CHAPTER 6

Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice: *German Unification*

The examination of historical turning points usually involves some tension between different levels of analysis. Large-scale causes are easy to identify and discuss without much specialized knowledge. In the case of Germany, for instance, a typical large-scale candidate for analysis might be the weakening grip of coercive power in the Eastern bloc. This factor can be accompanied by other explanations ranging from generational change to the information age to the epistemic community of new thinkers around Mikhail Gorbachev. In this examination of German unification, our bias is toward the micro-scale of analysis.

Many people have asked us about the knotty problem of whom to credit with ending the cold war peacefully. Abundant credit should be awarded to those who contributed to "a turning point in the more than seventy-year history of antidemocratic and totalitarian systems that emerged after World War I."[1] The events of 1989 and 1990 can and should be placed in a well-defined setting already shaped by the operation of large-scale historical forces. But, granting these underlying circumstances, many outcomes were still possible. The former Soviet foreign minister and ambassador to the United States, Aleksandr Bessmertnykh, stated at a recent conference that "the story of reunification seems simple after you've heard what everybody has to say about it. In fact, it was not that simple, it was not that naïve, and it was not that placid. There were

1. Hans-Dietrich Genscher, quoted in Richard Kiessler and Frank Elbe, *Ein runder Tisch mit scharfen Ecken: Der diplomatische Weg zur deutschen Einheit* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1993), 14–15; Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (New York: Random House, 1993), 343.

a lot of nerve-wracking situations in Moscow.''[2] And not only in Moscow.

Some recent books have put forward particular Germans, Americans, or Soviets as winners of the prize for having made a difference in the ending of the cold war. However diverting, such a contest tends to shed more heat than light. We are more interested in the interaction of perceptions and choices by the various governments. Though some individuals had more influence than others, we found the spotlight shifting from person to person and from country to country at different times and on different issues.

We would like to offer another way of thinking about the challenge of assigning credit to one particular individual or to one individual's favorite cause. To do this, we have adopted a rather formal causal analysis. The following points might be thought of as constituting a map of causal variables in the unification of Germany. First, we specify our dependent, or outcome, variables:

- *Unification and its timing*. The two German states are unified into one before the Federal Republic of Germany elections at the end of 1990.
- *The fundamental nature of the new German state*. Unification occurs according to Article 23 of the West German constitution, destroying the German Democratic Republic and making the new state an expanded FRG without any fundamental changes in the system of government or principles for the organization of society.
- *The political alignment of the new German state*. The united Germany is a full member of the North Atlantic Alliance, with all German territory protected by NATO, all German forces remaining integrated within NATO's multinational military

2. For ''greatest triumph,'' see Karl Kaiser, *Deutschlands Vereinigung: Die internationalen Aspekte* (Bergisch Gladbach: Bastei Lübbe, 1991), 16; for ''most hated developments,'' see Aleksandr Bessmertnykh, quoted in a 1991 interview in Michael Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1993), 240.

command, and without placing unique legal limits on German forces.

- *Asymmetrical treatment of NATO and Soviet forces.* All Soviet forces leave Germany; Western forces, including U.S. nuclear forces, stay.

German and European history since 1990 would be quite different if any of these variables had acquired a different content.

Next, we offer a set of independent, or explanatory, variables. We believe these variables must meet three criteria:

1. But for the specified content of the variable (that is, in a counterfactual condition with this variable being absent), the content of one or another dependent, or outcome, variable would have been materially different;
2. The above-mentioned counterfactual condition must be reasonable, in that there must be a genuine possibility of the variable being absent; and
3. The causal variable is independent, in that the decisive content of the variable is indeterminate even after the contents of preexisting (but not simultaneous) variables have been established.

At least 13 variables appear to meet these criteria. To help the reader apply the third criterion cited above, we list them in chronological order, although several of them overlap in time.

1. The USSR and the GDR divide sharply and publicly on the need for and direction of reform communism (1988–1989).
2. Hungarian decisions on borders are made and misunderstood; Hungary then reverses its policy toward Romanian and East German refugees (May–September 1989).
3. East Germans decide against the ''Chinese solution'' for domestic protest and choose, with Soviet backing, the reform Communist government of Egon Krenz (October 1989).

4. Responding erratically to a surge in domestic unrest, the Krenz government's policies culminate in the unplanned opening of the Berlin Wall (October–November 1989).
5. Chancellor Helmut Kohl, with President George Bush's encouragement, reverts from the *Ostpolitik* paradigm of *Wandel durch Annäherung* (change through rapprochement) back to the Adenauer paradigm of *Wandel durch Kraft* (change through strength); Kohl destabilizes the East German governments of Krenz/Modrow, spurring popular contemplation of unification; the United States helps deflect international attempts to curb Kohl and restrain popular expectations in the GDR (October–December 1989).
6. Kohl spurns confederative negotiations with Hans Modrow and the Roundtable, and, with U.S. backing, decides to seek direct economic and political annexation of Eastern Germany (January–February 1990).
7. The United States chooses maximal objectives for unifying Germany in NATO and the "Two-plus-Four" plan for negotiating international aspects of unification (January–February 1990).
8. Kohl's agenda for rapid unification, propelled by indicators that it is internationally viable, produces a surprising electoral victory for his cause in the GDR election (March 1990).
9. Soviet diplomatic reactions to German developments are ineffective as "Two-plus-Four" activity is deliberately delayed and constrained and the United States and the FRG rally the West behind common objectives for unification (February–May 1990).
10. The FRG offers limited financial aid to the USSR and spurs positive but inconclusive multilateral consideration of a much larger assistance package (January, May–July 1990).
11. The United States and the FRG shape and deliver commitments on German armed forces and significant change in NATO's political and military stance that nevertheless re-

main consistent with preexisting U.S. and FRG objectives (June–July 1990).

12. Gorbachev makes a series of connected decisions: he avoids an invasion of Lithuania, begins to abandon structures of collective leadership, and starts changing his stance on the German question during and after the Washington summit. Yet he successfully fends off challenges at the Twenty-eighth Soviet Communist Party Congress (May–July 1990).
13. Complex political-military negotiations of linked political and economic agreements, consistent with preexisting U.S. and FRG objectives, are accomplished among "Two-plus-Four" states and specifically among the USSR, Germany, and the United States (July–September 1990).

Our narrative attempts to reconstruct the intricate details of each of these variables, which are themselves clusters of choices and interactions. But for the reader anxious to get to the story, we offer a sample of the empirical data underlying the fifth independent variable from the preceding list. This story focuses on the way in which America worked to shield Kohl and keep the GDR pot bubbling at a full rolling boil.

President Bush had been a firm supporter of German unification since the first time he was asked about this issue in May 1989.[3] As December 1989 began, he met with General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev on the island of Malta and did his part to ease Soviet anxieties about East-West relations in general and German developments in particular. Chancellor Helmut Kohl had responded to the opening of the Berlin Wall and the new government in East Berlin by working to further destabilize the East German state. Even before the wall opened, Kohl had concluded that "cosmetic

3. See George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 188–189; Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 24–29, 80–81, 92–95.

corrections [in East Germany] weren't enough. We didn't want to stabilize an intolerable situation.''[4] On this point, Bush agreed.

As President Bush flew from Malta to Brussels to tell Allied leaders what had happened, he faced another formidable task. Having determined that Soviet policy on Germany was still relatively quiescent, he now needed to accomplish the remaining operational objectives for his trip. Most crucial was rallying Allied support behind the Ten-Point Plan for unity that Helmut Kohl had announced on November 20, thus sheltering Kohl. Meanwhile, as Kohl himself later put it, Bush's ''calculation was to make himself a spokesman for the German side and in return to secure our firm assurance that we would stick strongly by membership of a united Germany in NATO.''[5]

Soon after his plane touched down in Brussels, President Bush met with Chancellor Kohl. Secretary of State James Baker chose not to attend the dinner meeting, deliberately permitting the two heads of state to talk without the presence of West German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher (Baker's counterpart). Genscher's absence would allow Kohl to speak more freely.[6] To the Germans, Bush and his national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft, seemed tired. But Bush launched into a detailed report on the talks in Malta. The U.S. president warned Kohl that Gorbachev thought the chancellor was in too much of a hurry. Kohl said he had reassured Gorbachev that no one wanted events in the GDR to get out of control.

Kohl then thanked Bush for his ''calm'' reception of the Ten-

4. Helmut Kohl, *Ich Wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, ed. Kai Diekmann and Ralf Georg Reuth (Berlin: Propylaen, 1996), 117.

5. Ibid., 189; see also Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 196–197.

6. For the German account of this meeting, see Horst Teltschik, *329 Tage: Innenansichten der Einigung* (Berlin: Siedler, 1991), 62–64; for the U.S. notes, see memcon of meeting with Chancellor Kohl at Château Stuyvenberg, Brussels, December 3, 1989; the account that follows also draws on the Zelikow interview with Scowcroft, Washington, DC, June 1991, and Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 198–200. See also Scowcroft to President Bush, ''Scope Paper—Your Bilateral with Chancellor Kohl'' (trip briefing materials).

Point Plan and promised not to do anything reckless. There was no timetable. The FRG was part of Europe and part of the European Community (the EC, now called the European Union, or EU). The chancellor said he always worked carefully with French president François Mitterrand. Continued integration with the West was a ''precondition'' for the ten points. After free elections in the GDR, the next step was confederation, but with two independent states. The third phase, federation, lay in the future. It would take years, perhaps as many as five, to reach this goal.

Bush summarized Gorbachev's attitude as one of uncertainty. That, he said, was why ''we need a formulation which doesn't scare him, but moves forward.'' Kohl assured Bush that he did not want Gorbachev to feel cornered. The newspapers were full of nonsense, he said. Former secretary of state Henry Kissinger had written that East and West Germany might come together within two years, but that was obviously impossible, Kohl said, as the economic imbalance between the two states was too great. However, he added, Bush should not misunderstand; the unification question was developing ''like a groundswell in the ocean.'' West European reactions were mixed. ''I need a time of quiet development,'' Kohl remarked, sounding somewhat drained by the extraordinary events of November, when the Berlin Wall had opened.

Both the White House and the chancellery considered this dinner conversation significant. The Americans found Kohl clearly determined to move forward toward unification. The Germans felt somewhat relieved about the way Gorbachev had approached the unification issue with Bush at Malta. Scowcroft felt sure Kohl now understood that the United States would stand by him, and Scowcroft was right.

The NATO summit meeting of 16 heads of government, to be held in Brussels on December 4, would consist of two main sessions. In the morning President Bush would debrief his counterparts on his meetings in Malta. In the afternoon he would offer a general overview of the future of Europe that his NSC staffers, Robert Blackwill and Philip Zelikow, had drafted before the trip.

They had started with a paper originally prepared when Blackwill was first flirting with the idea of a landmark joint statement by Presidents Bush and Gorbachev and then turned it into a statement of U.S. policy toward Germany and Europe. It included an outline of NATO, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (then the CSCE; it is now the OSCE), and the EC as the central institutions for Europe's future. The draft welcomed the possibility of German unification. Scowcroft had circulated the draft to Secretary of Defense Cheney, who endorsed it with enthusiasm.

On the road, Bush's planned policy statement was significantly revised, principally by Baker's counselor, Robert Zoellick, along with Blackwill. The revisions on Germany were especially important. In late November, Baker had endorsed four clear guidelines for U.S. policy on German unification, which had been put together for him by Dennis Ross and Francis Fukuyama of his policy planning staff. Although the press took little notice, Secretary Baker first publicized an initial version of these four principles in his pre-Malta briefing for the White House press corps in Washington on November 29.[7] During the trip, Zoellick suggested that Baker's four principles be inserted into Bush's statement. Blackwill agreed, and the traveling party worked on the language, strengthening its endorsement of German unification. The draft was reviewed and approved by Scowcroft, Baker, and Bush.

President Bush began the afternoon session before the NATO leaders with his policy statement about "the future shape of the new Europe and the new Atlanticism." The alliance, he said, faced great choices in consolidating the peaceful revolution in the East and providing the "architecture for continued peaceful change." He stated that the United States and NATO had never accepted the "painful" division of Europe; all had supported German reunification. The president continued:

7. See PA transcript, Press Conference by Secretary Baker on Bush-Gorbachev Malta Meeting, the White House, Washington, DC, November 29, 1989, 7–8.

In our view, this goal of German unification should be based on the following principles:

- *First,* self-determination must be pursued without prejudice to its outcome. We should not at this time endorse nor exclude any particular vision of unity. [The earlier State Department addendum, which said that the outcome must also be acceptable to Germany's neighbors, had been dropped.]
- *Second*, 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.[8]
- *Third*, in the interests of general European stability, moves toward unification must be peaceful, gradual, and part of a step-by-step process.
- *Lastly*, on the question of borders we should reiterate our support for the principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

Bush added: ''An end to the unnatural division of Europe, and of Germany, must proceed in accordance with and be based upon the values that are becoming universal ideals, as all the countries of Europe become part of a commonwealth of free nations. I know my friend Helmut Kohl completely shares this conviction.'' Then, following up on the ''Europe whole and free'' rhetoric of his May 1989 trip, Bush proposed that the alliance should make the promotion of greater freedom in the East a basic element of its policy. At the same time, NATO should continue to be the guarantor of stability in this period of historic transition. In this context, Bush said, ''I pledge today that the United States will maintain significant mil-

8. The earlier Ross-Fukuyama formula included a qualifier: ''if there is unification.'' That phrase was dropped. The language referring to four-power rights was new, added because the embassy in Bonn had complained of Kohl's persistent failure to refer to these rights and because of the Americans' care to mention their legal obligation for Berlin and ''Germany as a whole.'' See Bonn 37736, ''Kohl's Ten-Point Program—Silence on the Role of the Four Powers,'' December 1, 1989.

itary forces in Europe as long as our Allies desire our presence as part of a common security effort. . . . The U.S. will remain a European power.'' Bush also praised the European Community's ''intensified'' integration and said that the United States would seek closer ties with the EC.[9]

When Bush completed his statement, Kohl remarked that no one could have done a better job of summarizing the alliance approach and said, ''The meeting should simply adjourn.''

Following an awkward pause, Italian prime minister Giulio Andreotti asked to continue with his presentation. He warned that self-determination, if taken too far, could get out of hand and cause trouble. Kohl snapped back that Andreotti might not hold the same view if the Tiber divided his country.

The Dutch prime minister, Ruud Lubbers, interrupted the skirmish between the Germans and the Italians to support Bush's approach. British prime minister Margaret Thatcher could not let the matter rest there. She said that she shared Andreotti's concerns and wanted to study Bush's proposal more carefully. But one by one, other Allied heads of state supported the general thrust of the Bush approach.[10]

9. The text of the intervention was subsequently released to the public. ''Outline of Remarks at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Headquarters in Brussels,'' December 4, 1989, in *Public Papers of the Presidents: George Bush* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990), 2:1644–47. Bush passed along his four principles on Germany directly to Gorbachev. See President Bush to President Gorbachev, December 8, 1989. For a sense of the positive press reactions to Bush's handling of the Malta-Brussels trip, see News Conference in Brussels, December 4, 1989, in *Public Papers*, 1989, 2:1647–49; and Scowcroft to President Bush, ''European Press Reaction to the NATO Summit and Your Speech on the Future of Europe,'' December 6, 1989.

10. Teltschik, *329 Tage*, 64–67; Blackwill, interviewed by Zelikow, Cambridge, MA, 1991. Despite growing calls for U.S. troop cuts in Europe, American public support for military commitment remained solid in late 1989. In 1982, about 66 percent of Americans wanted to maintain or increase U.S. troop strength in Europe; in November 1989, despite the political changes on the continent, this figure had shrunk by only 8 points to 58 percent. The success of the May 1989 NATO summit may have played a part, as did wariness about future Soviet intentions and the uncertain political situation—themes repeatedly emphasized by President

Thatcher felt defeated by both the U.S. stance on Germany and Washington's strong support for the further integration of Europe. After the NATO meeting in Brussels, she wrote: "[I knew there] was nothing I could expect from the Americans as regards slowing down German reunification [and] possibly much I would wish to avoid as regards the drive towards European unity."[11]

Kohl and his advisers, by contrast, were elated. The NATO framework would now dominate the treatment of Germany at the EC summit four days later. The world leaders would not derail Kohl's plan. "On the contrary!" Horst Teltschik wrote, "The signal stayed green—caution will be admonished, but the railway switches are all thrown the right way."[12]

The NATO allies were not the only ones to get the news from Malta. Warsaw Pact heads of government also gathered on December 4 to hear Gorbachev's report.[13] All these states were now ruled by Communist "reformers" except for Poland and Romania. Gorbachev praised the Malta summit and President Bush. He said that Bush did not lecture him as Reagan had sometimes done, but instead formulated careful positions "slowly, thoughtfully." In Gorbachev's book of his public and private statements, the chapter on

Bush. On the polling data, see Tutwiler to Baker, "Support for NATO and U.S. Troops in Europe," December 8, 1989.

11. Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 795–796.

12. Teltschik, *329 Tage*, 67.

13. For the official Soviet report on the Warsaw Pact summit meeting, an account of which follows, see "Vstrecha rukovoditelye godsudarstvuchastnikov Varshavskogo Dogovora" [Meeting of the leaders of the Warsaw Pact members states], *Vestnik* (December 31, 1989), 42–45. For the account of a participant as told to a journalist, see Don Oberdorfer, *The Turn: From the Cold War to a New Era—The United States and the Soviet Union, 1983–1990* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 384–386. Although Krenz insisted on going to Moscow with Modrow, the Soviets pointedly publicized Gorbachev's meeting with Modrow, treating the now discredited Krenz as a nonperson. Ralf Georg Reuth and Andreas Bönte, *Das Komplott: Wie es wirklich zur deutschen Einheit kam* (Munich: Piper, 1993), 185–186. Modrow later described the message from Gorbachev in a conversation with Rudolf Seiters. See Teltschik, *329 Tage*, 68.

Malta is titled "A Historic Breakthrough." Privately, too, Gorbachev felt he could trust Bush.

But Gorbachev was displaying second thoughts about the German issue. According to one participant, he told the Eastern European delegates that both NATO and the Warsaw Pact must be maintained to preserve Europe's security. Kohl's Ten-Point Plan speech, he said, had gone too far. Gorbachev asked for comments. There were none, except for a bitter tirade from Romania's dictator, Nicolae Ceauşescu,[14] a man whose overthrow and execution by his own people was then only three weeks away. East Germany's new premier, Hans Modrow, in Moscow for the Warsaw Pact meeting, was able to meet with Gorbachev, who told the premier that his "treaty community" idea was acceptable—but only if it did not lead to German unification.

Storm clouds were forming around Modrow's once hopeful government. By early December it was clear that the East German people would force their leaders to allow free elections, whatever this choice might mean for the future or for socialism in the GDR. On December 1, the East German parliament, the *Volkskammer*, voted to revoke the constitutional guarantee of the governing party's leading role in politics. The country was rocked by disclosures of top-level corruption. Shortly afterward, the entire party Politburo, and then the full Central Committee, resigned their positions.

The arrests of former top officials, charged with corruption and

14. See Deutschland Archiv, *Chronik der Ereignisse in der DDR* (Cologne: Verlagwissenschaft und Politik, 1990), 33–34; Elizabeth Pond, *Beyond the Wall: Germany's Road to Unification* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1993), 140–145; and Konrad H. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 70–76. In Washington, Blackwill convened a meeting of CIA and DIA analysts to review the situation in the GDR on December 7, 1989, and the U.S. government closely monitored developments for signs of a breakdown of public order. Soviet forces remained quiet. See Benko (analyst attached to Blackwill's office) through Blackwill to Scowcroft, "Intelligence Community Assessment of Current Tensions in the GDR," December 7, 1989.

abuse of power, began on December 3. Egon Krenz resigned his post as head of state on December 6, leaving Modrow alone at the top. Civil authority began to break down. Some citizens' committees seized public buildings in order to stop secret police destruction of incriminating government records.[15] There were several attacks on East German, and then Soviet, military installations in the GDR. The Soviet press angrily warned that "attacks on military property would not be tolerated." The situation became so unstable that, on December 7 or 8, Soviet military commanders ordered Soviet forces in the GDR to undertake "emergency measures to protect themselves and property."[16]

Ambassador Yuli Kvitsinski was recalled from Bonn to Moscow to help prepare a lengthy, highly secret interdepartmental paper on upcoming Soviet negotiations with the government of the GDR. The paper contained his still controversial proposal to persuade the East German government to press the idea of a German confederation as an alternative to unification. Kvitsinski reminded his colleagues that the paper could be put forward only after it had been formally approved by the Politburo of the USSR. Two of Gorbachev's top advisers, Aleksandr Yakovlev and Valentin Falin, flew to East Berlin, where, on December 8, Modrow's beleaguered party was holding a congress to plan their next moves. The visiting Soviets, Falin in particular, offered their frustrated hosts little beyond philosophical musings about the need for two German states.[17]

15. See *Krasnaia zvezda* and *Izvestia*, December 5 and 6, 1989. For reports on emergency measures taken by Soviet troops, see the same newspapers for December 8 and 9, 1989.

16. Julij A. Kwizinskij, *Vor dem Sturm: Erinnerungen eines Diplomaten*, trans. Hilde and Helmut Ettinger (Berlin: Siedler, 1993), 17; Wjatscheslaw Kotschemassow, *Meine letzte Mission* (Berlin: Dietz, 1994), 195–196.

17. According to both Shevardnadze aide Sergei Tarasenko and Cherniaev, the Soviet leadership was becoming worried that the real problem for them if Germany unified would be a witch hunt carried out against those who had "lost East Europe and Germany." Tarasenko claims that, by the end of 1989, he and others knew that the unification of Germany was inevitable and were trying to devise a strategy to keep this development from bringing down Gorbachev's government. See Rice interviews with Tarasenko, Moscow, October 1991, and Cherniaev, Mos-

On December 5, Gorbachev abruptly abandoned his philosophical detachment. His appeals to history and to Kohl's "sense of responsibility" had not worked. Bush and Kohl had received the impression from Gorbachev that he was not anxious about Germany's future, perhaps because, as Gorbachev's foreign policy aide Anatoli Cherniaev noted, Gorbachev liked to avoid confrontation in personal discourse. But now Gorbachev seemed frustrated and angry that they had misread his message. To Cherniaev, Gorbachev seemed angriest of all about Kohl's failure to consult him before presenting his Ten-Point Plan. Yet when Gorbachev had had the chance to voice his concerns directly to President Bush, he had not done so.

Perhaps there was no single cause for the shift in Gorbachev's mood. The situation in Eastern Europe was continuing to deteriorate. Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania were all in the throes of crises. At home, pressures from the republics and from a relentlessly outspoken Boris Yeltsin were building. Now, with the GDR trembling again with internal crisis, yet another Gorbachev gamble—this time on Modrow—was on the verge of collapse. The stakes were high. As the situation worsened in the GDR, Gorbachev had reason to worry that a loss of face on Germany might be the final straw in his situation at home in the Soviet Union, a development that could radically alter the domestic balance of power in Moscow and bring down all that he had worked for there.[18]

cow, June 1994. This evidence is not reliable as a characterization of the whole Soviet diplomatic effort, but it does offer insight into the way domestic concerns were already shadowing Soviet policy.

18. This discussion is based on Soviet memcon, "Zapis besedy M. S. Gorbacheva s Ministrom inostrannykh del FRG G. D. Gensherom," December 5, 1989, made available to the authors by Aleksandra Bezimenskaia. See also Anatoli Cherniaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym: po dnevikovym zapisiam* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1993), 306–309. The "left no doubt" quotation is from Kiessler and Elbe, *Ein runder Tisch mit scharfen Ecken*, 70. Shevardnadze's reference to Hitler was in the context of an alleged German diktat in forcing the annexation of a neighbor. For Genscher's own account to his counterparts of his meeting in Moscow, see State 3834, "12/13/89 Quadripartite Ministers' Meeting," January 5, 1990. See also *Pravda*, December 6, 1989, 1, and *Izvestia*, December 6, 1989, 4.

West German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher was the first target of his wrath. In an extraordinary meeting that Cherniaev thought went "far beyond the bounds" of Gorbachev's usual discussions with statesmen, Gorbachev treated Genscher like an errant child.[19] He told Genscher at the start that the conversation would be serious and Genscher would not be spared, especially because the two men knew each other well. Genscher delivered a general presentation about Soviet-German rapprochement. Gorbachev said he welcomed such comments, but more needed to be said. This was a test of history, Gorbachev remarked, and he could not understand why Kohl had come out with his Ten-Point Plan. Kohl's demand for revolutionary political change in the GDR as a condition for German assistance outraged him. "One should say this is an ultimatum, a 'diktat,'" he fumed. The move had been an "absolute surprise" to Gorbachev, who thought that he and the chancellor had reached an understanding in their telephone conversation on November 11. He remarked, "And after that—such a move!"

Perhaps the chancellor did not need this understanding anymore. "Perhaps," said Gorbachev, "he thinks that his melody, the melody of his march, is already playing and he is already marching to it." This attitude could not be reconciled with the talk of con-

Shevardnadze's public criticism of Genscher was especially sharp. Teltschik was surprised by the Soviet hard line after Bush's report of his more temperate talk with Gorbachev in Malta (*329 Tage*, 68). Echoing Gorbachev's line (which he may have helped write), Valentin Falin told the British ambassador in Moscow on December 7 that the USSR thought Kohl, demonstrating "national egoism," had broken a promise to Gorbachev not to undertake any pan-German initiatives. On the hardening Soviet line, see the analysis sent urgently to Washington in Moscow 35285, "Soviet Concerns about Germany," December 9, 1989. The Falin comment was passed along by the British to their U.S. colleagues in Moscow. Soviet deputy foreign minister Anatoli Adamishin also went out of his way on December 11 to convey a message in Paris to Richard Schifter, assistant secretary of state for human rights, that, in part because of domestic criticism, Moscow was "deeply concerned" over the possibility of early German reunification. Schifter heard concerns from senior officials in the French foreign ministry as well. See Schifter to Baker, "Soviet Concern over German Reunification and French Thoughts Thereon," December 15, 1989.

19. See TASS reports, December 5, 1989, in *FBIS-SOV* 89–233, December 6, 1989, 51. The *Pravda* reports for the next day, December 6, are similar.

structing a common European home. Kohl had promised a balanced, responsible policy. But Gorbachev attacked the Ten-Point Plan in detail. He asked what confederation ideas meant for defense and alliance membership and whether the FRG would be in NATO or the Warsaw Pact. ''Did you think this all through?'' he demanded of Genscher.

Genscher loyally defended the Ten-Point Program, though in fact he had been as surprised by it as Gorbachev. He pointed to the qualifying language, to the vague assurances, and to the goodwill of the German people, who, Genscher said, had learned from their mistakes. It was a proposal, not an ultimatum. Gorbachev would not be assuaged. ''Never mind all that,'' he said. The German chancellor was treating citizens of the GDR as if they were his subjects. Shevardnadze interjected dramatically, ''Even Hitler didn't permit himself this.'' Gorbachev made it clear that Kohl's conditions for helping the GDR amounted to demands for revolutionary change. Genscher tried to explain, but Gorbachev said he was not fooled. This line of thinking from Kohl ''was a political blunder.'' The Soviets ''left no doubt'' that the GDR must remain an independent state and a member of the Warsaw Pact.

Breaking with what had become a practice of downplaying differences between Western and Soviet leaders, the Soviet press went out of its way to emphasize that Genscher's meetings with Gorbachev, Shevardnadze, and Yakovlev had been ''extremely frank.''[20]

Gorbachev formally reported on his German policy to the Communist Party's Central Committee in a plenum on December 9. ''We underscore with all resoluteness,'' he declared, ''that no harm will come to the GDR. It is our strategic ally and a member of the Warsaw Treaty.'' He harshly attacked Western attempts to ''influence the processes under way in socialist countries'' and promised to ''neutralize attempts at such interference, in particular, in regard to the GDR.''[21]

20. See reports of the Gorbachev speech in *Pravda*, December 10, 1989, 1–3.

21. Soviet memcon, ''Zapis besedy M.S. Gorbacheva s preszidentom Frantsii F. Mitteranom,'' December 6, 1989, made available to authors by Aleksandra Bezimenskaia. For French foreign minister Dumas's account of the meetings in Kiev, see State 3834, ''12/13/89 Quadripartite Ministers' Meeting,'' January 5,

Meeting Gorbachev in Kiev the day after the Soviet president had savaged the West German foreign minister, French president François Mitterrand heard firsthand about the Soviets' anger over Bonn's behavior. At the end of November, Gorbachev had phoned Mitterrand and reportedly told him that, on the day Germany unified, "a Soviet marshal will be sitting in my chair."

Mitterrand did not need much prompting. At their meeting in Kiev, Gorbachev began with a philosophical discussion, but Mitterrand replied bluntly, "Today the problem is Germany." Mitterrand emphasized the all-European process. The German component should be a part of all-European politics, "not overrun it." He was not afraid of a unified Germany, but the four powers had to safeguard the balance of power in Germany's relationship to Europe.

Mitterrand, like Gorbachev, thought that Kohl was hurrying. When he said so to Genscher on November 30, Genscher had not seemed to disagree. Gorbachev recounted how "rudely" he had handled Genscher the day before, criticizing Kohl's plan as a "diktat." Mitterrand expressed his surprise and pressed Gorbachev for the details. Mitterrand mentioned his plan to visit East Germany and asked if Gorbachev would like to join him there. Though this move would have been a tremendous boost for Modrow, Gorbachev seemed too astonished by the suggestion to even muster a reply. Mitterrand asked at one point, "What should we do concretely?" But neither leader had answers to that question, and the meeting ended inconclusively.[22]

With Soviet concerns ringing in his ears, Mitterrand flew back to France to prepare for another EC summit, a meeting of the European Council, that he would chair in Strasbourg on December 8. Mitterrand soon found another ally. The British wanted him to

1990. Mitterrand told Kohl, over breakfast during the EC summit on December 9, that Gorbachev had displayed "astonishing" inner peace about Germany but might react differently if developments moved too quickly toward unification. The Germans noticed that Mitterrand said nothing about the French side of this conversation. As usual, Kohl tried to downplay any concern about unification taking place anytime soon. Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 71.

22. Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 796.

help open up a second front against Kohl's plan. Though discouraged by Bush's handling of the NATO summit meeting, Thatcher had not given up. Her attention turned to Paris. "If there was any hope now of stopping or slowing down reunification," she recalled, "it would only come from an Anglo-French initiative."[23]

Mitterrand and Thatcher had two private meetings in Strasbourg on the margin of the summit. The subject was Germany. Thatcher recalls Mitterrand as being "still more concerned than I was." That was true. Mitterrand had already warned Genscher that Kohl's rash policies might lead to the revival of the Triple Entente of France, Britain, and Russia, which had been formed before World War I. He cautioned that such an alliance might rally once more against Germany. Now the French leader drew an analogy from the years before World War II: "We find ourselves in the same situation as the leaders in France and Britain before the war, who didn't react to anything. We can't repeat Munich!"[24] Mitterrand criticized Kohl's plan and commented disparagingly on the Germans. So what could be done? Mitterrand said that Kohl had already gone well beyond the assurances he had offered EC colleagues in Paris a few weeks earlier. According to Thatcher, Mitterrand commented that at times of great danger France and Britain had always established special relations. Such a time had come again. But the two leaders could not agree on a plan of action.[25]

At least France could ease its worries by assuring itself that steps toward German unity could be matched by equally large steps toward European union. This was just the approach Jacques De-

23. Ibid., 796–797.

24. See Jacques Attali, *Verbatim: Tome 3, Chronique des années 1988–1991* (Paris: Fayard, 1995), 337, 369.

25. Genscher, interview by Zelikow, Wachtberg-Pech, December 1994; and Conclusions of the Presidency, European Council, Strasbourg, December 8 and 9, 1989. See also Scowcroft to President Bush, "Mitterrand and the Strasbourg Summit," December 13, 1989 (drafted by Blackwill). The CIA pointed out the similarities between the president's four principles on Germany and the EC's Strasbourg statement in an informal chart, "Conditions for German Reunification," which Blackwill passed to General Scowcroft on December 13.

lors, president of the European Commission, had chosen to adopt. On these points Kohl was ready to agree; Mitterrand would be pushing on an open door. So France was able to accomplish its most important operational objectives for the Strasbourg summit of the European Community. Mitterrand won Kohl's support for convening, in late 1990, an intergovernmental conference to amend the Treaty of Rome, which had created the European Community, in order to prepare a new treaty adopting economic and monetary union. In return, the EC endorsed Germany's movement toward unification in terms similar to the guidelines proposed by President Bush at the December 4 NATO summit.

Yet the language on Germany was contested. The German negotiators, led by political director Dieter Kastrup, sought unequivocal support for self-determination. The French and the Italians objected that Germany's future could not be determined by the Germans alone. Genscher thought that the German attitude toward monetary union would be the test for earning Mitterrand's support. Bonn passed the test. After a sometimes heated discussion, the EC heads of government agreed on a single modest paragraph:

> We seek the strengthening of the state of peace in Europe in which the German people will regain [their] unity through free self-determination [the traditional formula]. This process should take place peacefully and democratically, in full respect of the relevant agreements and treaties and of all the principles defined by the Helsinki Final Act, in a context of dialogue and East-West cooperation. It also has to be placed in the perspective of European integration.[26]

Kohl commented later on the "icy climate" he had encountered among his fellow leaders in Strasbourg. The winds from Moscow were chilly, too. The United States had been watching with alarm as pressure was being put on Kohl. He seemed to be isolated on all fronts. Gorbachev may have been calm at Malta, but now he

26. Teltschik, *329 Tage*, 70.

seemed furious. In Bonn, though, Teltschik was still discounting the Soviet worries as nothing but "appeals and warnings." After all, when West Germany had accepted deployment of new U.S. nuclear forces in 1983, "the Soviet leadership had threatened us with war and missiles."[27] Fortunately for Bonn, the Soviet, British, and French governments seemed to have an attitude without a policy.

The most important priority for the United States was to keep the path for Kohl open—free of conditions that Moscow, or the French or British for that matter, might attach. In early December, the only addendum to Bonn's goals was the set of principles articulated by Bush, putting Kohl on the record in support of continued German alignment with NATO. As one of Genscher's top advisers put it, "In this way Bush had made Germany's NATO membership an unequivocal prerequisite for the later process of unification, like the solution of the border question with Poland."[28]

A week after the Strasbourg summit, Mitterrand flew to St. Martin in the Caribbean to review European developments in person with President Bush.[29] They discussed the future of Germany at some length. Again Mitterrand tried to find the proper balance. Though not projecting the alarm Thatcher recalls from the Strasbourg summit, Mitterrand was clearly troubled about developments in Germany. This time he agreed with President Bush that Germany could unify with "a proper transfer" of power. But the

27. Kiessler and Elbe, *Ein runder Tisch mit scharfen Ecken*, 55.

28. The account that follows is drawn from the Zelikow interview with Baker, Houston, TX, January 1995, and memcon of meeting with President Mitterrand, St. Martin, December 16, 1989. See also Scowcroft to President Bush, "Scope Paper—Your Meeting with President Mitterrand," December 15, 1989 (drafted by Basora and Blackwill); and Scowcroft to President Bush, "Mitterrand, the Germans, U.S.-EC Cooperation, and the CSCE," December 15, 1989 (drafted by Blackwill).

29. See CIA, "East Germany: Movement Toward Democracy and Reunification," December 11, 1989; Munich 4955, "Bavarians and the Reunification Question," December 15, 1989; Bonn 38006, "Kohl's Ten-Point Program: A Burst of Criticism and then More Embracing," December 5, 1989; Claus Gennrich, "Genscher Pledges Respect for Soviet Security Interests," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 13, 1989, 4; Bonn 38015, "The SPD and the German Question," December 5, 1989; and other U.S. intelligence reports.

objections of the Soviets, Poles, Czechs, Belgians, Danes, Italians, and others could not be ignored. Mitterrand had told Kohl at their recent meeting in Switzerland that Germany should go no faster than the EC, or the whole thing ''will end up in the ditch.'' Mitterrand repeated that, for him, developments in Germany were linked to developments in NATO and the EC. He could understand what the Germans wanted and it was hard to stop them. But if Kohl went too fast, he could cause a diplomatic crisis. It would have the wrong effect, complicating East-West relations at a time when the West was winning hands down.

Secretary of State Baker pointed out that the NATO and Strasbourg summits had shown the way to a common position. Mitterrand claimed to agree with Bush but said he was trying to manage the contradictions of the situation. Fast movement could disrupt the equilibrium in Europe and on the frontiers. Like Gorbachev, Mitterrand had been annoyed by Ambassador Walters's speculation that reunification could occur in as little as five years. Bush replied that Walters's view was not official and would not be repeated. Nevertheless, Mitterrand argued, Walters said it in Germany and the Germans had heard it. We should not encourage more speed, he said. Movement on arms control, EC integration, and Euro-American relations was also required. Mitterrand's anxiety seemed to spill over as he spoke of the need for a new Europe if the continent was to avoid slipping back to where it had been in 1913 (an analogy Mitterrand had also used with Gorbachev and with his own advisers). Everything could be lost.

The fact that Mitterrand did not air these views in public shows the powerful but silent effect of the clear U.S. stance. With President Bush openly saying he supported German aspirations for unification, Mitterrand and Thatcher were acutely inhibited from publicly voicing their concerns. That enforced reticence, in turn, made it harder for them to rally a countervailing political momentum against the West German and U.S. plans.

Secretary of State Baker then made his own trip to Berlin, where he reassured Kohl about a meeting of the ambassadors from the

four powers that the Soviets, British, and French had requested. Then he made a brief visit to East Germany, where he linked any Western economic assistance for the GDR to fundamental political and economic reform. He stressed the importance of genuinely free elections. Immediately after his meetings in Potsdam, Secretary Baker traveled on to Brussels, where he met with EC foreign ministers on December 13, principally to discuss the status of economic assistance for Eastern Europe.

Most important, on the evening of December 13, Baker had a working dinner with foreign ministers Hurd, Dumas, and Genscher to discuss Berlin and German issues. The ministers responded positively to the broad vision for Europe's future that Baker had explained in a speech in Berlin. But the Germans were still angry about the sight of the ambassadors from the four powers standing together in Berlin. Genscher felt that there should never be another such meeting at which the Germans were left sitting at the "cat's table." Behind the scenes, Genscher's advisers began to warn of the danger of a new peace treaty "like Versailles." Baker put his hand on Genscher's arm and said, "Hans-Dietrich, we have understood you."[30]

Other European statesmen pursued their own efforts to moderate the quickening pace toward German unity. Mitterrand, completing his energetic round of diplomatic consultations, met with Modrow in East Berlin on December 21. Breaking with the U.S. approach, the French president offered a multiyear program of aid for the existing East German government and proclaimed his support for closer GDR ties to Western Europe. One of Mitterrand's advisers privately warned Teltschik again that Kohl was going too fast.[31]

30. For accounts of this dinner and the next morning's breakfast, see Kiessler and Elbe, *Ein runder Tisch mit scharfen Ecken*, 74–75 (quoting Genscher and Baker; Elbe was present); State 3934, "12/13/89 Quadripartite Ministers' Meeting," January 5, 1990.

31. On the comment from Mitterrand's adviser, Jean-Louis Bianco, see Teltschik, *329 Tage*, 96.

Nevertheless, as 1989 drew to a close, Helmut Kohl clearly held the reins in determining Germany's future. Bush and Baker had deliberately decided to legitimize Kohl's program, and the United States had succeeded in adding its own objective: Germany's continued membership in NATO, anchoring the FRG firmly to the West. The U.S. diplomatic strategy was intended to calm the Soviets and keep the Allies from descending into renewed national hostilities so that the goals of Washington and Bonn could be achieved.

Chancellor Kohl tried to reassure the Soviets. He sent a message to Gorbachev promising not to destabilize the situation in Europe. It was the people, he wrote, who were putting the German question back on the agenda. Any developments would be embedded in all-European structures. He recognized the legitimacy of Soviet security interests. As this message was being delivered, Gorbachev was sending his own letter to Kohl. Its tone was cold. Gorbachev said that the USSR would do all it could to "neutralize" intervention in the GDR's internal affairs. East Germany was a strategic partner of the Soviet Union, and the existence of two German states was a historic fact.[32]

Kohl tried to meet with Gorbachev as he had told Baker he would, but the Soviet leader rebuffed him, saying that he did not have time. According to several officials, the Soviets were trying once again to reevaluate their policy options.[33] Perhaps Gorbachev was still angry and wanted to keep Kohl waiting. But once more, Moscow forfeited a chance to define the agenda. When the two leaders finally met in February 1990, the German Democratic Republic was a walking corpse.

Undaunted by Gorbachev's slight, Kohl pressed on with the first steps of his Ten-Point Plan, meeting with Modrow in Dresden

32. Kohl's message was sent to Moscow on December 14, 1989. Gorbachev's message was waiting when Kohl returned on December 18, 1989, from a visit to Hungary. Teltschik, *329 Tage*, 80–81, 85.

33. Tarasenko, interview by Rice, Moscow, October 1991. Teltschik was told this by the Soviets as well. Teltschik, interview by Zelikow and Rice, Gütersloh, June 1992.

on December 19, 1989, to begin negotiating new agreements on social, cultural, and economic ties between the two German states. Kohl indicated a readiness to help Modrow stabilize the GDR and listened sympathetically to his request for billions of marks in aid. The leaders announced that they would open the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin as a border crossing and lift the remaining restrictions on cross-border movement in time for Christmas.

The Dresden trip was important for Kohl, bringing home the momentum of East German opinion and providing an opportunity to seize the moment. Addressing cheering crowds in Dresden, Kohl spoke emotionally of the German nation and was met with chants for unification. Kohl had rallied political support for his cause within his party, he had kept his program for unity on the table, and now, as he had hoped, the East German people were rallying to the dream he had told them could come true.

In Washington, even the Americans were beginning to fear that the FRG was acting imprudently. Conceding that Kohl had scored a public relations coup by his visit to East Germany, Secretary Baker advised President Bush that Kohl's activities "may raise again the question with some, however, of whether the chancellor's domestic political interest is leading him too far, too fast on the issue of unification; he's tapping emotions that will be difficult to manage."[34]

It was clear that the frenzied diplomacy in the month after the opening of the Berlin Wall had dramatically altered the political landscape. Genscher's adviser, Frank Elbe, captured the change when he recalled that in the middle of November he had told Zoellick that "the tempo of German unification cannot be permitted to endanger the stability of Europe." By early December, however, Elbe told Zoellick, "If German unity *doesn't* come, *that* will endanger the stability of Europe."[35]

34. Baker to President Bush (for his evening reading), December 20, 1989. On Kohl's trip to the GDR, see Teltschik, *329 Tage*, 87–96.

35. Kiessler and Elbe, *Ein runder Tisch mit scharfen Ecken,* 47 (emphasis added). Elbe remembers that Zoellick replied to the December warning by agreeing, "We also see it that way."

As pressure mounted in 1990, there was no longer any doubt that the two German states would come together in some fashion. The most difficult challenge now was to determine when and how unification would occur and to balance these plans against the danger of a new East-West crisis that could plunge Europe back into a cold war. An authoritative German history rightly judges that, by the end of 1989, "The constellation of interests had quickly crystallized: The Federal [German] government and the U.S. administration as real advocates of unification against a large, clear group of doubters and brakemen, with France and Great Britain also declared enemies of unification along with the GDR and the Soviet Union."[36] To meet that challenge, the U.S. and West German governments rushed in the first weeks of 1990 to develop a whole new strategy to bring about unification, this time on a timetable of months rather than years.

Returning to the opening argument of this essay, the preceding story turned a magnifying glass on the December 1989 diplomacy that partly determined the content of only one of 13 such independent variables in this turning point of the cold war. In this brief story, the content was not predetermined. A more timid West German policy or a more passive Bush administration policy during this period is quite imaginable and could well have slowed the process and dampened popular expectations inside East Germany. Perhaps, too, a different set of policies might have been adopted by the opposing powers. But the effect of the December maneuvers on the volatile German crisis was that, instead of wielding a fire extinguisher, Kohl and Bush were adding judicious splashes of gasoline. Yet this outcome still did not preordain the content of our dependent variables. Instead, the content of this specific variable opened up new choices and possibilities and another spectrum of potential outcomes in a succession of pivotal moments.

36. Werner Weidenfeld with Peter M. Wagner and Elke Bruck, *Aussenpolitik für die deutsche Einheit: Die Entscheidungsjahre 1989/90*, vol. 4, *Geschichte der deutschen Einheit* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1998), 208.

For analysts of international relations, illustrations such as these can be humbling. They suggest that within one large turning point, a number of smaller turning points can be discerned, each deserving careful study before causal explanations for the whole can be offered confidently. The burden of required knowledge may seem forbidding. But just as analogous developments in the science of physics and human biology have liberated understanding and creativity, so a renewed appreciation for the significance of microchoices in the even less determinate realm of human behavior can add essential understanding.