the diplomatic process a creative and constructive cast. The ability of Soviet leaders to negotiate was particularly surprising – and important. This Soviet ability to make

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8 Sarotte, 1989, pp. 64-65.

9 Stephan F. Szabo, The Diplomacy of German Unification (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), p. 30.

10 Szabo, The Diplomacy of German Unification, p. 30.

decisions was revealed at the Ottawa meetings, when the so-called Two-Plus-Four formula for negotiating a settlement was adopted. "In Ottawa," Alexander Moens argues, "Shevardnadze showed a capacity for making important decisions on the spot. Traditionally, such weighty matters would have been taken back to Moscow. To many Western participants, it was a tremendous surprise to discover that the Soviet leadership could respond immediately to a proposal, and accept it simply because it was reasonable."[11]

The importance of negotiations and the intensity with which leaders engaged each other followed directly from special circumstances of the historical moment. First, the "problem" that triggered the negotiations was in some sense unstoppable. It was the collapse of East Germany and the flow of people out of the East that made the status quo untenable. Delay and stalemate would not work in this instance. The German people were in the midst of creating a new reality. German unification was inevitable. It was a coming reality that the Soviets and Germany's European neighbors had to deal with. The question was: what sort of unification and on what terms? On the American side, President Bush was of the view – expressed over dinner with his advisors just a few days after the wall came down – that he wanted a "prudent evolution."[12] Other leaders had their agendas. Negotiations aimed at shaping the flow of events was in the interest of all parties. Second, there was competition of "solutions" to the problem. These solutions came in the form of alternative institutional arrangements that would undergird and embed German unification. This competition further reinforced the incentives that diplomats faced to shape and tip what was unfolding. Third, coalitions of leaders were available for use in the diplomatic scramble. There were many parties and many positions – and so there was room for coalition building. West German leaders found a partner in the Bush administration. The French and British leaders initially found at least implicit common cause with Gorbachev. These loose alignments and shifting coalitions became valuable tools of diplomacy.

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[11] Alexander Moens, "American Diplomacy and German Unification," Survival, Vol. XXXIII, No. 6 (November/December 1991), p. 544.

[12] Baker, The Politics of Diplomacy, p. 165.

Fourth, there existed an array of institutional mechanisms and forums in which to engage in diplomacy. EC meetings, NATO summits, and other gatherings filled the diplomatic calendar, and these meetings became occasions to bargain. The end of the Cold War was not a classic moment in which leaders make pronouncements and sign parchment around a great peace table. It was a cascading diplomatic drama played out in many acts and on many stages. Europe itself was a diplomatic theater with many stages, rehearsal halls, dance floors, and green rooms. This institutional environment both supported and encouraged this multifaceted diplomatic exercise. Sixth, the diplomacy was not just pushed forward <u>on</u> many stages – but also <u>in</u> many stages. It was a sequence of issues, one leading to the next. The first step was to establish the framework for the resolution of issues of unification. The first breakthrough was the agreement to work within a 2 plus 4 arrangement in which the two German states would carry the process forward. This ensured that the settlement would be driven by German choices in the first instance, followed by the four allied war powers acting to ratify and support these choices. In the spring and summer of 1990 the negotiations proceeded to substantives issues. Finally, the stakes of the negotiations were exceedingly high, and this too reinforced the importance of diplomacy aimed at determining the long-term institutional foundations for German unification. The shape of Europe and the wider rules and institutions of post-Cold War great power relations were indirectly on the table.

<u>Strategies of Binding and Reassurance</u>

The directionality of political change after November 1989 was driven by the imperatives that leaders had to seek and offer reassurance, restraint, and commitment. Each of the countries facing the prospect of German unification had worries. Britain and France worried about a more powerful and united Germany that operated outside European institutions, particularly the European Community – and they worried about a Soviet backlash that might unseat Gorbachev. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher wanted to slow the process of unification down and

saw Gorbachev and French President Mitterrand as potential allies.[13] The Soviet Union – Gorbachev in particular – worried about its former ally being absorbed in Germany and the West. The expansion and encroachment of NATO loomed. The United States worried that Germany would drift out of the Atlantic system and fracture the Western alliance precisely at the moment when it was most triumphant. West German leaders worried about gaining the acceptance of its peers for a unified Germany. All of these leaders saw these problems in the context of various institutional configurations that would provide the anchors for assurances and signals of restraint and commitment – institutions that would also shape the wider logic of the European and great power order.

In the first instance, it was Helmut Kohl who was under pressure to reassure the Soviets and his European counterparts that a unified Germany would continue to be a good partner – restrained and embedded in European and Atlantic institutions. In an important speech to the Bundestag on November 28, 1989, Kohl outlines a ten-point program for German unification. It would be a staged process – exchanges, travel, movement toward "confederative structures," culminating in a single federal Germany. Kohl sought to reassure Germany's neighbors, arguing that inter-German relations should take place within a larger European process that would allow for "an organic development which takes into consideration the interests of all parties concerned and guarantees a peace order in Europe."[14] Kohl did not mention NATO in his speech, but in a message to President Bush following the speech, the chancellor reaffirmed West Germany's "unwavering loyalty" to NATO.[15]

This strategy of linking German unification to European integration became the centerpiece of Kohl's diplomacy in the months that followed. The idea was to reassure the other

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13 In the early months after November 1989, Thatcher warned against the "rash" resolution of the German question and Mitterrand described German unification as "a legal and political impossibility." Quoted in Manfred Gortemaker, Unifying Germany, 1989-90 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 155. See also, Jeffrey Anderson, German Unification and the Union of Europe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 33.

14 Quoted in Zelicow and Rice, Germany Unified and Europe Transformed, p. 120.

15 Quoted ibid, p. 122.

great powers that a unified Germany would be deeply embedded in European institutions. It was a strategy of binding – so as to reduce the resistance of worried neighbors to a more powerful Germany. "Pool sovereignty," Elizabeth Pond argues, "quickly became the preoccupation of Chancellor Kohl" who shared the nightmare of his "famous nineteenth-century predecessor, Otto von Bismarck – a Germany surrounded by a hostile coalition of neighbors." And so, his strategy of "warding off this danger was to bind his countrymen irrevocably to a pan-European structure and preclude 'renationalization' of defense and foreign policy on the continent."[16]

The basic orientation of German policy was to reassure its neighbors – both East and West – that a unified and inevitably more powerful Germany would be deeply enmeshed in wider regional institutions. Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher articulated this basic German view in a January 1990 speech: "We want to place the process of German unification in the context of EC [European Community] integration, of the CSCE [Conference on Security in Europe] proces, the East-West partnership for stability, the construction of a common European house and the creation of a peaceful European order from the Atlantic to the Urals."[17] Genscher and other German leaders did not always mention NATO in these statements, which worried American officials in the early months of the unification debate, but the basic message was clear: to gain agreement on unification, Germany was prepared to further bind itself to its neighbors.

The United States sought to reassure Gorbachev that Soviet security was not at risk in the unfolding developments but also to offer support to Kohl as he tried to allay the worries of European leaders. In September 1989, when Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher visited Moscow, Bush sent a message along to Gorbachev stressing that change in Eastern Europe should not be taken as a threat to the Soviet Union.[18] In Washington on November 12, Secretary Baker had a

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16 Elizabeth Pond, The Rebirth of Europe (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institutions, 1999), p. 39.

17 Quoted in Robert Hutchins, American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War: An Insider's Account of U.S. Policy in Europe, 1989-1992 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 120. See also Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Rebuilding a Divided House: A Memoir by the Architect of Germany's Reunification (New York: Broadway Books, 1998), pp. 335-38.

18 Zelikow and Rice, Germany Unified and Europe Transformed, p. 73.

weekend lunch with the Soviet ambassador and communicated his understanding of the importance of "keeping order."[19] At a summit of Soviet and American leaders in Malta in early December, Bush indicated to Gorbachev that the United States had not tried to exploit developments in Eastern Europe. Bush said that the United States has "not responded with flamboyance and arrogance. . . . I have conducted myself in ways not to complicate your life. That's why I have not jumped up and down on the Berlin Wall."[20] Soon afterwards, at a meeting of NATO leaders in Brussels, Bush again stressed that it was important for Gorbachev not to feel cornered.

While attempting to reassure the Soviets, the Bush administration was also trying to rally allied support for Kohl's plan for unification. This entailed extracting assurances from West Germany and stressing the wider institutional structures within which change would occur. The central goal of American policy during these months was to ensure that a unified Germany remained firmed anchored in the Atlantic alliance. And during late 1989, the United States began pursuing a policy of linking support for German unification to assurances about Germany's continued commitment to European and Atlantic institutions. President Bush presented this view as American policy at a NATO meeting in Brussels on 4 December and later stated it in public: "unification should occur in the context of Germany's continued commitment to NATO and an increasingly integrated European Community, and with due regard for the legal role and responsibilities of the Allied powers."[21] The American president argued that NATO should remain the guarantor of stability in Europe, and to this end the United States remained committed to Europe. In effect, German unification would be rendered acceptable to its neighbors by the same means that a revived West Germany was rendered acceptable after World War II: Germany would be embedded in wider Euro-Atlantic institutions. The NATO alliance

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[19] Mary Sarotte, p. 67.

[20] Quoted in Zelikow and Rice, Germany Unified and Europe Transformed, p. 127.

[21] President Bush's news conference in Brussels, 4 December 1989.

and European economic integration would bind Germany to Europe, and the United States would ensure agreement by adding its own security commitment.

This sort of reassurance was necessary because the British and French leaders remained wary of a unified Germany. In a meeting with Bush at Camp David on 24 November 1989, Thatcher had restated her view that German unification would destabilize Europe, undercut Gorbachev, and work against the prospects for democracy in Eastern Europe. Mitterrand too had such concerns. In a meeting with Bush on St. Martin in the Caribbean on 16 December, the French leader again reaffirmed his view that German unification must be linked to developments in NATO and the European Community. Arms control, EC integration, European monetary union, and American cooperation with Europe must all be addressed together in order to create a new Europe in which German unification would be a part. "Otherwise," Mitterrand warned, "we will be back to 1913 and we could lose everything."[22]

These sorts of institutional linkages appeared over and over again in the following months. Specifically, the German pledge to redouble the commitment of a unified Germany to European integration was an essential part of the process of reassurance and the signaling of restraint and commitment. This was because Germany's European neighbors had serious concerns about how Germany would relate to the EC – concerns that Chancellor Kohl and his colleagues had to allay. According to Jeff Anderson, these were two-fold. One was a general worry on the part of European partners about Germany unification and its implications for stability in Europe and the "European project." The other was a worry about securing an EC accession for the GDR as it made its transition. Both were both concerns about how Germany would operate within the European Community. As Jeff Anderson notes, "Bonn sought to signal and secure the maximum amount of continuity with its relationship to the EC."[23] In emphasizing the connections between German unification and European integration, Kohl was able to build

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22 George H.W. Bush and Brent Scowcroft, A World Transformed (New York: Knopf, 1998), p. 201.

23 Anderson, German Unification and the Union of Europe, p. 33.

support for his cause. "Bonn's emphasis on the European dimension of unification resonated with the architectural designs of actors elsewhere on the continent: specifically, Jacques Delors, president of the EC Commission, and key members like France, eager to secure from Germany an early and irreversible affirmation of integration."[24]

At a meeting of EC leaders in Strasbourg on 8 December, Mitterrand was able to gain Kohl's support for convening an intergovernmental meeting to amend the EC's Treaty of Rome in order to prepare the way for a new treaty of economic and political union. In return, the EC leaders adopted a statement that endorsed German unification within the context of wider European developments. Again in March 1990, Chancellor Kohl announced that his government was committed to the goal of economic and political union. This was reinforced one month later when Kohl and Mitterrand called for the convening of an intergovernmental conference on political union to run in parallel with the formal discussions over a European Monetary Union. It was these steps that set in motion negotiations that led to the Treaty on European Union, negotiated at Maastricht in December 1991 and signed by the leaders of the twelve European member governments in early February 1992. Germany was binding itself to Europe, even in the face of domestic German unease about economic and political union. Kohl was signaling that his country would indeed wear the "golden handcuffs" that tied a unified Germany to Europe.[25]

Gorbachev and the Soviets initially rejected the idea of German unification – certainly a unified Germany within NATO. The initial position of Gorbachev was that the two German states were legal entities that should remain so. As the East German collapse and calls for unification proceeded, the Soviet position moved to support for some sort of confederation or "treaty community" between the two German states. Gorbachev and Shevardnadze sought to slow the momentum toward unification by proposing to reactivate the four-power rights in Berlin. Technically speaking, Berlin was still officially under four-power jurisdiction. The Soviet

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24 Anderson, Germany Unification and the Union of Europe, pp. 33-34.

25 Timothy Garton Ash, In Europe's Name (New York: Random House, 1993), p. 358.

strategy was to take the control of events out of the hands of West Germany and to seek accord with worried British and French leaders over the pace and destination of political change. The Soviets called a meeting of four-power ambassadors so as to deliberate on "the control mechanisms created by the former allies of the anti-Hitler coalition."[26] When German unification became impossible to stop, Gorbachev insisted that a unified Germany could not remain within NATO. Unification was possible, but Germany must be neutral and its military power limited. On Germany remaining in NATO after unification, Gorbachev told the press in Moscow on 6 March 1990: "It is absolutely out of the question."

The goal of American policy in the spring of 1990 was to gain Soviet acceptance of a unified Germany within NATO. The first move was to resist Gorbachev's efforts to settle the question of Germany's status among the Four Powers, a forum that would allow the Soviets to hold out for German unification contingent on its neutrality. The critical move occurred at the Ottawa summit in February 1990s of NATO and Warsaw Pact ministers when the parties accepted the United States proposal for a Two-plus-Four formula. This agreement put the decision into the hands of the Germans themselves, leaving the Allied parties in a secondary position to ratify Germany's determination of its status.

The United States also worked with its allied partners to allay Soviet fears about a unified Germany. Soviets sent mixed signals. In a meeting with Secretary of State James Baker in February 1990, Gorbachev indicated that the Soviets did not worry about a united Germany. At other moments, Soviet leaders were less certain. At a Kremlin meeting on policy in January 1990, there were split opinions. Gorbachev advisor Anatoly Chernyayev, for example, thought that a united Germany inside of NATO was not a threat – quite the contrary, it was a source of some reassurance, particularly if Kohl linked unification to an "all-European process." Others, such as Valentin Falin, thought it was wrong to accept the absorption of East Germany into West Germany and NATO.

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[26] Quoted in Angela E. Stent, Russia and germany Reborn: Unification, the Soviet Collapse, and the New Europe (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 102.

The United States tried to convince the Soviets that a unified Germany outside of NATO would be more dangerous that a Germany inside of NATO. This argument was advanced by Baker in talks with Shevardnadze in Moscow in February 1990. The Soviets by this time understood that unification could not be stopped. It was a question of Germany's external affiliations. Shevardnadze argued that a unified Germany might eventually become militaristic and threaten the Soviet Union, hence their proposal for a disarmed and neutral Germany. Baker turned the argument around and posed the question to Gorbachev: "Assuming unification takes place, what would you prefer: a united Germany outside of NATO and completely autonomous, without American forces stationed on its territory, or a united Germany that maintains its ties with NATO, but with the guarantee that NATO jurisdiction or troops would not extend east of the current line?"[27] Baker's argument in Moscow was that embedding German military power in Western institutions was preferable to neutrality, even to the Soviets.

Gorbachev notes in his memoir that the second part of Baker's statement eventually formed the basis for a compromise over Germany's military-political status. This was so even though at the time of the Moscow meeting the Soviet leader was unprepared to accept the proposal. Gorbachev recalls that "I too believed that we needed a 'safety net' which would protect us and the rest of Europe from any 'surprises' from the Germans. However, unlike the Americans, I thought that these security mechanisms should be provided not by NATO but by new structures created within a pan-European framework."[28] The opening for compromise dealt with the specific guarantees that might be attached to unification about the size and configuration of NATO and German forces.

In the months that followed, the United States and German leaders sought to reassure Gorbachev that NATO could provide the needed "safety net." The Germans were themselves

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27 Quoted in Gorbachev, Memoirs, p. 529.

28 Gorbachev, Memoirs, p. 529. On Baker's report of the meeting, see Baker, The Politics of Diplomacy, pp. 234-35. See also Don Oberdorfer, The Turn: From the Cold War to a New Era (New York: Poseidon Press, 1991), p. 395.

open to putting limitations on the positioning of NATO troops within what would be the former East Germany. In May 1990, Secretary Baker went to Moscow with a package of incentives prepared for talks within the Two-plus-Four talks – the so-called "nine assurances." The steps that the West would be willing to take to meet Soviet security concerns included assurances that unification would be accompanied by new conventional and nuclear arms limitation agreements, a German affirmation not to possess or produce nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons, agreement that NATO troops would not be stationed in the former territory of the GDR, and a promise that NATO would undertake to revise its strategy and its posture within a transformed Europe.[29] Most of these assurances had been presented to the Soviets during the previous few months, but the repackaging of them was itself part of the process of changing Soviet thinking. In German meetings with the Soviets during this period, they presented their own package of reassurances that dealt with force levels and territorial limitations as well as promises of economic assistance.

The turning point came in May 1990 during Gorbachev's visit to Washington. Although he initially proposed that a united Germany must belong to both NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet leader conceded on this visit that all countries had the right to choose their own alliances. In agreeing to this principle, Gorbachev was effectively agreeing that Germany had a right to stay within NATO. The Four Powers could not dictate German alliance membership. In agreeing to this principle and allowing the Germans themselves to decide, the dispute over German membership in NATO was on the way to resolution.[30]

The Soviet leader heard American officials again make the argument that binding Germany to NATO was the most effective security strategy for all parties concerned. Bush told Gorbachev that "It appears to me that our approach to Germany, i.e. seeing it as a close friend, is

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[29] The nine-point "incentive" package, which was prepared by State Department Counselor Robert Zoellick, is reprinted in Zelikow and Rice, Germany Unified and Europe Transformed, pp. 263-64. See also Raymond L. Garthoff, The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations at the End of the Cold War (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institutions, 1994), pp. 426-27.

[30] See Oberdorfer, The Turn, p. 429.

more pragmatic and constructive. . . . all of us in the West agree that the main danger lies in excluding Germany from the community of democratic nations."[31] The Soviet Union was again being asked to see NATO – and Germany's role in it – as a security institution that could reduce Soviet worries rather than aggravate them. The American promise to recast NATO's mission was meant to make the alliance all the more acceptable.

The great contest over what European institutions would emerge to support and contain German unification ended less than a year after the wall went down. The Western institutions – NATO and the EC – were in place and available, and ultimately they served the needs that all parties had for reassurance and restraint. The Bush administration, of course, championed these institutions as the vehicle to accommodate and embed a unified Germany. This policy took shape almost immediately after November 9. As Secretary Baker prepared for his trip to Europe, State Department counselor Robert Zeollick wrote a memo that emphasized the importance of these various layers of Atlantic and European institutions. He argued that there was a need for a "New Atlanticism and a New Europe that reaches farther East." But the "architecture of the New Atlanticism and New Europe should not try to develop one overarching structure. Instead, it will rely on a number of complementary institutions that will be mutually reinforcing," including NATO, the CSCE, the WEU [Western European Union], and the Council of Europe.[32] Secretary Baker publically presented these ideas in a speech to the Berlin Press Association on December 12, arguing that the three great institutions to Europe – NATO, the EC, and CSCE – should be adapted to provide the multi-level framework to absorb the coming changes. The slogan was a "new Atlanticism for a new era."[33] The existing Western institutions were expansive and integrative – allowing new members and new configurations of states. They also

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31 Quoted in Gorbachev, Memoirs, p. 533.

32 Quoted in Sarotte, 1989, pp. 77-78.

33 See Baker, The Politics of Diplomacy, pp. 172-73. See also, "Baker, in Berlin, Outlines a Plan to Make NATO a Political Group," New York Times, December 13, 1989, pp. A1, A10.

were institutions that reinforced multilateralism and restraint. In a period of rapid and dramatic power shifts – and the worries and opportunities that flowed from this transitional moment – those institutions proved most critical.

The Paradoxical Structure of the West

Stepping back from the immediate negotiations over unification, it is possible to a deeper dynamic at play between the West and the Soviet Union. Even before the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Gorbachev had taken truly remarkable steps to pursue domestic reform and international accommodation. Gorbachev signaled this new Soviet orientation in his United Nations speeches and ambitious nuclear diplomacy with President Reagan. The Soviet leader made unilateral moves to end of the Cold War through accommodation, steep arms reductions, and a hands-off policy in Eastern Europe. Gorbachev was pursuing a risky strategy to end of the Cold War and reposition the Soviet Union in the global system. Why was he willing to do this? Importantly, again, the structure of the West itself facilitated this Soviet reorientation. The United States and the Western system manifest paradoxical characteristics. The West was able to generate power and wealth much more efficiently – and on a greater scale – than the Soviet Union. This put the Soviets at a structural and persistent disadvantage. But the West – as a complex political entity – was also sufficiently benign and defensive to allow Gorbachev the ability to make his historical gambles.

There were many reasons that led Gorbachev to seek an end the Cold War and a transformed political relationship with the West. The Soviet system was failing. Its political order in East Europe was crumbling. In the past, the Soviet Union had responded to crises and failures by cracking down and reimposing order. But Gorbachev responded differently, operating from a position of weakness but seeking to engage the United States in a ambitious restructuring of great power relations. In contrast to earlier historical eras when Russia faced hostile and imperial European great powers, the Soviets in the 1980s faced an integrated array of Western democracies. The Western democracies together forms a grouping of countries that

made it very difficult for them individually or collectively to exploit or dominate the Soviet Union as it contemplated the transformation of its posture toward the outside world. As Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev noted subsequently, the Western countries were pluralistic democracies and this "practically rules out the pursuance of an aggressive foreign policy."[34] This view was also articulated by Gorbachev. At the December 1989 summit between the American and Soviet leaders, Gorbachev argued that the United States played a stabilizing role in Europe. "We accept your role in Europe. It is very important that you be there."[35]

A cluster of institutional characteristics made the Western order fundamentally a defensive aggregation of power as it confronted the Soviet crisis. The pluralistic and democratic character of the countries, and transnational and domestic opposition movements toward hard-line policies all worked to soften the face that the Soviet Union saw as it looked westward. The alliance itself, with its norms of unanimity, made an aggressive policy by one country difficult to pursue. These aspects of Western order all served to make Gorbachev's historic gamble less risky. The threats to Soviet security lay closer to home.

There is a popular view – at least in the United States – that the Cold War ended by Soviet capitulation to the steady policy of Western containment and, in the 1980s, to the Reagan administration's dramatic military build up.[36] By this analysis, Reagan's newly vigorous military posture and ideological offensive doomed the Soviets. In fact, the Reagan administration, the United States, and the Western world presented – as a whole – a much more complex and often contradictory set of impulses and positions. Reagan was surrounded by hard-liners who wanted to push the Western military advantage, but other officials and Reagan himself entertained more

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34 See Andrei Kozyrev, "Partnership or Cold War?" Foreign Policy, No. 99 (Summer 1995), pp. 3-14.

35 Quoted in Baker, The Politics of Diplomacy, pp. 170-71.

36 For popular version of this account, see Peter Schweizer, Victory: The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy that Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994); Jay Winik, On the Brink: The Dramatic, Behind-the-Scenes Saga of the Reagan Era and the Men and Women Who Won the Cold War (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996); and Paul Kengor, The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall o Communism (New York: Harper Perennial, 2007)

ambivalent views, particularly on issues of nuclear weapons. Reagan's willingness to consider far-reaching nuclear arms reductions was indicated at the November 1985 Geneva summit, and even more dramatically at the Reykjavik summit in October 1986. Nuclear hard-liners in the administration worked to disavow Reagan's views, but Reagan did provide Gorbachev with the signal that radical initiatives might be reciprocated rather than exploited.[37]

In addition to the ambivalence of Reagan himself, the hard-line position of the Reagan administration was undercut by several other factors. One was that the aggressive talk in the early years of the administration had fueled a large peace movement in the United States and Western Europe in the 1980s, a movement that put considerable pressure on Western governments to pursue far-reaching arms control proposals. That mobilization of Western public opinion created a political climate in which the rhetoric of the early Reagan administration was a political liability. By the presidential election in 1984, the administration embraced arms control goals that it had previously rejected.[38] This new policy line culminated in a speech to the UN General Assembly in September 1984. To the Soviet leaders who Reagan had previously called "the focus of evil in the modern world," the American president now made a new appeal: "For the sake of a peaceful world. . . let us approach each other with ten-fold trust and thousand-fold affection."[39]

In Western Europe, the arms control movement was even more vocal, putting pressure on the Reagan administration to be more forthcoming or risk a split in the alliance. The Western political system as a whole exhibited a sort of counterbalancing dynamic. Hard-line policies in the United States stimulated a more vocal arms control and disarmament movement which, in turn, had the effect of softening the intensity of the original hard-line position.

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[37] See Oberdorfer, The Turn; Garthoff, The Great Transition; and most recently, James Mann, The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War (New York: Viking Press, 2009).

[38] Garthoff, The Great Transition, chapter four.

[39] 24 September 1984. Address to the UN General Assembly.

The Reagan administration's tough policies were also undercut by powerful Western interests that favored East-West economic ties. In the early months of Reagan's administration, the grain embargo imposed by President Jimmy Carter after the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was lifted in order to keep the Republican party's promises to Midwestern farmers. And despite strenuous opposition by the Reagan administration, the NATO allies pushed ahead with a natural gas pipeline linking the Soviet Union with Western Europe. That a project creating substantial economic interdependence could proceed during the worst period of Soviet-American relations in the 1980s demonstrated the failure of the Reagan administration to present an unambiguous Western hard line toward the Soviet Union.

When the Bush administration came to office, the diversity of views among advisers and agencies on how to respond to Gorbachev continued. Some in the administration wanted to see more concrete evidence that Gorbachev "new thinking" was real and credible. But the dominant view was that Gorbachev should be encouraged by giving him tangible signs of reciprocation. Likewise, the diversity of views within the alliance – ranging from British skepticism to French ambivalence to German enthusiasm – worked to weaken a tough response to the Soviet Union. The dominant view was reflected in a cable to Washington from Jack Matlock, the American ambassador tot he Soviet Union in 1989: "We have an historic opportunity to test the degree the Soviet Union is willing to move into a new relationship with the rest of the world, and to strengthen those tendencies in the Soviet Union to 'civilianize' the economy and 'pluralize' the society."[40] The Bush administration sought to channel the rapidly unfolding political changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the direction of peaceful integration and democratic reform. The unexpected nature of the change coming out of Moscow and the goal of maintaining allied unity in its face reinforced the reactive and benign character of American policy.

The Soviet view of the Western order in the 1980s was not unlike the European view of American hegemony after 1945. The West represented an overwhelming concentration of power,

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[40] Quoted in Hutchings, American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War, p. 33.

but the actual exercise of that power was sufficiently constrained and institutionalized and the possibilities for reassurance were sufficiently available that cautious cooperation rather than outright power balancing was possible. A single, consistent and unambiguous hard-line policy was structurally impossible to sustain within the Western order.

The End of the Cold War as a Constitutional Moment

Behind the diplomacy of German unification and European reorganization was a deeper saga of the American and Soviet negotiations that set the stage for the events in Germany and the end of the Cold War. The events leading to the September 1990 treaty that ratified the unification of Germany and transformed the relations across the Euro-Atlantic world cannot be understood outside of the larger context of American-Soviet diplomacy that ended the Cold War. The Cold War did not just end – it was settled. The Americans – together with their Western partners – and the Soviets negotiated an end of the Cold War. In doing so, they also articulated a vision of the international order that would follow, agreeing to a set of principles and arrangements that would guide the next era of great power relations. As such, it was a "constitutional" moment.

Across the history of the modern state system, settlements in the wake of great conflicts have become ordering moments when the rules and institutions of the international order are on the table for negotiation and change. The principle components of settlements are peace conferences, comprehensive treaties, and postwar agreements on the principles of order. At these infrequent settlement junctures, the major powers are forced to grapple with and come to agreement on the general principles and arrangements of international order. These ordering moments do not just ratify the outcome of the war, they also lay out common understandings, rules and expectations, and procedures for conflict resolution. It is in this sense that they have a quasi-constitutional function.[41]

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[41] See Ikenberry, After Victory; Kalevi J. Holsti, Peace and War: Armed Conflicts and International Orders, 1648-1989 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Andreas Osiander, The States System of Europe, 1640-1990: Peacemaking and the Conditions of International Stability (London: Oxford University Press, 1994); and Jeff Legro, Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

The great settlements of the past were of this sort – Westphalia, Utrecht, Vienna, Versailles, and Potsdam/Yalta. Like these settlements, the Cold War was brought to an end with a far-reaching negotiated settlement that its architects optimistically hoped would be the framework for the new international order. This settlement was not one event but happened in steps unfolding over several years. A sequence of events and agreements marked the process – the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the negotiated withdrawal of the Soviet military and the reunification of Germany, the mutual disarmament of nuclear and conventional forces, and the culminating and unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union. All of this occurred rapidly, peacefully, and unexpectedly. And all of it was negotiated. Potentially explosive developments were skillfully managed by intensive diplomacy and negotiated agreements and understandings.

When the Berlin Wall came down, the Americans and Soviets had already been intensively engaged in redefining their relationship. Gorbachev had already made historic gestures aimed at ending the Cold War arms race. Both leaders had made major speeches at the United Nations offering new visions of world politics, visions in which the United States and the Soviet Union would bury their old rivalry and build a structure of cooperation. They engaged in "constitutional" discourse about rules, principles, and the desired organization of the great power system. In his famous UN speech, on December 7, 1988, Gorbachev argued that "world progress is now possible only through the search for a consensus of all mankind, in movement toward a new world order." The agenda for this new consensus would revolve around the "demilitarization of international relations" starting with an ambitious agenda of conventional and nuclear force reductions. This was a remarkable statement for a Soviet leader, arguing for "joint efforts to put an end to the era of wars, confrontation and regional conflicts, aggression against nature, the terror of hunger and poverty, as well as political terrorism."[42] President George H.W. Bush offered similar statements regarding the historic character of American and Soviet negotiations, describing the efforts of the two states as crafting the terms for a new world

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[42] Gorbachev speech to the United Nations General Assembly, 7 December 1988.

order. In short, the two superpowers were engaged in an ongoing discussion of not only how to end the Cold War standoff but how to shape the coming great power system.

The Cold War settlement focused on the principles of restraint, accommodation, and integration. The Soviet Union would emerge from the Cold War as a partner with the West, and the West would use its institutions to integrate and accommodate the Soviet Union. A new era of cooperative security would be ushered in, organized around arms control, the political transformation of NATO, and the tackling of new "global issues." The Cold War would not end in Soviet defeat but in a new grand understanding between East and West. Russia's interests would be respected and accommodated, and on the basis of this great power comity a new architecture of international institutions and cooperation would be built. The United States and the Soviet Union would emerge as partners on the global stage.

The settlement of the end of the Cold War was to an unprecedented degree centered around several major nuclear arms control treaties. The Cold War was unlike all previous interstate struggles in that the fantastic destructiveness of nuclear weapons made the stakes of the conflict so large. A central turning point in the 1980s was the unexpected convergence of Reagan and Gorbachev on a view of the nuclear problem that went far beyond the deterrence and war-fighting conventional wisdom of both Soviet and American security establishments. The diplomatic centerpiece of the end of the Cold War were thus several arms control treaties, most notably, the intermediate nuclear forces (INF) which completely banned entire classes of weapons based in the European region, and the START I Treaty, which mandated deep cuts in the Soviet and American long-range strategic nuclear arsenals. These treaties built upon the legacies of the earlier detente period. Of particular centrality was the ABM treaty of 1970, whose draconian restraints on defensive deployments were widely understood to be the prerequisites for subsequent offensive arms reductions. The animating vision of the Cold War settlement was that nuclear arms control would continue with further rounds of building down of weapons and building up of security institutions.

A second feature of this settlement was the transformation of NATO. President Bush and other Western leaders offered a new vision of the Western security alliance. A united Germany would be anchored inside of NATO but NATO would be transformed from a Cold War military alliance into something closer to a political entity. The United States used the promise of NATO transformation in its efforts to reassure Gorbachev about Germany's post-unification membership within the alliance. A new "concept" for NATO was one of the so-called "nine assurances" that the America's presented Gorbachev in May 1990. The efforts to alter NATO were made more concrete at the London NATO summit on July 5, 1990. The draft declaration prepared by the Bush administration proposed a radical shift in nuclear doctrine, elimination of nuclear artillery, additional cuts in conventional forces, an invitation to the Warsaw Pact to open a liaison mission to NATO, and the institutionalization of the CSCE.

The culmination of this vision was perhaps the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) summit in Paris in November 1990. The most notable outcome of this summit was the signing of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty that mandated reductions in conventional arms of the NATO and Warsaw Pact countries. The original task of the CFE talks were to reduce the concentration of Soviet forces in central Europe and provide a framework for the balancing of conventional forces between the two alliances. But these efforts were overtaken by events – and the agreement became a symbol of a hoped for transformation in Cold War security relations. As Raymond Garthoff argues, "all member states of the NATO and Warsaw alliances signed a joint declaration in which they welcomed 'the historic changes in Europe,' 'the end of the era of division and confrontation,' and solemnly declared that they were 'no longer adversaries' but would 'build new partnerships and extend to each other the hand of friendship,' recognizing that 'security is indivisible.'"[43]

The third aspect of the evolving post-Cold War settlement was the expectation that the United States and the Soviet Union would work together to tackle global issues. This would start

[43] Raymond Garthoff, The Great Transition, p. 434. The quotes are from the "Text of the Joint Declaration of Twenty-Two States," November 19, 1990.

with the renewal of the United Nations itself. As Gorbachev articulated in his speeches, particularly at those given at the United Nations, the end of the Cold War was to be the beginning of a major restoration and extension of the U.N. system that had been paralyzed for so long by the East-West conflict.

The Soviet Union would re-establish its position on the global stage as a state dedicated to a progressive global agenda, beginning with a comprehensive arms control agenda. The reassurance that the Bush administration gave Gorbachev in the spring of 1990 in the context of Two-plus-Four talks over Germany unification included movement on arms control and force reductions in Europe. The American position what the events of 1989 should lead to a consolidated Western system – and indeed they did. But part of what made this acceptable to the Soviet Union was that the events of 1989 were also a prelude to a new global compact in which the Soviets would work with the United States and its Western partners of a full range of global issues.

The old Cold War antagonists were redefining the basic framework of great power relations. This background dynamic is a critical aspect of why the events of 1989 and 1990 unfolded as they did. It helps explain why Gorbachev gave the ground he did on the terms of German unification. It also explains why the United States was agreeing to major arms control negotiations and offering to redefine the purposes of NATO. It also explains – twenty years later – why dissatisfactions and grievances linger, at least on the Russia side, over the seeming erosion and breakdown of the Cold War settlement.

Conclusion

The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 triggered a cascade of diplomacy leading to the restructuring of political order between East and West. It was part of a larger unfolding drama that punctuated the end of one world historical era and the beginning of a new one. As this paper suggests, it is useful to see this drama at several levels. In some sense, like a Matryoshka doll – or a Russian nested doll set – there were dramas within dramas within

dramas. The inner drama was the swirl of diplomacy, bargaining, and compromise that unfolded through summits, conferences, dinner meetings, state visits, and other large and small gatherings of leaders and foreign ministers in the months between November 1989 and September 1990.

This diplomatic drama took place in a wider setting of great power grand strategy that was aimed at shaping the geopolitical structures in which German unification would be situated. From the American perspective, this was a drama about ensuring the a unified Germany would remain in NATO. More generally, this was a drama about efforts to signal reassurance and restraint. It was a drama over how to find institutional arrangements that would make a unified – and more powerful – Germany acceptable to its neighbors. Institutional solutions to problems of German unification were proposed. Many proposals failed and some succeeded. Ultimately, the institutions that emerged as most acceptable were the old Euro-Atlantic ones – NATO and the EC, along with the OSCE. These were institutions that could bind Germany to Europe and the West, making power shifts relatively unthreatening to the other leading states.

At a third level, this drama over institutions and restraint played out in the context of the larger Western order. This political formation itself exerted profound influence over the course of events. The Western order was a complex political amalgam organized around alliance partnership, multilateral institutions, market interdependence, cooperative security, democratic solidarity, and American hegemonic leadership. It was a dynamic political order that generated massive amounts of power and wealth – and it was a political an order that offered a relatively benign face to the Soviet Union.

At a fourth level, the events of 1989 and 1990 were part of a larger settlement of the Cold War. Like the settlements that followed great power wars of the past, the Cold War also ended with agreements and understandings that were to form the basis for a new international order. Both sides offered visions of the post-Cold War world. Leaders made concessions and promises. What most marked the settlement of the Cold War were the principles of accommodation, integration, and restraint. As we have seen, these were in turn expressions of a larger historical agenda of American and Western liberal order building. The United States and the Soviet Union

– and later Russia – agreed to engage in far-reaching efforts at nuclear and conventional arms reductions. NATO would expected to transform itself into a more politically-oriented alliance. New partnership agreements and a pan-European security organization would tie Russia to the West. The United States and the Soviet Union would emerge from the Cold War as partners. A new "constitution" for great power politics was laid down – or at least that was the hope and expectation that shadowed the events and decisions in the months that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The unification of Germany – together with the peaceful end of the Cold War – is without a doubt one of the greatest triumphs of the modern state system. It is a triumph that reminds us of the importance of diplomacy, the uses of institutions, and the unusually ability of the Western system to integrate and bind states together. The "constitutional" moment that emerged at this juncture reminds us that grand efforts at order building are not just old fashioned diplomatic exercises of early eras, marked by dates such as 1815, 1919, and 1945, but part of the today's world. The constitutional settlement that ended the Cold War has eroded in recent years. Promises and expectations have not been keep or fulfilled. The global system may soon be ripe for a new "constitutional moment" and new efforts at world order building.