THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL. ITS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

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Abstract. The fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, resulted from a complex pattern of causes, including historical contingencies. One of these was Günter Schabowski's ill-phrased announcement of free travel for GDR citizens, another Mikhail Gorbachev's access to power in 1985 and his promise of "perestroika". At the core of the matter lies "the German question" as the key issue of controversies, in the early phase of the Cold War. Even after 1955, when the two post-war German states had been integrated into the military blocs, the German question remained on the diplomatic agenda. The erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961, however, signified that the "German problem" had been shelved. After the Cuban crisis in October 1962, when the two superpowers refrained from nuclear confrontation, they appeared to enter into an era of *détente*.

Facing up to these facts, West Berlin´s Mayor Willy Brandt and, foremost, his adviser Egon Bahr developed their concept of "Ostpolitik". Its long-term perspective was to change the *status quo* of German division by accepting the *status quo*, *i.e.* the consequences of WW II, the Oder-Neisse border to Poland, the reality of the blocs, and the East German state under Communist rule. It was based on the assumption a) that *détente* was an irreversible process and b) that the GDR, displaying economic stability at that time, while remaining an indispensable element in the Soviet bloc, would be disposed to forms of cooperation.

The dialectics of history proved otherwise. Geopolitical rivalries between the superpowers continued to exist. In 1979, the Soviet Union's military intervention in Afghanistan coincided with its opening another round in the arms race focussing on intermediate-range missiles in Central Europe. Both decisions propitiated the interior crisis of the Soviet Union, due to technological backwardness and military overburdening of its state-run economy. Gorbachev's attempts at reform proved ineffective, his proclamation of *glasnost* encouraged

dissident movements in Eastern Central Europe, *e.g.* the independent peace movement in the GDR, to resist their regimes. Gorbachev's renunciation of the "Brezhnev doctrine" motivated reform-minded governments in Poland and Hungary to test the limits of Soviet hegemony.

The decisive factor was the comprehensive crisis in the GDR: an unproductive economy based on external debts, a decrepit infrastructure, ecological damage, an oppressive dictatorship rejecting reform, dissident activists challenging the regime. All this, in the autumn of 1989, led to the mass exodus of East Germans fleeing across Hungary's open border to Austria. The upshot of this course of events was the collapse of the Berlin Wall.

Germany's reunification in 1990 entailed the creation of the European Union, an in-between of a confederation and a federal union of states. Its *raison d´être* is to a) provide a structure of peace in Europe b) to avert German hegemony on the Continent based on its power potential. Nonetheless, apprehensions concerning Germany's future role in Europe have not altogether vanished. With regard to its immigration policy, some observers speak of a new type of "moral hegemony". Last but not least, Merkel´s decision in 2015 admitting millions of migrants to Europe, tipped the scale in favour of Brexit.

Keywords: "the German question", "Ostpolitik", crisis of the Soviet Empire, perestroika, the future of Europe

I.

November 9, 1989, the day the Berlin Wall came down, will remain one of the great historical markers of the 20th century, completely altering the political landscape of Europe that had emerged from World War II and profoundly affecting Europe's fate in the present. Looking back on the events of 1989/1990 thirty years after the collapse of the Wall, we are taking for granted what back then to many observers of world politics had seemed inconceivable: a reunited Germany in the centre of a united Europe.

It may be noted that for all the public commemoration of this *annus mirabilis,* the tones of joy and jubilation in Germany are somewhat subdued. This may be in part due to the intellectual climate in a country that continues to fail in coming to terms with its painful historical burden. In fact, the ambivalence of predominantly West German intellectuals as to the history and

culture of their country accounts for the rejection of emotions suspected of "nationalism". They will point out that the joyful date of November 9, 1989 coincides with the sinister date of November 9, 1938 in Nazi Germany. They may recall that a few days after the Wall came down, the demands for German reunification first emerged in "the East" during the demonstrations in Plauen, Leipzig, Dresden and elsewhere. Emotions were carried by flag-waving, by the slogan „Deutschland einig Vaterland" (*Germany united fatherland* – the line taken from the original GDR anthem) and by the phrase „Wir sind ein Volk" *(We are one people*). Recollections of this sort do not fit into the image and reality of a multi-ethnic society that Germany – like other West European countries – is in the process of becoming. These profound changes are taking place in parallel with the academic tendencies to "deconstruct" the concept (devalued as an "invention" or "narrative") of *nation* as the historical basis and political framework of democratic self-determination.

To be sure, the media are calling back to memory the dramatic course of events in the late summer and autumn of 1989, leading up to the climax at that November night 1989. Post-wall generations thus can get an idea of what happened back then: in the beginning, there was the press conference where Günter Schabowski (deceased in 2015, his name forgotten), member of the SED Politbureau (an unfamiliar term to many today), responded to an Italian journalist´s question concerning free travel for GDR citizens in dubious grammar. The announcement on West Berlin radio and TV set a number of East Berliners to probing the promise. When TV anchorman Hanns Joachim Friedrich (1927-1995) in his introduction to the late evening news injected the interpretative phrase "...the gates in the Wall are wide open" *(...die Tore in der Mauer stehen weit offen),* he triggered the rush of thousands of East Berliners to the checkpoints. At Bornholmer Strasse, the border guard (*i.e.* Stasi / Staatssicherheit / "state security") officer Harald Jäger in view of the pressing mass of people decided to raise the barrier, just half an hour before midnight. The next morning the world was watching crowds dancing on the crescent-shaped wall barring the

Brandenburg Gate. Banners displayed the people's political wit, German flags hitherto primarily seen at sports events signalled their political will, young men smashing through the Wall with sledge-hammers.

That the Wall came down without a shot being fired, that Germany's reunification into a single state was achieved in peaceful agreement, they both make the events of 1989/1990 appear as historically exceptional, if not miraculous. We can ignore here the dispute promoted by some GDR veterans like Egon Krenz, Erich Honecker´s successor as the head of the party and state, by sympathizers of the party "Die Linke" and others insisting on the term "turn" ("*die Wende*") in order to downsize the term "revolution". In most features, the end of the GDR amounts to a revolution except for its nonviolent dialectics and its peaceful outcome. None of this was foreseeable, as we recall the ominous atmosphere during the mass demonstration of some 70 000 people in the dark streets of Leipzig on October 9, 1989. All things considered, the revolution in the GDR displays the historical pattern of remote and immediate causes, of deep-rooted and growing unrest, of an activist minority challenging the authorities, of power-wielders at odds with the situation, last but not least of contingencies. Among these, we may count the historical circumstances attached to the name of Mikhail Gorbachev.

II.

Recently, a dispute has arisen between the historian Ilko-Sascha Kowalczuk, a former GDR oppositionist, and the sociologist Detlef Pollack, a former non-activist student of theology at Leipzig. Kowalczuk argues that the dissident minority who ventured to set forth from the precincts of Leipzig´s Nikolaikirche and to enter the streets on September 4 with their banners deserve all the credit for triggering the mass protests in the weeks to come. He also sides with those who extol the role of Poland´s *Solidarność* in challenging the Communist regime there back in 1981 and in paving the way for the

breakdown of the Soviet empire. By proposing the term "exit revolution", his opponent Pollack insists on the decisive role of the long-time non-activist majority whose discontent erupted in the late summer and autumn of 1989, with masses of "ordinary" people fleeing from the GDR via Hungary and the West German embassies in Prague and Warsaw. In this view, the exodus of young men, women, and children leaving the GDR in rage and despair delegitimized the regime more visibly than the protesters, who gained their cutting-edge strength only when tens of thousands dared to join them in the streets.

Controversies of this sort may sharpen the view for the dramatic phase preceding the fall of the Wall in 1989, although they tend to curtail the full scope of the drama. To get to the core of events in 1989, a wider perspective is needed. It will encompass East-West relations after the Berlin Wall was raised, in August 1961, and after the Cuban crisis, in October 1962. In the post-war era until the late 1950s, the division of Germany was considered a key issue of the Cold War. The indicative date is the Geneva conference in 1959 when, for the last time, the Four Powers – admitting two separate delegations from the FRG and the GDR as "observers" - convened on the German question. Two years later, the Wall dividing Berlin and the refugees shot at the Wall signified to the world that the German question had been shelved. In fact, for quite a few members of the political elites in Western Europe, the division of Germany had its charm; for others, it preserved its features of a frozen conflict. On a theoretical – and practical - level, the two German states´ integration into the bloc structure under the hegemony of the USA respectively the Soviet Union served to maintain the balance of power in Europe. From the perspective of a country with strong national traditions like Poland, the arrangement came to be known as the "system of Yalta".

Confronted with the reality of the Wall, German hopes for "reunification" began to fade. In fact, patriotic sentiments among the younger generation in West Germany tended to rapidly weaken in the wake of the student revolt associated with the date "1968".

The student movement's radicalism was triggered June 2, 1967, when a student participating in a demonstration against the autocratic Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi of Iran, who was visiting West Berlin, was shot by a police officer. (Some forty years later, in 2009, Stasi files revealed that the killer had originally been a GDR Stasi agent.) The students' furore exploded in the Easter days of 1968 after a right-wing extremist's attempt to kill West Berlin's charismatic student leader Rudi Dutschke (1940-1979), a refugee from the East. Focussing on the war in Vietnam, the emotions of West German intellectuals (like elsewhere in Western Europe) were swayed by anti-imperialism meaning identification with revolutions in the Third World, by radical socialism and individual emancipation. In Dutschke´s speeches and writings – by no means based on sober analysis - revolutionary fervour directed against both US capitalism and Soviet oppression were merged with national aspirations. After recovering from cerebral injuries inflicted by the attempt on his life, he and some of his friends resumed contacts with dissidents in Eastern Europe. Thus, in the seventies, Dutschke came out as a standard-bearer of attacks on the division of Germany and Europe. A few months before his death on Christmas Eve 1979, he was one of the co-founders of the West German Greens who, at that time, put forth the German question in their (then) pacifist, ecological, and feminist platform.

Radical opposition to the *status quo* in Europe implied a critical approach to the piecemeal strategies pursued by the Social Democrats in the 1970s. In view of political realities embodied by the Wall, the concept had been worked out in West Berlin by Mayor Willy Brandt's adviser and friend Egon Bahr (1922-2015), often referred to as the "architect of Ostpolitik". It was based on several assumptions. First, faced with the possibility of mutual destruction, the two nuclear superpowers had entered into an era of détente, both sides respecting the existing bloc structure. This meant that Germany's partition was to persist for a prolonged period of time. To keep the idea of one German nation alive in the generation to come, it was essential to maintain and strengthen ties of family,

friendship and culture. Second, from his German point of interest, Bahr saw political chances in the approach promoted by President Kennedy that the acceptance of the *status quo* was the prerequisite for overcoming the *status quo*. Third, in the course of rapprochement, a comprehensive security system was to replace the military blocs. In this process, the two German states would develop a mutual interest in the reunification of the country. In some aspects, this concept fit in with the theory promulgated at that time in the United States that there was a long-term tendency of convergence of the opposing systems of Western capitalism and Eastern communism arising from the necessities and nonideological mechanisms of industrial societies.

Bahr first promoted his concept under the title of "Wandel durch Annäherung" (*change by approach*). While this idea was rejected by East German politicians and ideologues as another scheme of subversion, the Soviets and their allies were ready to respond to the initiatives taken by Federal Chancellor Brandt right after entering the office, in 1969. For the Soviets (and of course for the Poles), the German acceptance of the *status quo*, *i.e.* the recognition of the post-war territorial order (above all the Oder-Neisse border with Poland) held some promise. They were prepared, then, to accept certain elements of "Ostpolitik". The next three years (1970-1973), a series of treaties were concluded. The Moscow leadership under Leonid Brezhnev pressured the East Germans – by replacing the reluctant Walter Ulbricht as head of the party and the state by Erich Honecker - into negotiating with their West German counterparts. These negotiations resulted in a treaty establishing the "fundamental basis of relations" between the two states. The Soviets themselves signed a "Four-Power-Agreement" with their former allies that served to improve the situation in West Berlin in 1971. The document contained a formula stating that the four powers' ultimate sovereign rights in Germany were unaffected by the agreement. It made clear, that – in the absence of a peace treaty - the victors of World War II still had a say in German affairs.

"Ostpolitik" was based on a long-time perspective. Its merits are

out of a dispute. With Chancellor Willy Brandt as its anti-Nazi protagonist, it served to expel the spectre of German revanchism from the East European scenery, thus preparing the acceptance of a united Germany in the future. As to its short-term goals, it succeeded in maintaining and promoting contacts between Germans on either side of the dividing border. To be sure, visits from the other side still turned out to be a rather bothering affair, due to red tape, to a system of controls at the border marked by an ugly fence and surmounted by watchtowers, or German Shephard search dogs led by guards on the trains. Whereas for an increasing number of younger West Germans, the GDR comprising core territories of German history and culture thus came to be a remote *terra incognita,* a reverse self-perception prevailed in the East. The theory proclaimed by ideologues that there existed two separate German nations never really caught on in the GDR. By meeting with relatives and friends from the West, by listening to older family members with travel permits reporting their impressions in the West, last but not least by watching West German TV, people in the GDR, while widely accepting their state as a given fact, preserved the idea of belonging to the same nation as their cousins and nephews in the West. Also, personal contacts, Western radio and TV as well as travelling in the more liberal East European states like Poland and Hungary nourished doubts, discontent, and hopes for a different future.

The concept of promoting an irrevocable process of détente, arms control, and cooperation easing and replacing the conflict between the hegemonic powers and their bloc systems did not materialize to the degree expected by some of its proponents. In fact, the Soviet leadership showed little enthusiasm in weakening their position in Eastern Europe (as demonstrated once again in Prague, in 1968). On the other hand, the Soviets were interested in having the *status quo* accepted by the West in a conclusive form. The mutual agreement on the *status quo* was achieved at the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), in 1975. However, the Final Act of CSCE in "Basket III" contained

one vital concession extracted from the eastern negotiators obligating the participants to the respect of civil rights. Although being open to interpretation, this formula proved helpful for East European dissidents as an argument in their protracted opposition to the repressive regimes in their countries. In East Germany, the authorities dealt with refractive dissidents by first jailing them for an indefinite period of time, then transferring them to the West – a mechanism based on informal accords with the Federal Republic. Some were granted exit visas they had applied for, others were expelled like protest singer poet Wolf Biermann, in 1976, followed by the oppositionist Robert Havemann's friend Jürgen Fuchs (1950-1999), in 1977, or peace activist Roland Jahn from Jena, in 1983. Others continued to take the risks of being shot or captured in escaping to the West.

It is misleading, then, to consider "Basket III" as the original and most effective key in bringing down the Wall and the Soviet empire. Despite the Helsinki accords, the Cold War continued in Third World regions, in geopolitical rivalry (*e.g.* Soviet military bases in Syria and Libya), in alliances with dictatorial regimes in Africa and Asia, as well as in interferences in civil wars. The upshot came with the Soviets' military intervention in Afghanistan on Christmas 1979. The Politbureau's decision to rescue the tattering Communist regime in Kabul threatened by traditionalist tribal forces proved to be a fatal mistake. The *mujaheddin* (of various fundamentalist Islamic backgrounds) instigated and equipped with arms by the US under President Jimmy Carter and his security adviser Zbigniev Brzezinzki as well as aided by the Islamist regimes of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia put up ferocious resistance. The Soviets found themselves bogged down in a guerrilla war that only ended in Spring 1988 during Gorbachev's *perestroika.*

III.

The dialectics of history turned against the Soviet regime when it entered into another round of the arms race with NATO. At the

core of the matter lays the idea of the military balance of power. Since the 1960s, the two superpowers – an appropriate term at that time – have concluded a number of treaties intended to reduce the dangers of the all-out nuclear war. Arms control was to comprise nuclear missile systems, limiting and balancing arsenals to thereby guarantee mutual security. In the late1970s, NATO analysts observed that the Soviet Union had been "modernizing" its intermediate-range missile system with devices named SS 20. From the Western perspective, the new Soviet missiles would have opened a "gap" in the pattern of security based on stages of nuclear deterrence. The dispute over missile deployment came to a head in 1979, coinciding with the Soviets' invasion in Afghanistan. The West responded with announcing the deployment of equivalent systems to be based primarily in West Germany.

By unhinging the accepted military pattern of security, Soviet political strategists may also have intended to loosen the ties between Western allies, above all by shaking West Germany's reliance on the US nuclear security shield. Whatever these intentions, the idea backfired in the wake of a massive peace movement in West Germany in the early 1980s. Inspired in part by genuine pacifism, in part by leftist partisan activism, in part by national sentiments ("No additional nuclear weapons on German soil!") the movement saw an unexpected recurrence of the "German question". For a short period of time, the Greens emerging as a new force made up of diverse splinter groups of the student movement allying themselves – thanks to Rudi Dutschke's efforts prior to his death - with national-neutralist elements, seemed to be its most vociferous standard-bearers. The "national-patriotic" wing of the Greens, however, was soon to be pushed aside by experienced politicos like Joschka Fischer, later on, Foreign Minister of the reunited country.

Political excitement grew when, in parallel to a mass demonstration in Bonn against the new weapons, an "Open Letter" inspired, in parts, by friends of mine in West Berlin and authorized by the prominent dissident Robert Havemann (1910-1982) was

publicized in October 1981. Bearing the names of signatories from both East and West, it was addressed to the Soviet leader Brezhnev on the eve of his state visit to Bonn. The text demanded the conclusion of peace treaties instead of relying on infertile schemes of nuclear military balance. It called for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Germany. To add to the excitement in the media and among the political class, the "Open Letter" ended with the phrase "it should be left to us, to the Germans ourselves, how to solve the national question". The "Havemann Letter" posited a clear challenge to the *status quo*. Its political significance lays in attracting attention to an outspoken group of dissidents in the GDR rejecting the regime's claim to peace and political sovereignty. At the date of Havemann's death, in April 1982, another "Appeal from Berlin" (even though receiving less resonance) was voiced by his pastor friend Rainer Eppelmann. The dissidents asserted to represent the "independent peace movement" in the East. A number of them held contacts with the opposition in the neighbouring countries, often dating back to their hopes and frustration during the "Prague Spring", in 1968. The opposition's basis became visible in many Protestant churches, young people wearing badges displaying the Biblical promise of "swords into ploughshares" (*Schwerter zu Pflugscharen*) and protesting against militarist education in schools.

At the state level of politics, East-West contacts followed the pattern of uneasy relations between the superpowers and their clients. When Chancellor Helmut Schmidt came to meet Erich Honecker in December 1981, the visit, whilst displaying the regime's repressive character, produced no positive results. At the very same time, Prime Minister General Wojciech Jaruzelski proclaimed martial law in Poland to preclude the dangers of Soviet (and possibly East German) intervention against *Solidarność* and its tendency to break away from the bloc.

Emotions calmed down after Helmut Kohl (CDU) succeeded Helmut Schmidt (SPD) as chancellor in 1982, due to the Liberals' (FDP) switch of coalition from the Social Democrats to the Christian Democrats. The peace movement, powerful for a short

moment, subsided when the "missile crisis" was over, NATO stationing US missiles in autumn 1983 without causing hostile Soviet reaction. Chancellor Kohl continued the pragmatic approach in dealing with the GDR. A spectacular deal with the GDR came into the open in Summer 1983, when the Bavarian Prime Minister Franz Josef Strauß cooperated with a dubious East German negotiator (a Stasi officer residing in a posh Bavarian resort) to grant a credit of a billion DM to the GDR. The money served to prevent the collapse of the GDR's badly indebted, technically outdated and unproductive economy. A year later, Strauß even steered his private plane to Leipzig to convey another credit. The positive idea behind these deals was to prevent an uprising in the GDR, which might have provoked the Soviets to suppress it with their tanks. Thus, on the governmental level, relations between the two states did not deteriorate. In September 1987, Helmut Kohl even invited Erich Honecker to a formal visit in Bonn, making it clear that he was maintaining the goal of German unity. Honecker did not openly object, yet insisted on the prevalence of peace. He also used the opportunity to see his sister in his mining home town in the Saarland.

Meanwhile, the Social Democrats in parliamentary opposition pursued a policy of their own. Protagonists of "Ostpolitik" believed that negotiating with SED functionaries on issues of peace and ideological "disarmament" could serve to improve relations between the two German states. In their written proclamations, the concept of transforming the *status quo* was abandoned in favour of speaking of the historically durable existence of the two states. Some upheld the idea of Germany's division as a prerequisite to peace in Europe, assisted by Protestant pastors who, ignoring historical facts, mystified the country's partition as resulting from historical guilt.

Even Egon Bahr, the architect of "Ostpolitik", seemed to have rescinded his long-time goal of restoring Germany's unity. In echoing pronouncements from the East, he repeatedly affirmed the existence of two separate German states as a stabilizing element in the bloc structure. In oppositional circles demanding civil rights and

political change in Eastern Central Europe, Bahr was to become the *bête noire*, viewed as the protagonist of immobility and the *status quo*. His negative popularity among dissidents was not helped by his well-known back-channel contacts with the Soviet diplomat Valentin Falin. Even for some weeks after the Wall came down, Bahr warned against demands for reunification. It is to his credit as a political strategist, though, that in 1988, when no one expected the Berlin Wall to collapse like the walls of Jericho, he presented a design of transcending the *status quo*. In a small book titled "Zum europäischen Frieden. Eine Antwort auf Gorbatschow" (*Concerning European Peace. An Answer to Gorbachev*), he had called for peace treaties to restore full sovereignty to the two German states. Though not expressed explicitly, the intention was to open the road for some form of reunification.

Meanwhile, in West German schools, teachers in politics classes focussed on "comparison of systems", overlooking the totalitarian features of a rigid dictatorship and elevating the GDR to a productive industrial country ranking tenth among the world's economies. Economic experts tended to overlook the obvious deficiencies of the state-run economy. These were exacerbated when, in the early 1980's, the Soviet Union, itself in economic troubles, reduced petrol exports to its "fraternal states" while raising the price to world market level. Without credits from the West to service its debts, then, the GDR would have faced bankruptcy years before. Its real economic status was revealed after Honecker's deposition in October 1989 in the *compte rendu* presented by Politbureau member Gerhard Schürer, head of the State Planning Commission.

Notwithstanding evident facts, as late as 1986, the influential liberal weekly "Die Zeit" presented an optimistic view of the East German scenery, ignoring the decay of the economy, its decrepit infrastructure, its outdated machinery, the severe ecological damages caused by sulphurous emissions from soft coal power plants, last but not least, the sad appearance of dilapidated inner cities. The GDR, proclaimed editor-in-chief Theo Sommer in a

comprehensive misperception of reality, was to be recognized as a modern, economically efficient state directed by well-trained technocrats in industry and agriculture. To cling to the idea of German reunification was considered a political nuisance as well as an absurdity. Like a good politician as many other West German ones, Oskar Lafontaine (SPD), reneged the idea of German unity. Cultivating a special relationship with his Saar compatriot Erich Honecker, he demanded to cancel the concept of citizenship in the Federal Republic hitherto based on German nationality. A constitutional change depriving East Germans of being entitled to citizenship in the Federal Republic of Germany would have changed their status of refugees from the East to that of asylum-seekers.

To be sure, there were quite a few journalists conscientiously reporting on the true state of East German affairs. They were observing the erosion of the regime from below. Peace and "green" activities in the churches - like pastor Eppelmann's blues masses at Gethsemane Church in East Berlin - attracted young people who, more often, had not been raised in atheist families. "Scientific socialism" revealed in the doctrines of Marxism-Leninism had long lost its intellectual charm except for true believers. The every-day aspects of "real socialism" (*Realsozialismus*) contradicted the utopian promise upheld by the ideologues. Imports of popular culture like rock und punk music served to evoke emotions against the regime's oppressiveness personified in the omnipresent Stasi and its octopus-like system of informers. When August 16, 1988, the British band Pink Floyd gave a concert near the Reichstag, sending their song "The Wall" via megawatt sound boxes across the Wall, thousands of people flocked to listen on the eastern side. The police feared a revolutionary outbreak when the crowds commenced shouting "The Wall must go down" (*"Die Mauer muss weg!"*). By 1989, the atmosphere in East German cities was charged with open rebellion.

All this went unnoticed by many contemporaries in the West. In the Federal Republic, delusion mixed with "Western" indifference to matters East continued to prevail among a great many – not among all - West German intellectuals, in contrast to ordinary

people who kept visiting the East. In the GDR, there were a number of dissidents like Edelbert Richter, teaching philosophy at church seminars in Naumburg and Erfurt, and his student Christian Dietrich, who voiced clear-cut opposition to the "German-German" *status quo*. East German activists were encouraged by friends like Jiři Dienstbier who, later on, after the "velvet revolution" in Prague ensuing the fall of the Wall, became Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia, to speak out on the "German question". The division of Germany was guaranteeing Soviet hegemony and Communist rule in Eastern Europe. In the West, though, reflecting on the "German question" was considered as a futile exercise in nostalgia left to sentimentalists, the author of this text being one of them.

IV.

Despite its neglect by many West Germans, the "German question" continued to lie at the core of politics – meaning politics based on potential and interests, to a much lesser degree on morality – in Europe. Its key was held in Moscow's Kremlin. In the final analysis, then, German affairs – as well as things in eastern central Europe - depended on political strategies developed by the Soviet leadership.

The decisive changes came with Gorbachev's access to power, in March 1985 - in retrospect, one of history's fortuities. Gorbachev's career had been promoted by Yuri Andropov, long-term chairman of the KGB and head of the party from 1982 until his death, in 1984. Andropov had proven himself as an unrelenting hard-liner in assisting the Soviets' suppression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956 and in crushing the Prague Spring in 1968. During the arms race in the early 1980s, *i.e.* at another stage of the Cold War, he refused to seek a compromise with the US, relying on the Western (notably West German) peace movement to prevent the Americans from countering the Soviet SS 20 missiles with weapons of a similar category. Andropov's miscalculations in power politics came into the open when President Ronald Reagan called the bluff,

denouncing the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" and challenging it by announcing a new Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI). The superior system was to be based in space, made functioning by sophisticated electronics. SDI, it may be recalled, was to remain a concept on paper. It helped the West to win the Cold War.

The American President, detested by leftist liberals in the US and all over Europe, was counting on the inherent weakness of the Soviet system. While its state-centralized economy had fallen far behind the West in technology and productivity, the USSR was spending 70 per cent of its budget on the military, aside from pouring billions into its geopolitical efforts in Afghanistan, Cuba, Nicaragua, Syria, Libya, South Yemen, North Korea etc. At that point, Andropov and the Kremlin leadership came to realize that economic modernization was needed to keep up in the global power game. One may hypothetically ask which course history might have taken with Andropov's staying longer at the head of the Soviet regime. Very likely, he would have followed the Chinese model put into practice in 1979 by Deng Xiaoping, who succeeded in achieving a modernized economy by preserving a dictatorial system. After fifteen months, in February 1984, before he could have successfully applied new strategies for the Russian Empire, Andropov died of kidney failure. When his successor, Konstantin Chernenko, died only one year later, Mikhail Gorbachev ascended to the party's head position of General Secretary.

Among Gorbachev's advisers, we find Alexander Yakovlev (1923-2005) and Vyacheslav Dashichev (1925-2016). Yakovlev, from 1983 to 1990 was head of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Perhaps already somewhat disenchanted by Marxist-Leninist dogmas, he got to know the US as a former Fulbright student at Columbia University (1958/1959). Serving as Soviet ambassador to Canada in the 1970s, he struck up an amicable relationship with liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. Although Yakovlev's career as a reformer seems to be not so clear-cut, he is known for being the architect of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. Liberalization, then, was to end the

authoritarian system within and to alter relations with the East European countries. When the Brezhnev doctrine proclaiming Soviet hegemony in its Warsaw Pact bloc was revoked, it became clear that the Soviet Union was departing from its previous course and would no longer intervene in its Eastern European client states.

Historian Dashichev, himself a war veteran, now head of the Foreign Policy Department at the Institute of World Socialist Systems at the USSR Academy of Sciences, had come to critically assess Stalin's role in WW II and Soviet Post-War policies. Acting as Gorbachev's adviser on foreign policy, he inspired "new thinking" by approaching the German question. The concept of a "Common Europe Home" made essential a new design for Germany in Europe's centre. Also, reformers knew that West Germany's economy was needed for salvaging the Soviet Union from economic breakdown. In the summer of 1986, the pitiful state of Soviet technological standards had been exposed dramatically by the melt-down in the nuclear power plant at Chernobyl.

In October 1986, at their spectacular summit meeting in Reykyavik, Gorbachev had come to accords with President Reagan to end the arms race. Nonetheless, he was still hesitating to take up the German problem. There was no direct response when President Reagan, at the peak of his visit to Berlin, June 12, 1987, exclaimed "Mr Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" It was only two years later, during his visit to West Germany in the summer of 1989, when Gorbachev and his wife Raissa were cheered by crowds shouting "Gorbi, Gorbi", that the Russian leader indicated a change of policy. At a banquet in Bonn, when Chancellor Kohl broached the theme of German unity, Gorbachev responded by speaking of a solution in the future, thereby accepting the topic.

Gorbachev's iniatives opened political leeway for reform-minded Communists as well as for oppositionists in Hungary and Poland. In the GDR, Gorbachev's "new thinking" fostered hopes among the long-frustrated people and encouraged the dissidents. On the other side, the SED leadership refused to read the signs of the time, missing its last chance of restabilising their power by reform.

Instead, up to its very end, the regime's repression was not alleviated. What is more, party ideologue and top functionary Kurt Hager did not refrain from making offending remarks. Egon Krenz, as a member of the Politbureau in charge of affairs of youth and education, also well-known for his role in faking local elections in May, caused an outrage throughout the country, when he commented on the bloody finale of the "Chinese Spring" on Peking's Tiananmen Square (June 4, 1989) as "having restored order". A few weeks later, June 27, Austria's Foreign Minister Alois Mock and his Hungarian colleague Gyula Horn in joint symbolic action cut the barbed wire separating their countries. The Iron Curtain was being removed. When Hungary proceed to in fact opening its border September 10, the mass exodus from the GDR to the West set in.

There is irony in some historical dates. In September 1989, President François Mitterrand was about to conclude the two-hundred-year anniversary of the French Revolution with celebrations at Valmy, site of an inconclusive battle on September 20, 1792, between the revolutionary army and the armies of the old feudal German (Holy Roman) Empire. In September 1989, there was another revolution going on in Central Europe. Gorbachev had been invited to East Berlin to participate in the GDR 's 40-year anniversary October 7, 1989. When he was standing on the stage next to Honecker and close to Jaruzelski to watch the military parade, the regime's celebrations were disturbed by young demonstrators shouting "Gorbachev". The visitor from Moscow had come to lecture his hosts: "Life will punish him who is coming too late". When, on October 17, Egon Krenz, Günter Schabowski, and hated Stasi chief Erich Mielke staged a coup to save the regime by deposing Honecker in the Politbureau, they did come too late.

For good reasons, protagonists of the peaceful revolution in the GDR refer to Leipzig as its focus and to October 9 as its crucial date. As to its revolutionary character, it is worth noting that, at a nearby NVA (*National People's Army*) training school for non-commissioned officers, soldiers refused to be shipped to the scene

in arms. Yet there were other forces preparing for violence. The authorities, with lists of leading dissidents, had set up camps to arrest protesters as well as emergency wards storing blood bottles at hospitals. In that night, for whatever reasons, the security forces refrained from stopping the huge march. There is doubt concerning Egon Krenz's recent claims of having himself given orders not to shoot. The massive protest in Leipzig (preceded by a similarly peaceful protest in Plauen) triggered demonstrations in numerous other cities. November 4, about a million people assembled on East Berlin's Alexanderplatz to voice their demands. When Schabowski (who, later on, was ready to deplore his own political role and ideological delusions) and Markus Wolf, in a sort of gambit just recently retired from the top of GDR espionage and now re-emerging on the political scene, attempted to convince the crowds of their good intentions, they were booed down from the stage. The latter-day reformers' last attempt to handle the situation by granting free travel failed November 9 at Schabowski's press conference. In that night, the Berlin Wall came down.

V.

The fall of the Wall, in irresistible dynamics as it were, ushered in Germany's reunification. Recognizing the window of opportunity, Chancellor Helmut Kohl took the initiative on November 28. Having intentionally abstained from consulting with West Germany's allies, he presented a blueprint for achieving Germany's unity in a sequence of steps: close cooperation, confederation, unification. The GDR's new government had no choice but to give in to Kohl's strategy. In vain, the SED leadership tried to save the situation by changing the party's name into PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism) and directing the people's wrath against the Stasi, its very own instrument of power and oppression. Returning from a visit to Moscow in January 1990, Prime Minister Hans Modrow, considered as a reformer, took up the Leipzig rallying cry "Deutschland einig Vaterland".

Under pressure from all sides, Modrow's interim government accepted demands to reschedule free elections for the *Volkskammer* to an earlier date, March 18, 1990. On that day, political groups representing a number of dissidents favouring a slower pace or even advocating to preserve the GDR as a state, were marginalized by an alliance led by the CDU. Due above all to SPD chairman Oskar Lafontaine who had ostentatiously exhibited his indifference to German unity, the vote for the Social Democrats was much smaller than expected. Willy Brandt, who had hoped for victory at the polls in the former heartlands of Social Democracy, was deeply disappointed, feeling personally offended by Lafontaine. Nonetheless, Willy Brandt's name will be recorded in the annals of German reunification. He had stood next to Kohl during an emotional scene at the Schoeneberg town hall (his former West Berlin office seat) staged the day after the dramatic night of November 9. Just a few days afterwards, Willy Brandt, the grand old man of European democratic socialism, declared that "now that which belongs together is growing together" (*"Jetzt wächst zusammen, was zusammengehört"*). Throughout the crucial period from November 1989 to October 3, 1990, date of country's formal reunification, Kohl could rely on Brandt's support, as well as on Social Democrats like Helmut Schmidt.

The new GDR government formed in March was based on a coalition of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats. In the following months, the East German governments worked in parallel and cooperation with the Federal Government. Disputes arose about the mode of reunification, some deputies pleading for a joint constitutional assembly as stipulated in Article 146 in the West German constitution (*Grundgesetz*). In view of time running out for a prolonged process, the *Volkskammer* on August 23 decided to accede to the Federal Republic *via* Article 23, in its then wording open to such interpretation. *De facto* unity had been achieved July 1st, the day the West German DM was introduced, the East German currency *(Mark*) was tumbling in value. The negative aspects of this politically motivated move of setting an exchange rate of 1:1 became

apparent in the early nineties when, in the East, numerous privatized firms faced with unforeseen debts proved unable to compete on the market. They went into bankruptcy, innumerable people losing their jobs.

On the international scene, the cry for German unity was channelled into diplomacy. The German question was not to be left to the Germans themselves. In the final analysis, its solution depended on the four victorious powers of WW II. We may recall that not all of West Germany's allies were happy about consequences arising from the collapse of the Wall. Britain's Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, while voicing her sympathy for the East Germans' longing for liberty, bluntly declared this had nothing to do with the idea of reuniting Germany. This was not to happen in her lifetime. In March 1990, when the inevitable was taking shape, she convened a meeting with scholars from Great Britain and the US, who tried to diffuse her apprehensions. In December 1989, Francois Mitterrand had flown to Kyiv to meet and persuade Gorbachev to avert German predominance in Europe by committing the Soviet Union to the *status quo* and by maintaining support for the new East German government. Overlooking Ukrainian flags being waved in Kyiv, Mitterrand failed to recognize the situation Gorbachev was caught up in. With Soviet power rapidly depleting, the economy in dire straits, and secessionist tendencies growing in Georgia, in the Baltic region, in Ukraine, and in Belarus, he had little choice but letting German things take their course. Aside from Gorbachev's consent to reunification, during the entire process, the Germans could rely on the unambiguous support of the United States under President George H.W. Bush.

Up to the early phase of the Two-Plus-Four negotiations, in May, Gorbachev upheld the concept of German neutrality as the key to European security. In fact, for a moment, this idea was also voiced by West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who had become a friend with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze (later on second President of Georgia). A neutral Germany would have meant the end of the pact systems, of both

NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Helmut Kohl, opposing neutralization himself, knew that such a scheme was unacceptable to the Americans. For them (as in the eyes of others), it was essential, in the words of US Secretary of State Jimmy Baker, to keep "the Germans on the leash".

In February 1990, Genscher came out proclaiming the formula Two-Plus-Four (meaning negotiations between the two German states and the Four Powers). Talks began in May. In July, during a cordial meeting with Kohl in his Caucasian home region, Gorbachev too was ready to accept the concept of leaving united Germany in NATO. As a Western concession to the USSR, it was agreed in the Two-Plus-Four Treaty signed in Moscow September 12, 1990, that along with unilateral Soviet withdrawal and limiting German armed forces to 370 000, NATO would not station troops (other than Germans) on former GDR territory. Nor were nuclear weapons to be stationed there.

Serving as a substitute of a peace treaty, the *Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany* was to come into effect October 3, 2019. On that day, the two post-war German states, separately established in 1949, were reunited into one single state.

VI.

There were immediate and long-term consequences of Germany's reunification in the year 1990. On the national level, there was soon to be seen in the East a reversal of great expectations into disappointment. Integration into the Western capitalist market system via privatization went along with incidents of fraud and inequity. Many people, faced with unemployment, seeing themselves deprived of their hopes, turned their frustration into political radicalism. For some thirty years, after repeatedly changing its party labels (today "Die Linke"/ The Left) the ex-communist PDS, having itself illegally shipped some billions to foreign banks, has been profiting from discontent. In this field, "Die Linke" is

competing with the AfD (*Alternative für Deutschland*) on the other side of the political spectrum.

Radical nationalist sentiments shot up soon after reunification, manifesting itself in murderous neo-Nazi attacks on foreigners and asylum-seekers. Extreme right-wing parties like the NPD appeared on the scene. Causes of these phenomena are manifold. Aside from nationalist sentiments surviving and existing undiluted by the Party's antifascist proclamations even in the ranks of the SED, the regime's atheism needs to be identified as one seedbed of that unsavoury fruit.

The rise of the rightist AfD in recent years can in part be seen against this background. Its success, though, cannot simply be interpreted in terms of right-wing extremism. To be sure, the AfD – like its counterpart on the left - is carried by populist emotions and appeals. To a large degree, these sentiments stem from the East Germans' experiences ensuing the country's unification they had yearned for. After jubilance for participating in Western wealth and liberties, there came the shock of economic collapse and unemployment.

Many people were forced to find jobs in often far distant places in the West. Over the years, up to three million (out of less than seventeen million in GDR) left their homes in the East for the West. They were there confronted with different mentalities and the complexities of an immigrant society. The "remainers" were inclined to cultivate resentments against the Western "take-over", apparent in politics, firms, universities – and Western "green" ideology. The estrangement of West and East Germans had encompassed two, perhaps three generations, living in two different societies. In the West, younger generations had been raised with their eyes to Western Europe and a lack of national sentiments. Detaching themselves from the idea of the nation-state and of German reunification, intellectuals proclaimed the concept of a post-national democracy. When the Wall fell, after a short phase of joyful national unity, the Western post-national sentiments, quite often arising from real – or imagined - shame about their nation's

history again began to prevail. In a sort of educational project, these sentiments were imported in the East. Many West Germans displayed little regard for living conditions in the East by condescendingly speaking of their compatriots as "the Ossis" (*the guys from the East*).

As to the AfD strongholds in the Eastern *Bundesländer* (Federal states), the very fact that it is gathering votes from all corners calls for differentiated explanation. First, party affiliation in the eastern regions is weak, except in a specific Catholic section in Thuringia and among the minority of Protestant church-goers in an atheist society. In fact, for many years many AfD members and voters used to be conservative adherents of the CDU. Secondly, people in the East preserved traditions of local and national consciousness rooted in history, rejecting the Western concept of multiculturalism in a multi-ethnic society. Third, due to their experience with an authoritarian dictatorship, they are sensitive *vis-a-vis* pressures from above, even in their milder democratic forms of telling people what to think and feel (to wit: this is not meant as an excuse for primitive sentiments and behaviour). Last but not least, the AfD's ascent is to be ascribed to German policies in the era of Chancellor Angela Merkel, herself a remarkable example of an Eastern conformist's political success in the West.

After bringing about the downfall of Kohl, her long-time promoter, as CDU chairman in 1999, Merkel for some years presented herself as a vociferous opponent of multiculturalism. When she reversed her stance on immigration policies – vacillating from opening the gates in 2015 and trying to close them in costly deals with Turkey's President Erdogan –, she met with opposition throughout Germany (and elsewhere). Not only in the Eastern part of Germany voters switched their political loyalties to the right. Today we even find AfD sympathizers among some former GDR oppositionists (known as *Bürgerrechtler*), disenchanted with the Greens, the SPD, and the CDU under the leadership of Merkel.

VII.

Germany's reunification in 1990 upset the entire political scenery of Europe. One of its first consequences - even though not its primary and only cause - was the collapse of the Soviet Union, according to Vladimir Putin "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century". In Moscow, Gorbachev's political leniency towards war-time enemy Germany, including the abandonment of the Soviet glacis in Eastern Europe by withdrawing all troops, provoked opposition, culminating in plans to oust him by a military coup. When the conspiracy failed, with soldiers dismounting from their tanks in the streets of Moscow, August 19-21, 1991, the Soviet Union, heir to the Czarist Russian Empire, fell apart. The three Baltic states, which had declared their sovereignty the year before, now formally proclaimed their independence. Five months before, in April 1991, Georgia had declared its independence. Yet Georgia, regarded by many Russians as their crown jewel in the Caucasus, soon entered into civil strife. The Soviet Union, disrupted by ancient antagonisms dating back to the nineteenth century, was formally dissolved in the Declaration of Alma Ata, December 21, 1991.

Instead of national revival hoped for by many patriots, Russia under President Boris Yeltsin, a hero of the failed putsch, sank into agony. The Yeltsin era was marked by a total collapse of the economy. Radical liberal market doctrines were applied by former Communists, the "big bang" causing poverty, despair, coinciding with corruption and crime at an unprecedented scale. It was only under the authoritarian rule of Putin, basing his power on his KGB apparatus and on an economy of state-controlled monopolies exporting Russian minerals, that, at the expense of civil liberties, the country was recovering from the economic disaster.

Russia, by its name of Russian Federation *(Rossiskaya Federatsiya),* continued to be a multi-ethnic empire. When, on November 1, 1991, air force general Dshokhar Dudayev proclaimed independence for the small Caucasus region of Chechenya, this declaration was not recognized by Gorbachev. Three years later, Yeltsin decided to intervene against the rebellious and war-like

secessionists. The Chechen war – soon in its second round initiating Putin's ascent to power - culminated in bloody horrors and entailing the entry of terrorist Islamism into the Caucasian theatre.

If in some of these developments there seems to be a cogent causality with the fall of the Wall, the pattern of conflict leading back to it does become apparent in various other cases. It is open to dispute if the ethnic disintegration of Yugoslavia ushering in the Balkan wars in the nineties can be seen as a direct and inevitable consequence of Germany's reunification. Another case in point is Ukraine. When the protracted low-key war between Russia and Ukraine in the latter's separatist regions near the Crimea (re-annexed by Russia in 2014) erupted in 2013, it was preceded by a power struggle in Kyiv, intermeshed with nationalist emotions and cries for democracy. At its core lay Russian efforts to bloc "Western" influence and Ukrainian tendencies of joining both the European Union and NATO.

In the 1990s, under the weak leadership of Yeltsin, Russia had seen NATO's expansion to Eastern Europe. Yeltsin's successor, Putin, while promoting Russia's resurgence as a world power (based once more on military strength), rejected the West's argument of providing security for the Baltic states and Poland. At the Munich Security Conference in 2007, he openly challenged the West by accusing it of having violated the accords on military disengagement agreed upon in the Two-Plus-Four talks. As against this background, it is worth recalling that Gorbachev too, whilst conceding that there exists no written text to confirm Putin's claim, is maintaing the idea of a mutual understanding during these talks on the issue of NATO's future role in Europe. Horst Teltschik, Kohl's leading adviser and negotiator with the Soviets, brings back to mind that the Two-Plus-Four Treaty was concluded with the Soviet Union still existing as a political entity, thereby inferring that NATO's expansion had not been in anybody's view at that time.

In the past years, Gorbachev, while deploring the state of international affairs, has repeatedly come out in support for Putin and defending Russia's position in the world. To be sure, Putin's

neo-imperial ambitions and his violent methods cannot be overlooked. Nonetheless, whatever the merit of hypothetical dispute, it may be argued that a system of collective security in Europe in the wake of Two-Plus-Four might have served peace better in Europe and elsewhere. Instead, we see the reemergence of East-West tensions resembling the Cold War. We observe traditional power politics in Eastern Europe and in some same regions of the globe like Syria and Venezuela, accompanied by another arms race.

VIII.

The most striking consequence of German reunification, signifying Germany's reestablishment as Europe's central power, was the creation of the European Union, inaugurated by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992. As mentioned above, in the turbulent weeks of November and December 1989, Mitterrand had exerted pressure on Kohl to slow down the train toward unity. Kohl gained Mitterrand's consent to the course of German events during a meeting in Bordeaux, assuring the French president of his (Kohl's) commitment to the concept of European integration. He was ready to sacrifice (West) Germany's most powerful political instrument, *i.e.* the sovereignty of the *Bundesbank* (Federal Bank) (labelled as "Germany's nuclear bomb" by Mitterrand's adviser Jacques Attali) as well the DM as Europe's key currency. Born and raised in Rhineland-Palatinate, bearing painful childhood memories of the war, Helmut Kohl was devoted to the idea of a peacefully united Europe, considering it as an essential part of his German patriotism. Indeed, suspicions about his sincerity (as expressed by Margaret Thatcher) were unfounded. Meantime, somewhat different charges of hegemony are being voiced with regard to Germany's export-oriented economy profiting from a "weak" Euro.

European integration was promoted by a series of treaties ensuing Maastricht. After failing to create and proclaim a European constitution resembling the historical model of the United States, as

a sort of substitute the Treaty of Lisbon was signed in 2007. The concept of "an ever-closer union" is based on two motives: The first is a moral one: devotion to peace in Europe, arising from the horrors of war in the twentieth century. The second is its political *raison d' être*: to prevent future antagonisms among Europeans a) by integrating Germany's power potential into joint structures, thereby neutralizing Germany's predominance feared by its neighbours and no longer coveted by the Germans themselves b) by basing Europe's future on a durable, inseparable alliance of France and Germany.

The process of an integrated Europe dates back to the 1950s, starting with the Treaties of Rome,1957. In the wake of EU integration marked by Maastricht, Europe's nation-states have progressively ceded political sovereignty to a political system *sui generis*, an in-between of a confederation and federal states. The relationship between (limited) national sovereignty and the EU superstructure in many aspects seems to escape clear definition. An ever-growing bureaucracy in Brussels appears to function as a *de facto* central government. On the continent so far, aversion to "Brussels" and criticism of the loss of sovereignty is voiced only by elements labelled "populists" and in countries like Hungary under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

The concept of unifying Europe into an "ever closer union" promoted on the Continent never caught on in England. The Brexit movement is rooted in historical sentiments, a "populist" feeling of losing democratic sovereignty, last but not least in reservations about Germany's role in Europe. Unfounded though such suspicions may be, they gained momentum in view of Chancellor Merkel's fateful decision to open borders to refugees in 2015. Her action most likely tipped the scale in perceptions and emotions in Britain. Brexit, then, which has become a historical fact thanks to Boris Johnson's landslide victory December 12, 2019, can be seen as a remote repercussion of Germany's reunification in 1990.

Germany, like other West European countries, due to a growing immigrant population of non-European background as well as due

to its immigrant policies, is faced with an unprecedented change of its social, political, and cultural foundations. Against the background of Orbán's accusations levelled at Western secularism, on the one hand, Islamist tendencies on the other, Europe as a whole is called upon to reflect on its cultural moorings. In a specific manner, this task needs to be taken up by Germany. In many ways, present-day Germany, with its religious traditions among ethnic Germans eroding, is marked by its culture of historical guilt (not likely to be shared by generations of immigrants). Traditions rooted in religion are dissipating. In the country's memorial culture, the commemoration of Nazi barbarism is overshadowing the jubilant scenes of the fall of the Wall, November 9, 1989.

On the political level, Germany remains to be confronted with defining its role as the most powerful country in the centre of Europe. Suspicions as to exerting hegemony by itself or in close coalition with France may be unfounded. Nonetheless, German relations with Russia are warily eyed by its eastern neighbours. In the wake of the "refugee crisis" of 2015, charges were raised by some critics, that Germany was assuming a stance of moral hegemony in Europe. After Brexit, the question of mitigating centralized power in Brussels or further tightening the European Union will be brought up again. We may conclude, then, that thirty years after the fall of the Wall, questions concerning Germany's future role in Europe remain to exist.