

# The “Ottawa Formula” and Transatlantic Relations Politics and Diplomacy of the “Two-Plus-Four” Negotiations

Ursula Lehmkuhl

Volume 5, Number 2, December 2009

Le retour de l’histoire ? Répercussions européennes et internationales de la réunification allemande

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1001456ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1001456ar>

[See table of contents](#)

---

**Publisher(s)**

Le Centre canadien d’études allemandes et européennes

**ISSN**

1718-8946 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

---

**Cite this article**

Lehmkuhl, U. (2009). The “Ottawa Formula” and Transatlantic Relations: Politics and Diplomacy of the “Two-Plus-Four” Negotiations. *Eurostudia*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.7202/1001456ar>

# THE “OTTAWA FORMULA” AND TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

## *Politics and Diplomacy of the “Two-Plus-Four” Negotiations*

---

---

Ursula Lehmkuhl  
University of Trier

The decision to structure the international diplomacy for negotiating the external dimensions of German unification as a „Two-Plus-Four“ forum was reached in Ottawa at the sidelines of the first joint conference of NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries on the issue of “Open Skies”, i.e. the question of aerial observation, in February 1990. At the traditional “Deutschland breakfast” that preceded NATO conferences, Foreign Ministers Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Roland Dumas, James A. Baker, and Douglas Hurd agreed on the framework for future negotiations on Germany. Baker and Genscher then individually met with Soviet Foreign Ministers Shevardnadze. At the end of this conference, on February 13 the so-called “Ottawa formula” (Genscher/Gorbachev 1990) was announced to the press. It simply stated that the foreign ministers of the six countries had agreed that the foreign ministers of the FRG and the GDR would meet with the French, British, Soviet, and American foreign ministers “to discuss external aspects of the establishment of German unity, including the issues of security of the neighboring states.” And it was announced that “preliminary discussions at the official level will begin shortly” (Zelikow/Rice 1995: 193; see also Elbe 2010).

After the Ottawa-formula was released to the press Canada, as well as the Netherlands, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Belgium, and Spain criticized the plan because their governments had not known that this forum was being created. Everybody felt somehow left out. The situation was particularly embarrassing for the Canadians, who were, after all, hosting the conference. “Most NATO partners felt steamrolled by the events” reported Frank Elbe who was present at the meeting in his function as Head of the Executive Staff of the Federal Foreign Minister’s Office (1988 to 1991). And Elbe continues that “the Canadian hosts complained that history had been made in their capital and they had not been informed in advance.” Robert Blackwill, the National Security Council official most



closely involved with German unification, and also present at that historic Ottawa meeting quoted a Canadian who said: “We felt like a piano player on the ground floor of a warehouse, who has some sort of idea of what is going on in the upper floors” (Elbe 2010: 39).

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney described the Canadian role at this meeting as that of “friendly bystanders” (MacDonald 2010). Whereas Condoleezza Rice and Philip Zelikow claim that Prime Minister Mulroney was not very helpful at the meeting because he seconded Shevardnaze by indicating that “he (Mulroney) did not see how the EC could accommodate the weight of a united Germany” (Zelikow/Rice 1995: 192). Actually Brian Mulroney supported reunification but had some reservations. He was concerned “that unification for Germany appears to be fuelled not just by the legitimate desire of the two states to come together but by the total collapse of the economy of one state and the economic strength of another”. And he openly confronted West German Foreign Minister Genscher with his assessment that West Germany is “not really talking about a merger”, but that “this is a takeover” (McGrath/Milnes 2009: 41).

\* \* \*

Starting off with a reconstruction of the chain of events that finally led to the signing of the “Two-Plus-Four” Treaty on September 12, 1990 this article will discuss the diplomacy and politics of German unification by focusing especially on the international organizations and institutions that were primarily affected by it. This also allows talking about Canada’s role in the process, since Canada was a member of the United Nations, of NATO and of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). It is only in this indirect way that we can learn something about Canada’s strategic priorities, the bilateral diplomacy between Canada and the United States, or Canada’s policies on NATO involvement or the future of the CSCE. In contrast to the United Kingdom and Germany no official Canadian documents have yet been published and the Canadian archives are still closed on this issue.<sup>1</sup>

For lack of Canadian documentation this article relies to a large extent on the comprehensive volume of documents published last year in the series “Documents on British Foreign Policy Overseas” which provides relatively deep insights into the strategic thinking of Foreign Office bureaucrats and the British government (Salmon et al. 2010). This publication together with the extensive edition of documents from the Chancellor’s Office published by the Federal Ministry of the Interior (Küsters/Deuerlein 1998) – since 2000 also available in electronic form (Küsters/Innern 2000)– and the really thrilling account of the negotiation process

published by Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice (Zelikow/Rice 1997), who were both involved in the process as policy advisors of the NSC, offer quite a good picture of the international challenges deriving from the fall of the Wall in November 1989.

## 1. THE “TWO-PLUS-FOUR” NEGOTIATIONS

The “Two-Plus-Four” negotiations started officially on 5 May 1990, in the “Welsaal” at the Federal Foreign Office in Bonn, after the constitution of the first freely elected government of the GDR.<sup>2</sup> But already in mid-March the political directors of the ministers began preparing the consultations. As Genscher explained: “This meeting in Bonn sent an encouraging message: The long-cherished yearning of the Germans for peaceful unification is coming to fruition” (Genscher/Gorbachev 1990: 230). At the end of this meeting Foreign Minister Genscher stated:

The will of the Germans to achieve their unity in an orderly manner and without delay was recognized by all participants. German unity is to be a gain for all countries. The objective of the talks is to arrive at a definitive international settlement, the replacement of the rights and responsibilities of the four powers (Genscher/Gorbachev 1990: 230).

After the inaugural May 5 meeting in Bonn, progress was astonishingly swift. The ministers met again three times in quick succession, in East Berlin (22 June), Paris (17 July), and Moscow (12 September) to discuss and work on the agreed agenda consisting of four main points: 1. border questions; 2. political and military matters, taking account of approaches to suitable security structures in Europe; 3. problems relating to Berlin; and 4. a final international settlement and replacement of the rights and responsibilities of the four powers (Genscher/Gorbachev 1990).

Polish representatives were present at the Paris meeting on 17 July 1990 to discuss the Oder-Neisse line, the border between Germany and Poland, and other border problems. The foreign ministers of the four wartime allies, the two Germanys, and Poland settled the boundary question without any dispute or confrontation. The united Germany would remove from its laws any language that suggested or implied that the Polish-German border is provisional. The newly unified country would comprise only East and West Germany and Berlin. The parliament of the unified Germany would confirm the Oder-Neisse line in treaty and would forswear any territorial claim. The wartime allies would serve as witnesses to these assurances (Harris 1991: 172). Hence problem No. 1 was solved. Between the ministerial meetings the political directors of the six powers met on an almost constant basis to negotiate details and to hammer out negotiation agreements that

were then discussed and confirmed during the ministerial talks.<sup>3</sup> By the end of the final meeting of the „Two-Plus-Four“ political directors in East Berlin between 4 and 7 September, three substantive questions still remained unresolved, among them the right of NATO forces to move into eastern Germany (Salmon et al. 2010: xxxi). As Frank Elbe reports:

When London's political director, John Weston, insisted that exercises of foreign troops must be allowed on the former territory of the GDR despite the fact that the relevant passage in the treaty had already been drafted – namely “that foreign troops can neither be ... stationed nor deployed in this part of Germany” – the Soviets called off the signing scheduled for the next day. Eventually, this problem was also resolved, and on September 12 the four Allied Powers and the two German states signed the Two Plus Four Treaty... (Elbe 2010: 43)

The NATO question was crucial for the United States. America's predominance in NATO and NATO's pre-eminence in European security were two main strategic pillars of U.S. post-Cold-War Strategy in Europe, and thus of American hegemony on the continent (Costigliola 1994: 88). A shared U.S.-Germany security strategy through a common U.S.-German NATO policy had become the most important foundation of America's position in Europe ever since France had left NATO (Conze 1995) and Britain refrained from supporting a policy of European integration involving the creation of supranational institutions (Rohe et al. 1992; Schmidt 2001; Schmidt/Meyers 1989). In addition to the security dimension attached to Germany's NATO membership, NATO was a crucial instrument to secure American economic interests in Europe. As Robert Blackwill pointed out in a policy paper published in 1990: “It is illusory to believe that the United States can successfully protect its commercial interests vis-à-vis Europe without the political and military link provided by NATO” (Blackwill 1990). As Germany unified in 1989-90, NATO appeared more necessary than ever to Washington officials (Costigliola 1994: 89).

Astonishingly, also Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev supported the continued existence of the two military alliances as instruments to stabilize a situation of major transformations taking place in Europe and in Germany. At the Soviet-American summit meeting on Malta in December 1989 Gorbachev had stated that the two alliances “will be preserved for the foreseeable future” because they could make a “contribution to strengthening European security” by becoming a bridge between the two parts of Europe (quoted in Adomeit 2006: 4).

Although a certain consensus existed between the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union, the question of the extension of NATO territory to the East became one of the most controversial issues during the „Two-Plus-Four“

negotiations. As Shevardnadze put it, the “mother of all questions” was the future military status of Germany. The Soviet leaders had to recognize that if Germany was reunified the GDR's participation in the Warsaw Pact would be impossible and a stabilization of the old security system on a modified basis would become unlikely. Thus Soviet decision-makers were confronted with the challenge that some other solution had to be found. In a situation characterized by uncertainty and pressure, they had to guard the interests of Soviet security in general and of the Warsaw Pact in particular (Wettig 1993: 955). This precarious political situation was the main reason why the Soviet leadership remained reluctant and uncompromising concerning the question of Germany's NATO membership. It eventually turned out to become a question of personal leadership by President Gorbachev to solve this two-level-game situation (on the role of ideas and personalities see Checkel 1993).

It was Gorbachev who opened the way for united Germany's membership in NATO at the Soviet-American summit in Washington, May 30 to June 3, 1990. In negotiations with President Bush, continuing the Moscow talks (16 to 19 May) during which Baker had presented his “Nine Assurances” (Baker/DeFrank 1995: 251-252) – a comprehensive package of incentives designed to persuade Gorbachev to accept the basic foundation of all subsequent and supplementary measures for a German settlement (Adomeit 2006: 11)<sup>4</sup> – Gorbachev agreed that the CSCE principles in the Helsinki Final Act, according to which all nations had the right to choose their own alliances, also apply to a sovereign united Germany and that hence Germany could choose to be a full member of NATO (Zelikow/Rice 1997: 277). Concomitantly Kohl and Genscher promised financial support for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the GDR and other help for the deteriorating Soviet economy. Thus Bush's and Baker's diplomatic skill and German economic and financial support for the Soviet Union cleared the way for the signing of the “Treaty on the Final Settlement With Respect to Germany” in Moscow on September 12, 1990.

In addition to terminating Four Power rights, the treaty mandated the withdrawal of all Soviet forces from Germany by the end of 1994. This made it clear that the current borders were final and definitive, and specified the right of a united Germany to belong to NATO. It also provided for the continued presence of British, French, and American troops in Berlin during the interim period of the Soviet withdrawal. In the treaty, the Germans renounced nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons and stated their intention to reduce German armed forces to 370,000 within 3 to 4 years after the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, signed in Paris on November 19, 1990, entered into force.

The signing of the “Two-Plus-Four” Treaty on September 12 was the culmination of four months of difficult but fast-paced negotiations that involved not only the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and France on the one side, and the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic on the other, but included also other European powers and Canada who participated in numerous international meetings and conferences taking place parallel to the “Two-Plus-Four” negotiations. By signing this treaty the four occupying powers agreed to hand back full sovereignty to Germany. This was confirmed at the sidelines of a special meeting of the CSCE in New York on 1 October 1990, where the foreign ministers of the “Two-Plus-Four” process officially signed a document suspending the operation of Quadripartite Rights and Responsibilities. Thus, Germany became *de facto* a sovereign state. One day later the foreign ministers of the CSCE states took note of the “Two-Plus-Four” document. This implied that German unification had taken place with the approval of the signatory states to the Final Act of Helsinki (Elbe 2010: 43). As a result of this agreement on 3 October 1990 the GDR acceded to the Federal Republic under Article 23 of the German Basic Law. Article 23 was then deleted, and Article 146 modified, to make it clear that there would be no further territorial additions to the Federal Republic.

In the preface to the second edition of their book Zelikow and Rice describe this solution as one which “destroyed” the GDR and made “the new state an expanded FRG without any fundamental changes in the system of government or principles for the organization of society” (Zelikow/Rice 1997: vii). The “Two-Plus-Four” treaty not only secured the continuation of the political, institutional, and societal structures of the Bonn Republic, but fulfilled *de facto* the function of a peace treaty by settling the territorial confines of the reunified German state and by confirming that “the rights and responsibilities of the Four Powers relating to Berlin and to Germany as a whole lose their function” – provided that the treaty was ratified by all signatory states, including the Soviet Union. The United Kingdom became the second of the Four Powers, following the United States, to ratify the final settlement. Following ratification by France in January and by the Soviet Union in March, the final settlement entered into force on 15 March 1991 (Schöllgen 2010; Elbe 2010: 44).<sup>5</sup>

## 2. ACHIEVING AGREEMENT ON THE OTTAWA FORMULA

Much more diplomatic drama characterized the process that eventually led to the Ottawa formula in February 1990. Less than three weeks after the fall of the Wall, on November 28, 1989 German Chancellor Helmut Kohl surprised the public by delivering a “Ten Point Plan” to the German Bundestag. He presented a multi-step

approach for unification with a democratizing GDR. The first step was closer cooperation between the two German states; this would be followed by the formation of a confederation and finally by the establishment of a federation that was compatible with East-West détente and European integration (for a list of the ten points see Zelikow/Rice 1997: 120).<sup>6</sup> This Plan was indeed a surprise, for German policy had never questioned the concept of “two states, one nation” which had been the political foundation of “Ostpolitik” and German-German relations ever since the early 1970s (Conze 2009: 705-709). It had not changed even when a major transformation in the geopolitical set-up became evident with the opening of the Hungarian border to Austria in May 1989. Kohl’s Ten-Point Plan indicated, according to Breuilly, a clear shift away from the core political pillars of “Deutschlandpolitik”, to a commitment to some form of reunification (Breuilly 1992). It immediately created an international frisson about whether German unification would be a German or an internationally managed affair (Deighton 1993: 290). This question not only dominated the scheduled summit meetings of NATO and the EC in December 1989, but also generated an intensive telephone diplomacy between Great Britain, France, Germany, the United States and the Soviet Union (Küsters/Deuerlein 1998; Teltschik 1991).

The ideas put forward by Kohl met with great apprehension especially from the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and from French President François Mitterrand. It is no secret that Thatcher was a bitter opponent of German reunification. The new documents released by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office show how she insisted that her government resist the historic development. She repeatedly reined back Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd and Christopher Mallaby, Britain’s ambassador in Bonn, who wanted to signal his support for reunification on the day the wall came down. Thatcher believed up until February 1990 that she would be able to slow the pace of reunification. She felt it was all happening far too quickly and feared that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev would be destabilized by the process (Volkery 2009). She supported a five-year transitional period with two German states and did not share Mitterrand’s optimism that the Germans could be tamed by being incorporated into European institutions (Salmon et al. 2010).

Even for Mitterrand, who had a close personal relationship with Kohl, the idea of a unified Germany was a bridge too far (Fritsch-Bournazel 1991). Mulroney quoted Mitterrand telling reporters at the Elysee, “I love Germany so much I wish there could be two of them” (MacDonald 2010). For President Bush it was clear as early as December 1989 that the United States had to remain Germany’s first friend if it wanted American troops to remain welcome on the territory of a united Germany (Teltschik 1991: 300). Moreover, considering the weakening position of President



Gorbachev and having come to the conclusion that unification was an inevitable development<sup>7</sup> Robert Zoellick, Under Secretary of State for Economic and Agricultural Affairs and chief counselor to Secretary of State Baker, pushed for a rapid unification against the opposition from the State Department's European Bureau, and was able to persuade President Bush and Secretary of State Baker to go along (Pond 1993: 161). Hence, "despite its own initial anxieties, the Bush Administration stood out as the government most accepting of German unification, as Bonn's most dependable and most powerful friend, and hence as Germany's interlocutor with the other three victor powers" (Costigliola 1994: 103).

At this stage of the process, American politics and diplomacy focused on solving three questions:

How quickly did the United States want German unification to happen, and what outcomes for NATO were acceptable? What kind of process should the United States support for managing the external aspects of German unification? What kind of military presence should the United States plan to maintain in Europe, and particularly in Germany, in the 1990s, and how should this military presence be reflected in the arms control process? (Zelikow/Rice 1997: 165-166)

Discussions took place domestically between the White House, the National Security Council, and the State Department and internationally between Bush and Kohl, Bush and Gorbachev (Malta summit 1-3 December 1989), and Kohl and Gorbachev. These discussions were prepared by closely coordinating German and American policy priorities and diplomatic approaches. Both Bush and Kohl regularly talked to Thatcher and Mitterrand to ascertain the main concerns of the two major European partners. In addition the Foreign Ministers of the six powers were involved in a diplomatic circus that involved bilateral and multilateral meetings and discussions. The documents available convey the impression that in December 1989 and January 1990 everybody involved on the official and bureaucratic level was working day and night without getting much sleep.

The German question was a central topic at the regular NATO summit in Brussels, on December 4, 1989. At this meeting, eight days after Kohl presented his Ten Point Plan, President Bush not only debriefed NATO heads of states on the U.S.-Soviet summit meeting in Malta, December 1-3, but also delivered a policy statement about "the future shape of the new Europe and the new Atlanticism" in which he explained that German unification should be based on four 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. *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. *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 (Zelikow/Rice 1997: 133).

Bush claimed that the Atlantic Alliance should make the promotion of greater freedom in the East a basic element of its policy, and thus continue to be the guarantor of stability in Europe (Gutjahr/Ramsbotham 1991).

The information presented at the NATO summit as well as the NATO framework itself dominated the treatment of the question of German unification at the European Council meeting that took place four days later on December 8-9 in Strasbourg. The meeting was chaired by François Mitterrand. The French President underlined his well-known position that steps toward German unity should be matched by equally large steps toward European Union. Mitterrand won Kohl's support for convening, in late 1990, an intergovernmental conference to amend the Treaty of Rome, which had created the European Economic 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.

Another five days later, on December 14, Secretary of State James A. Baker gave a much-quoted speech to the Press Club in the Steigenberger Hotel Berlin entitled “A New Europe, a New Atlanticism: Architecture for a New Era” summarizing the American position with regard to the new security challenges and the possible options to solve them. Baker argued that the “new architecture for a new era” must first offer an opportunity for the division of Berlin and of Germany to be overcome through peace and freedom. Second, it should reflect the continued linkage of America's security to Europe's security. He stressed that this new architecture should be based on three elements:

- 1) a new mission for NATO: In addition to its traditional role of deterrence and defense, the alliance would attend more to nonmilitary aspects of security, specifically including the CFE treaty and arms control verification.
- 2) The strengthening of EC-U.S. relations: Baker proposed “a significantly strengthened set of institutional and consultative links” between the US and the Community, as well as expanded EC support for the new democracies of Eastern Europe.
- 3) The institutionalization of the CSCE: Baker argued that the CSCE had set up standards for human rights and consultation that were already helping to overcome the division of Europe. New Europe-wide rules for democratic governance could become the top priority for the CSCE (Zelikow/Rice 1995: 143).

This very much correlated with German preferences. Germany wanted a three way solution: NATO and the American security guarantee, the EC-WEU and a single European security identity, and the CSCE and a pan-European security order (Sperling 1994: 264). The CSCE played an important function that neither NATO nor the European Community could play: CSCE provided an institutional mechanism for integrating the successor states of the Soviet Union into a pan-European security and economic space without necessarily compromising or threatening the geopolitical and military logic of NATO or undermining further progress toward European political union. This argument was put forward by Genscher in his Tutzing Address of January 31, 1990 "German Unity in the European Framework" (on the security dimensions of German unification see Genscher/Gorbachev 1990; for analysis of the Tutzing address see Maier 1997: 258-259).

In his Steigenberger Address Baker also reiterated the four principles the American President had stated in Brussels which now received much wider public notice in Western Europe and thus stirred the political and public debate about the institutional framework of German unification. With this speech Baker also confirmed American leadership in steering the diplomatic processes involved, a confirmation that reassured the German Chancellor at a time when criticism of his approach was relentlessly uttered by the British and French governments.

Despite the criticism and as a result of a joint effort of German and American politicians and bureaucrats, by the end of January 1990 a German-American plan for a dual diplomatic track to negotiate German unification was conceived and agreed upon: the two Germanys should negotiate with each other the domestic aspects of unification and they should negotiate with the four major victor powers on the international aspects, particularly on the key issue of united Germany's relationship with NATO. It was now a question of how to sell this plan to the other powers involved, especially to the Soviet Union and Shevardnadze who continued to push for a Four Power intervention (Zelikow/Rice 1997: 154-156) and to Margaret Thatcher who never got tired to warn that pressing for German unification with a continued German NATO membership would weaken Gorbachev to a point that the whole process might fail because of Soviet resistance.

### **3. SUMMIT DIPLOMACY: THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF GERMAN UNIFICATION**

The question of Germany's future not only dominated the agenda of the December 1989 NATO and EC summit meetings, but several more wide-ranging sets of talks

in different institutional settings, including NATO, the EC and the CSCE. In 1990 summit meetings of these international organizations took place in an astonishingly quick order followed by bilateral talks reassuring the major players that everybody was on the same track. The international diplomacy, taking place parallel to the “Two-Plus-Four” negotiations in meetings and conferences in Windhoek, Geneva, Brest, Münster, Washington, Turnberry, Copenhagen, Dublin, Houston, London and especially Archys, focused on the military and security aspects of German unification. They thus relieved the “Two-Plus-Four” process from one of the most controversial issues and contributed to a consensual settlement of the problems on the “Two-Plus-Four” agenda.

All of the meetings touched upon the question of the future role of a united Germany in those international organizations to which the Federal Republic of Germany had previously belonged. That was unproblematic in the case of the United Nations, of which both German states had been members since September 1973. More difficult was the question how to integrate the GDR into the European Community as part of a united Germany. For the French, German and American support for an intensification of European integration was a core prerequisite for accepting a continuing American hegemony in Europe via NATO. They demanded that a united Germany join them in a major strengthening of the European confederacy. The European Community's Maastricht Treaty, negotiated in 1991, was the result. It included European monetary union and a European foreign and security policy, and pointed toward common defense. The Copenhagen Agreement of 1993 added the EU's blueprint for widening.

Considering the security dimensions involved in the process of German unification, the major actors eventually agreed that the new Germany would be even more central than ever to European politics and to the structure of Western collective frameworks like NATO and the EC. It was not clear, however, how reunification would affect these frameworks. And there was open disagreement between the European powers, the U.S. and the Soviet Union about the strategic goals to be pursued. Indeed the structural implications of the fall of the Wall – German and for that European reunification, and the looming collapse of the Soviet Union – threatened many of the concepts and institutions around which the West had gathered during the Cold War. What would a world without enemies look like (Beck 1992a)? What did 'defence' and 'security' mean without the antagonism of the Cold War? Why, how, and with what intensity should states cooperate in defence and security issues now that 'threat' had become structurally and politically obsolete, only to be replaced in diplomatic and military language by the rather more nebulous 'risk' and 'instability' (Beck 1992b, 1997, 1998)? Without a clear, convincing military threat, what rationale could there be for the complex and

expensive military organizations that the West had maintained during the Cold War? What should be NATO's structure, missions and membership (Cornish 1996: 751)?

Answering these and other questions deserved middle to long-term strategic planning. However, when the Wall fell no blueprints existed, no scenario analyses were available. Politicians and political scientists alike had not foreseen the end of the Cold War. Thus ad hoc management and planning characterized the 10 months between 9 November 1989 and 12 September 1990. History was made on the spot and very much so by "great men" like Bush, Kohl, and Gorbachev.

President Bush discussed the complex security situation at length at the Camp David meeting with Chancellor Kohl in late February 1990 (24.2.1990). During this meeting Bush and Kohl agreed to combine forces, along the principles and the road map developed by Baker in his Berlin speech in late December 1989. Whereas America would push ahead the issue of arms control, Kohl would push for the intensification of the European integration process to pacify Mitterrand (EC Summit late April 1990). They agreed that the CSCE was a forum where events in Germany could be related to the concerns of all European countries. The Americans intended to use Soviet interest in the CSCE summit as a lever to secure Soviet agreement to the CFE treaty, which would effectively eliminate the imbalance of Soviet conventional forces in Europe, erasing the advantages Moscow had enjoyed for decades. And the American President once again confirmed that NATO and the Atlantic Alliance with Germany as America's "special partner" in leadership would have to become the core strategic pillar guaranteeing stability in this historic era of global political transformation.

The confirmation of the positive role military alliances can play for the stability of a transforming Europe foreshadowed to a certain extent the institutional developments of the Atlantic Alliance in the years to come. NATO enlargement was just a matter of time. Already in 1989 when the Berlin Wall came down, Lech Walesa and his colleagues increasingly "mustered the history and mythology of Poland - Solidarnosc and the church on the ramparts - to lay claim to NATO membership. Admission to NATO, they intimated (with varying emphasis, according to their audience), would be a guarantee of Poland's independence from Russia, a reward for Solidarnosc's strong defiance, recompense for the remarkable contributions Polish units made to the defeat of Adolf Hitler, and moral restitution for Poland's 'betrayal' by the West, that is, by the United States and Britain, at Yalta. Within Poland, the religious and nationalist right, the Western-oriented liberals, and the social democrats (in large part former communists) could all rally to this cry, whatever their previous history" (Bergbusch 1997/1998: 154-155).

The diplomacy of the „Two-Plus-Four“ negotiations thus prefigured two solutions for a post-Cold War Europe. The first was American hegemony, organized through NATO. The second was European confederacy, built around the European Community, soon to become the European Union. American hegemony reasserted its claim in the “Two-Plus-Four” agreements of 1990. Europe's upgraded confederacy sprang forth with the Maastricht Treaty, signed in early 1992. “Each agreement marked a dynamic solution-in-progress”, David Calleo explained in an article published in 2003 (Calleo 2003: 21). Whereas the Maastricht treaty prefigured the European Union's own progressive widening and deepening, the “Two-Plus-Four” Treaty was followed, in due course, by the various enlargements and redefinitions of NATO, including a French rapprochement, initiated in February 1991 by France’s announcement to take part in NATO's Strategy Review Group (SRG), set up after the July 1990 London Declaration.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The redefinition of Germany’s security agenda and the changed European state system obviously reshaped the role of the existing institutions of European security and rearranged the relative political strength of the main political players. Germany, the key continental European partner of the United States in NATO, faced a choice in the procurement of its security. This produced new security challenges. Whereas NATO had the character of an automatic alliance over the course of the postwar period (the Germans had little choice but to support NATO in exchange for an extended American deterrent), the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the absence of a countervailing order in the eastern portion of the European continent produced the “unsettling” effect of providing Germany with a range of security options. It was the close relationship between Kohl and Bush, but also Kohl’s determined stance on the question of Germany’s future role in the Western Alliance that prevented a demilitarized, or even neutral Germany.

Looking at the international agenda in early autumn 1990 we must not forget that global attention at that time was focused not so much on Europe but a continent away on Baghdad and Kuwait, where Operation Desert Shield would soon give way to Desert Storm. When President George Bush met with President Mikhail Gorbachev on September 1 at Helsinki, less than two weeks before the German settlement became final, the subject of the „Two-Plus-Four“ negotiations was not even on the agenda. The emerging Gulf Crisis is the main reason why the victors of World War II relinquished their rights and responsibilities toward Germany with less diplomatic fanfare than had been afforded scores of trade and arms control treaties during the Cold War (Zelikow/Rice 1995: 1).

Considering the dramatic development of the international debate after the presentation of Kohl's Ten Point Plan in November 1989 and the entirely unforeseeable reaction of the members of the Atlantic Alliance and the Warsaw Pact to the idea of a „Two-Plus-Four“ forum, it is surprising that the concept was realized and accepted in such a swift manner. From what we know about the diplomatic theatre before and during the Ottawa conference, not only the Baker-Shevardnadze talks in Moscow (3-7 February 1990) which laid the ground for Soviet acceptance of the „Two-Plus-Four“ formula, but also Baker's conference diplomacy was decisive. Baker used any spare moment between obligatory sessions of the Open Skies plenaries for intensive diplomacy with other foreign ministers, including Shevardnadze, on the German issue. Many of these meetings between ministers were ad hoc, arranged on a few minutes' notice. On February 13 alone Baker met with Shevardnadze on at least five separate occasions, held an equal number of meetings with Genscher, met privately with Hurd and Dumas, took part in two Quad ministerial meetings (with representatives from Britain, West Germany, and France), and led a NATO ministerial caucus (Zelikow/Rice 1995: 192). Baker thus not only secured agreement to the creation of a mechanism to manage the diplomacy of German unification. The joint announcement also served, symbolically, as public recognition that unification had passed beyond speculation and expectation into the realm of day-to-day planning.

When it comes to Canada and the Canadian role in the diplomacy of German unification, future research will have to focus on the role of Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. Mulroney was one of the Canadian Prime Ministers most involved in foreign affairs. He was at friendly terms with world leaders which he made good use of. Mulroney had a close relationship with both Reagan and the Bush administration (see the documentation in McGrath/Milnes 2009). As a Prime Minister he increased significantly the involvement of Parliament in the policy-making process. Among the successes of his premiership was the signing of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States in 1988, which was enlarged in 1994 to include Mexico into a North American Free Trade Area. In the context of this process Canada became a member of the Organization of American States. Canada also contributed to the establishment of La Francophonie, a project the French government had put back on the political agenda. Good Governance and Human Rights were at the center of foreign policy discussions.

However, on the domestic level, Mulroney was in trouble when the Wall fell, because one of his most prestigious domestic projects, the Meech Lake Accord, signed in 1987, was in jeopardy when the legislatures of Manitoba and New Brunswick refused to approve the accord. In early 1990, Newfoundland also withdrew its approval, which caused much domestic turmoil and kept the Prime

Minister’s office preoccupied with domestic affairs. This, together with a deepening fiscal crisis – the budget deficit reached almost \$40 billion CDN in 1989 and the federal debt soared to \$380 billion CDN – induced the Canadian Government to cancel the ambitious defense program envisioned in the White Paper of 1987. This meant not only the reduction of Canadian Forces personnel but also the closing of the two NATO bases in Germany in 1994.

The modifications of Canada’s strategic planning announced in the autumn of 1991 were already in the air in early 1990. According to the notes taken by Teltschik of a telephone conversation between Kohl and Mulroney about Germany’s future in NATO two days before Kohl left for the Camp David meeting with President Bush in February 1990, Mulroney explained that Canada also would want Germany to remain a member of the Alliance, but that the deployment of Canadian troops had produced high cost and that his government has to rethink the strategic relevance and importance of Canadian troops being stationed in Germany taking the new strategic situation into account.<sup>8</sup>

In a news conference on 10 April 1990 Mulroney was asked whether he and President Bush were “eye-to-eye on the long-term role for NATO”. At this occasion he confirmed that Canada like the United States sees itself as a part of Europe, and that Canada wants to be involved in the definition of a new architecture of Europe (McGrath/Milnes 2009: 51). This position was reaffirmed in the debates about the restructuring of NATO in the 1994 White Paper on Defence and the 1995 Foreign Policy Statement.<sup>9</sup> Both papers underlined that Canada intended to remain in NATO, which it continued to regard as important for Canadian security. The policy statements formulated in the mid-1990s like the official declaration during the press conference in April 1990 reveal, however, the ambiguity of Canadian security policy at that time. During the first half of the 1990s, after the fall of the Wall and German unification, Canadians raised more queries than ever as to whether NATO meant very much to them, now that the Cold War was over and the Soviet Union was disbanded (Haglund 1997: 476). Illustrative of the position that NATO’s place in Canadian security policy needed to be further diminished was not only the decision to close the Canadian garrisons in Germany, but also a policy recommendation from the Canada 21 Council, an advocacy group that played an important role in the debates that preceded the Chrétien government’s new defence and foreign policy statements. The Council recommended that Canada “actively press for the transformation of NATO into an inclusive collective security organization in the new Europe”.<sup>10</sup> Policy-makers in Ottawa also imagined that the CSCE would emerge as the central 'architectural' element in European security. None of this happened, although the formalization of the CSCE framework was agreed upon in the Charter of Paris for a New Europe which was



signed on November 21, 1990 and the restructuring of NATO was confirmed in the July 10 London declaration.<sup>11</sup>

Canada became one of the most ardent supporters of NATO enlargement and the further integration and expansion of the European Community and later the European Union. And even at the heights of another NATO crisis, the 2003 American decision to go to war against Iraq, Canada remained a fervent supporter of the Alliance despite its opposition to American security policy at that time. As the Canadian Ambassador to Germany, Marie Bernard-Meunier, underlined in May 2003: "Canada is fully committed to the transatlantic link, which is as vital for us as it is for any other member of the alliance. It is vital because of its irreplaceable role in international security. It is also vital because of Canada's profound interest in developing its relationship with Europe" (Bernard-Meunier 2005: 20-21). For Germany it is important to recognize that Canada is not the United States. It is an international actor with political interests and policy priorities that very often differ from those of its big southern neighbor and coincide with German ones, especially in questions of war and peace. The United States is not the only transatlantic partner. Canada always had and still has a special place in the transatlantic link. What exactly that place was during the international diplomacy accompanying the "Two-Plus-Four" process remains to be explored as soon as the official documents are available.

---

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> What is even more surprising, a collection of documents entitled "Major Documents and Speeches in Canadian Foreign Policy" published in 2000 (Blanchette 2000) does not even mention German unification or the end of the Cold War, not to speak of the ensuing fundamental changes in the geopolitical setup induced by the event of November 9, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> On the issue of the first free elections in the GDR see a highly interesting CBC broadcast entitled "The Road to Unification", March 4, 1990  
[[http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/international\\_politics/clips/15247/](http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/international_politics/clips/15247/)] accessed 1.1.2011.

<sup>3</sup> The first meeting of the Two-Plus-Four process took place on March 14, 1990 in Bonn, only four days ahead of the first democratic elections in the GDR. It was a meeting at the level of the political directors of the foreign ministries: Dieter Kastrup (FRG), Ernst Krabatsch (GDR, later replaced by Gerold von Braunmühl), Bertrand Dufourcq (France), Juli Kvizinsky (USSR), John Weston (Britain), and Robert Zoellick (U.S.).

<sup>4</sup> The nine points presented to Gorbachev and Shevardnadze were largely the result of Germany's insistence that the US should do something to bolster Gorbachev's public image (Teltschik 1991: 236-39; Szabo 1992, 86; Costigliola 1994: 105). Regarding the question of the military future of a united Germany "diplomacy turned into a public-relations exercise" aiming at supporting Gorbachev publicly (Elbe 2010: 42). The nine points were: 1. Limitation of the size of armed forces

in Europe, including in Central Europe, in a CFE agreement, with further reductions to be provided for in CFE follow-on negotiations; 2. The beginning of arms control negotiations on short-range nuclear missiles to be moved up; 3. Reaffirmation by Germany that it would neither possess nor produce nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons; 4. No NATO forces to be stationed on the former territory of the GDR during a specified transition period; 5. An appropriate transition period to be agreed upon for the withdrawal of all Soviet troops from German territory; 6. A comprehensive review of NATO strategy and change of NATO's conventional and nuclear force posture; 7. Settlement of Germany's future borders, that is, essentially confirmation of the Polish-German frontier; 8. Enhancement of the functions of the CSCE to ensure a significant role for the Soviet Union in Europe and linkage of a summit meeting of that organization with the finalization of a CFE treaty, both to take place at the end of 1990; 9. Development of Germany's economic ties with the Soviet Union, including fulfillment of the GDR's economic obligations to the USSR. (Baker/DeFrank 1995: 250-51; Zelikow/Rice 1997: 263-64; Adomeit 2006: 11).

<sup>5</sup> For an account of the ratification process in the Soviet Union see Schöllgen 2010; Elbe 2010: 43. Frank Elbe underlines the drama of the ratification process in Moscow which was the subject of a bitter controversy, and by no means certain. Elbe explains: “Before Ambassador Terechov handed over the Soviet instrument of ratification on March 14, 1991, Erich Honecker, the former head of the East German communist party and government was taken from the GDR to a hospital in Moscow by a Soviet military aircraft, an important concession to Gorbachev's foes in the Duma. This was most probably the last act in the Soviet exercise of power as an occupation force, because with the deposit of the last instrument of ratification Germany had attained full sovereignty over its internal and external affairs.”

<sup>6</sup> See also the online documentation provided by the GHI, Washington D.C. [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=223](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=223), accessed: 3.1.2011

<sup>7</sup> Zelikow and Rice point out that this was also the result of CIA estimates, see Zelikow/Rice 1997: 142.

<sup>8</sup> Dokument Nr. 190: Telefongespräch Kohl mit Mulroney, 21. 2. 1990: Deutsche Einheit, S. 2487 (vgl. Dt. Einh., S. 855 ff.) (c) Oldenbourg Verlag; <http://www.digitale-bibliothek.de/band21.htm>].

<sup>9</sup> Government of Canada, Department of National Defence, 1994, Defence White Paper (Ottawa: Supply and Services 1994); Government of Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada in the World (Ottawa 1995).

<sup>10</sup> Canada 21, Canada and Common Security in the Twenty-First Century (Toronto: University of Toronto Centre for International Studies 1994), 67.

<sup>11</sup> The CSCE was renamed into the OSCE on January 1, 1995, accordingly to the results of the conference held in Budapest, in 1994. The OSCE now had a formal Secretariat, Senior Council, Parliamentary Assembly, Conflict Prevention Centre, and Office for Free Elections (later becoming the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights).

## REFERENCES

*Adomeit, Hannes* 2006: Gorbachev's Consent to Unified Germany's Membership in NATO, in: Working Paper. Research Unit Russia/CIS Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik FG 5 2006/11: December 2006.

- Baker, James Addison/DeFrank, Thomas M.* 1995: *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War, and Peace, 1989-1992*, New York.
- Beck, Ulrich* 1992a: *Militär und Demokratie nach dem Kalten Krieg - Der feindlose Staat*, in: *DIE ZEIT* 23.10.1992 <http://www.ulrichbeck.net-build.net/uploads/Der-feindlose-Staat.pdf>.
- Beck, Ulrich* 1992b: *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, London ; Newbury Park, Calif.
- Beck, Ulrich* 1997: *Weltrisikogesellschaft. Weltöffentlichkeit und globale Subpolitik*, Wien.
- Beck, Ulrich* 1998: *Democracy without Enemies*, Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA.
- Bergbusch, Eric* 1997/1998: *NATO Enlargement: Should Canada Leave NATO?*, in: *International Journal* 53: 1, 147-168.
- Bernard-Meunier, Marie* 2005: *Canada, Germany, and the United States. Challenges and Options for the Transatlantic Partnership at the Beginning of the 21st Century*, in: *Kaim, Markus/Lehmkuhl, Ursula (Eds.): In Search of a New Relationship. Canada, Germany and the United States*, Wiesbaden, 19-21.
- Blackwill, Robert* 1990: *The Security Implications of a United Germany: Paper II: Papers from the IISS 32nd Annual Conference (1990)*, in: *Adelphi Papers* 257: Winter 1990/1.
- Blanchette, Arthur E. (Ed.)* 2000: *Canadian Foreign Policy, 1945-2000. Major Documents and Speeches*, Ottawa.
- Breuilly, John* 1992: *The State of Germany: The national idea in the making, unmaking, and remaking of a modern nation-state*, London; New York.
- Calleo, David P.* 2003: *Transatlantic Folly: NATO vs. the EU*, in: *World Policy Journal* 20: 3, 17-24.
- Checkel, Jeff* 1993: *Ideas, Institutions, and the Gorbachev Foreign Policy Revolution*, in: *World Politics* 45: 2 271-300.
- Conze, Eckart* 1995: *Die gaullistische Herausforderung: Die deutsch-französischen Beziehungen in der amerikanischen Europapolitik, 1958-1963*, München.
- Conze, Eckart* 2009: *Die Suche nach Sicherheit: Eine Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von 1949 bis in die Gegenwart*, München.
- Cornish, Paul* 1996: *European Security: The End of Architecture and the New NATO*, in: *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 72: 4 *The Americas: European Security*, 751-769.
- Costigliola, Frank* 1994: *An 'Arm around the Shoulder': The United States, NATO and German Reunification, 1989-90*, in: *Contemporary European History* 3: 1 87-110.
- Deighton, Anne* 1993: *Review: Winds of History or the Acts of Men? The Unification of Germany*, in: *Contemporary European History* 2: 3, 287-294.

- Elbe, Frank* 2010: The Diplomatic Path to German Unity, in: Bulletin of the German Historical Institute 46: Spring 2010, 33-44.
- Fritsch-Bournazel, Renata* 1991: German Unification: A Durability Test for the Franco-German Tandem, in: German Studies Review 14: 3, 575-585.
- Genscher, Hans-Dietrich/Gorbachev, Mikhail* 1990: Security for the New Germany in the New Europe, in: World Affairs 152: 4, 229-233.
- Gutjahr, Lothar/Ramsbotham, Oliver* 1991: Components of a New Atlanticism: The U.S., Britain and Germany - "special relationship" versus "partnership in leadership", Hamburg.
- Haglund, David G.* 1997: The Nato of Its Dreams? Canada and the Co-Operative Security Alliance, in: International Journal 52: 3 464-482.
- Harris, Chauncy D.* 1991: Unification of Germany in 1990, in: Geographical Review 81: 2 170-182.
- Küsters, Hanns Jürgen/Deuerlein, Ernst* 1998: Deutsche Einheit. Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik. Sonderedition aus den Akten des Bundeskanzleramtes 1989/90, Berlin.
- Küsters, Hanns Jürgen/Innern, Deutschland Bundesministerium des* 2000: Deutsche Einheit. Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik; Sonderedition aus den Akten des Bundeskanzleramtes 1989/90, Berlin.
- MacDonald, L. Ian* 2010: A conference in Ottawa 20 years ago this week helped pave the way for a united Germany, in: Vancouver Sun, 19.2.2010.
- Maier, Charles S.* 1997: Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and the End of East Germany, Princeton, N.J.
- McGrath, James/Milnes, Arthur* (Eds.) 2009: Age of the Offered Hand. The Cross-Broder Partnership between President George H.W. Bush and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. A Documentary History, Montreal, Kingston, London, Ithaca.
- Pond, Elizabeth* 1993: Beyond the Wall: Germany's Road to Unification, Washington, D.C.
- Rohe, Karl/Schmidt, Gustav/Pogge von Strandmann, H.* 1992: Deutschland--Grossbritannien--Europa: Politische Traditionen, Partnerschaft und Rivalität, Bochum.
- Salmon, P./Hamilton, K.A./Twigge, S.R.* (Eds.) 2010: Documents on British policy overseas, Series III, Vol. VII: German Unification, 1989-1990, London.
- Schmidt, Gustav* 2001: A history of NATO: The first fifty years, Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York.
- Schmidt, Gustav/Meyers, Reinhard* 1989: Grossbritannien und Europa, Grossbritannien in Europa: Sicherheitsbelange und Wirtschaftsfragen in der britischen Europapolitik nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg, Bochum.

- Schöllgen, Gregor* 2010: Achieving Unity. The Two Plus Four Process and German Unification, in: Deutschland Online: 26.5.2010, in: <http://www.magazine-germany.com>; 22.8.2010.
- Sperling, James* 1994: German Security Policy in Post-Yalta Europe, in: Hancock, Donald M./Welsh, Helga A. (Eds.): German Unification. Process and Outcomes, Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford, 261-284.
- Teltschik, Horst* 1991: 329 Tage: Innenansichten der Einigung, Berlin.
- Volkery, Carsten* 2009: The Iron Lady's Views on German Reunification - 'The Germans Are Back!', in: Spiegel Online, 9.11.2009.
- Wettig, Gerhard* 1993: Moscow's Acceptance of NATO: The Catalytic Role of German Unification, in: Europe-Asia Studies 45: 6 953-972.
- Zelikow, Philip/Rice, Condoleezza* 1995: Germany unified and Europe transformed: A study in statecraft, Cambridge, Mass.
- Zelikow, Philip/Rice, Condoleezza* 1997: Germany unified and Europe transformed. A study in statecraft, Cambridge MA, London.