

## PART 29

# Contemporary Issues in World History

### 29.1 A United Germany in a United Europe (June 5, 1990): Helmut Kohl

Germany has occupied a central position in the history of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. After nearly forty-five years of division, the events of 1989 presented opportunities for reunification. But the new realities posed new problems for Europe: Would Germany once again threaten its neighbors militarily? Would the financial costs of reunification stall the process? Who would bear the economic burden? Would the new Germany be politically neutral or maintain its central position in the NATO alliance? In 1990, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl addressed several of these questions in his speech to the American Council on Germany in New York City.

**Source:** "A United Germany in a United Europe" is from Helmut Kohl, speech delivered to the American Council on Germany, New York City, New York, on June 5, 1990. Contained in *Vital Speeches of the Day*, July 1, 1990, pp. 546–548.

#### HELMUT KOHL

We Germans are not oblivious of the fact that here and in other countries we are being asked questions as we head for unity:

What kind of Germany will emerge?

What will German unity mean for peace and security in the heart of Europe?

Will this Germany revert to old patterns of behaviour, or has it learned the lessons of history?

I shall attempt to provide answers here for the future, bearing in mind that we Germans can build on proven foundations as we move towards unity. Moreover, we Germans are determined, as we prove by our actions, to heed the lessons of our and of European history.

My first answer is this: A future united Germany will remain linked to the United States in close friendship and responsible partnership. . . . We shall remain together! This responsible partnership entails a future united Germany being a full member of the North Atlantic defense alliance.

We are thus drawing the first and most important conclusion from history: Peace, stability and security in Europe were ensured whenever Germany, the country in the heart of Europe, maintained firm ties, a fair balance of interests and mutually beneficial interchange with all its neighbours. On the other hand, when the Germans chose to go it alone or follow a separate nationalistic path, whether out of blind arrogance or criminal hubris, or when they were forced into isolation after a lost war, this resulted in discord, instability and insecurity for the whole of Europe.

A future Germany cannot and will not, therefore, drift back and forth between two camps. We do not seek neutrality or demilitarization, and we reject a non-aligned status. We Germans want to exercise our sovereign right, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. . . . We want to be a member of . . . the North Atlantic defense alliance. Our immediate neighbours in the East—the Poles, Czechs and Hungarians support this position.

Our commitment to the Western Alliance—and this is my second answer—implies above all our commitment to the Western community of shared values. A future Germany will be a free and democratic state based on social justice and the rule of law, on respect for human dignity and human rights. Right- or left-wing extremism does not, as more than forty years of domestic stability prove, stand a chance in our country in the future either.

A future Germany will also remain a federal state. . . . There is no better a means of preventing tyranny and totalitarianism than a constitution which not only provides for checks and balances, but also envisages a federal system. We in the Federal Republic of Germany have such a constitution: Our Basic Law has in more than forty years proved to be the most liberal constitution in German history. . . .

My third answer is this: A united Germany will be an economically sound and socially stable country. The unanimous opinion of international economic organizations is that German unification will significantly boost world economic growth. The pent-up demand in the GDR [formerly East Germany] and in the reformist countries of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe affords substantial market opportunities for everyone. . . .

The Federal Republic of Germany will strongly support this new economic and social start in the GDR. We are well prepared for this. For eight years our economy has been expanding. Business earnings, investments and employment are at a high level. We want to pave the way for private enterprise and the influx of private capital into the GDR. . . .

would like to repeat my invitation to American business: Become actively involved in the GDR to the mutual benefit. We Germans do not seek a monopoly; on the contrary, we seek competition and the common advantages of the international division of labour.

A future Germany—and this is my fourth answer—will from the very beginning be a member of the European Community. A united Germany will take part in 1992 when the large single market with 336 million people is completed. A united Germany will, together with France, be a driving force behind European unification. Before the end of this year two parallel intergovernmental conferences will be started to lay the contractual foundation not only for economic and monetary union, but also for political union.

Finally, our commitment to federalism does not end at our borders. Federalism is our real goal for Europe as a whole. A united Germany will therefore also espouse the ambitious goal of laying the groundwork for a United States of Europe before the end of this century. We are thus drawing a further conclusion from our history: German unity has a future only if it is achieved in harmony with our neighbours, and not through confrontation with them. . . .

A future Germany, firmly anchored in the West, will—and this is my fifth answer—in the future, too, live up to its share of responsibility for ensuring peaceful and stable reforms in the neighbouring Eastern and South-Eastern countries. In following our path to national unity, we Germans do not call borders into question. On the contrary, we want to make them more permeable. We are willing to achieve lasting understanding and comprehensive, forward-looking cooperation. Our goal is international reconciliation. In particular we are willing to take account of the legitimate security interests of all our neighbours, not the least the Soviet Union.

We are convinced that this recognition will soon prevail in the whole of Europe: A future united Germany as a member of the Western defense alliance will increase the security of everyone concerned and thus become a cornerstone of a stable, peaceful order in Europe.

**Questions:**

1. How did Chancellor Helmut Kohl view the impact of a “new” reunited Germany on Europe?
2. What did Kohl mean when noting that “federalism is our real goal for Europe as a whole”?