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# USSR: Developing a Game Plan for Six-Power Meetings on German Unification

An Intelligence Assessment

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# USSR: Developing a Game Plan for Six-Power Meetings on German Unification

An Intelligence Assessment

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## USSR: Developing a Game Plan for Six-Power Meetings on German Unification

### Key Judgments

*Information available  
as of 13 March 1990  
was used in this report.*

Moscow is probably still formulating its game plan for the six-power, or two-plus-four, sessions. Contradictions in Soviet thinking are apparent in the public and private remarks of Soviet officials and academics on security issues related to unification, such as Germany's ties to NATO, the status of foreign forces, and whether the united state must be neutral.

The Soviets will approach these discussions with two central objectives: to ensure that Soviet security interests are taken into account and to gain agreement on procedures and arrangements that will be accepted at home, where the recent injection of this emotional issue into the public political debate has added to its sensitivity. Moscow's security concerns have not changed substantially in recent months. It wants:

- Internationally sanctioned assurances that the new German government will not challenge postwar borders.
- Effective constraints on Germany's ability to threaten stability in Europe.
- A plan for German security ties that does not appear to favor the West. Moscow also hopes to use the six-power forum to rein in the process of unification so that a CSCE conference later this year will have a larger role than merely ratifying a deal between the Germanys. The Soviets hope to find more support at the conference for moves to establish a framework for a new European security order and enfold German unification into this process.

Recent high-level Soviet statements indicate that Moscow will initially argue for German neutrality and a peace treaty that guarantees the postwar borders. Moscow probably will insist that a peace treaty or some other type of legal declaration by Germany will be required at some point in the unification process to assuage East European concerns about future German territorial demands and to disarm domestic critics. In our judgment, however, the neutrality demand will be a negotiating tool, rather than a minimum condition. The Soviets hope to induce Bonn and the Western allies to move beyond the plan proposed by Foreign Minister Genscher to a compromise on German ties to NATO, possibly a phased approach along the following lines:

- *Stage 1.* Both Germanys would remain in their respective alliances during the initial steps toward unification. US and Soviet forces would remain on both sides at or below the level stipulated in the US proposal—195,000.

- *Stage 2.* The two Germanys would be united in a confederal state, and the United States and the Soviet Union would sharply reduce their forces. East German ties to the Warsaw Pact would lapse, and no NATO forces would be stationed in East Germany.
- *Stage 3.* As full unification approached, Germany would withdraw from the NATO military command but retain political ties to the alliance.
- *Stage 4.* A new European security order that would include a prominent role for both the United States and the USSR would displace NATO.

Moscow might ultimately agree to a French-style NATO membership for a united Germany, or even something akin to Genscher's plan, if President Gorbachev concluded there was little chance of a better deal and if he were confident of withstanding criticism from domestic hardliners. As part of the bargain, however, Moscow would insist on border guarantees, an extended timetable for the withdrawal of Soviet troops accompanied by significant reductions in US forces, and a Western commitment to press ahead with constructing a new security order in the CSCE. The Soviets might also hold out for a settlement or commitment to negotiate on nuclear weapons in Germany and for some restrictions on German national forces and arsenals.

**Contents**

	<i>Page</i>
<b>Key Judgments</b>	iii
<b>Moscow's View of Six-Power Consultations: Way Station to a European Summit</b>	1
<b>Reviewing Political, Economic, and Legal Issues</b>	1
<b>Ending World War II: A German Peace Treaty and Related Security Issues</b>	2
<b>Border Guarantees</b>	3
<b>Limits on German National Forces</b>	3
<b>Foreign Forces in Germany</b>	3
<b>Denuclearization</b>	4
<b>Germany and NATO</b>	4
<b>The Hardline Option</b>	4
<b>Looking for a Compromise</b>	5

## USSR: Developing a Game Plan for Six-Power Meetings on German Unification

### Moscow's View of Six-Power Consultations: Way Station to a European Summit

The Soviets have reacted positively to the prospect of linking the two Germanys and the four wartime allies in talks on German unification. They undoubtedly view agreement on the two-plus-four meetings as a first step in implementing the understanding reached between Gorbachev and Kohl in Moscow last month: the Germanys will exercise self-determination over internal matters, but unification will take place in an all-European context and with adequate consideration of the interests of Germany's neighbors. Indeed, Moscow's focus on getting these commitments in place may account in part for the limited attention devoted thus far to defining the necessary concrete steps toward unification. According

Moscow has only recently begun to focus on these.

Moscow probably views the six-power meetings as a means to limit any perception in the USSR that the leadership "lost" East Germany. A unification process channeled through the two-plus-four format would appear more like a merger than an absorption of East Germany by West Germany. Soviet officials have repeatedly stated that unification must not mean annexation. Moscow probably also hopes that starting the process agreed to in Ottawa will ease pressures for immediate unification in both Germanys.

While trying to avoid the appearance of obstructionism, the Soviets will probably attempt to draw out the process, both to gain time for more fully formulating their own policy toward a united Germany and to complement other efforts to stave off finalizing a plan for unification until an all-European summit takes place. Moscow wants the summit to help shape the terms of unification, not merely ratify a fait accompli between the Germanys. Despite their agreement to the two-plus-four meetings, the Soviets remain anxious that the process is moving too quickly. In a

speech to the Canadian Parliament last month, Foreign Minister Shevardnadze criticized "politicians . . . who want to play a game of political speed chess with a time limit of five minutes." He emphasized that it is "essential to progress only one step at a time, stage by stage on this matter, to abandon one thing only when the consequences are clear." The Soviets will undoubtedly attempt to play on similar fears among the other participants—including some in East Germany.

### Reviewing Political, Economic, and Legal Issues

Although the agreement reached in Ottawa specifically assigned only negotiation of the international aspects of unification to the six-power forum, the Soviets may call for initial sessions to review the internal arrangements for unification that are decided by the two Germanys. A Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman said West German Chancellor Kohl had exaggerated the "green light" on unification President Gorbachev gave in Moscow, and the Soviets have repeatedly criticized Bonn for forcing the pace. The more concerned Moscow becomes about the course of independent German actions, the more likely it will be to argue that intra-German decisions have an impact on external issues and should be closely monitored at six-power meetings. Indeed, the Soviets and the East German Government may already be preparing the ground for such a move. Prime Minister Modrow told the press in Moscow early this month that he would request Soviet help in securing property rights in the GDR and that this was a proper subject for two-plus-four negotiations because of the Soviet role in shaping GDR land reform and property issues during the period 1945-49.

The intra-German discussions will determine, among other things, the steps to be taken to integrate the two German economies. Shevardnadze and others have

said that the economic union of the Germans will largely benefit the USSR, but the Soviets nonetheless will want assurances that rapid movement toward economic integration will not harm their interests. The GDR is the USSR's largest trading partner and provides large quantities of machinery and manufactured goods that are important to Gorbachev's domestic economic program. Moscow will be concerned that the newly united Germany honor the GDR's economic obligations to the Soviet Union.

The Soviets will also try to get agreement on procedures and institutions for approving political changes in Germany as an additional safeguard against precipitate German actions. While all participants agree that the two-plus-four meetings are a prelude to an all-European summit, Moscow appears anxious for parallel discussions in other forums to take place soon. In his speech to the Canadian Parliament shortly after the six-power meetings were announced, Shevardnadze proposed that preparatory meetings for the Pan-European summit might begin as early as March. These meetings would involve the foreign ministers of all 35 European states in drafting the documents for the summit and its agenda, which he said must include the German question. He also suggested that the Four Powers continue consultations alongside the six-power meetings and the preparations for the summit—a call the Soviets have since repeated frequently. Moscow has insisted that Four Power rights and responsibilities are not superseded by the six-power forum. The Soviets may anticipate that these forums would serve as a hedge against unacceptable decisions by the Germans in their bilateral exchanges.

In the six-power sessions, the Soviets will probably propose a fairly long timetable for unification, arguing that security arrangements must have time to catch up with the pace of political change. Indeed, in a recent *Izvestiya* interview Shevardnadze said unification would "most likely take several years." Although some Soviet commentators have said it may now be too late to induce the Germans to agree to confederal and federal stages on the way to full unification, Moscow may nonetheless try to fan French and British concerns and any anxieties it perceives in the Germans to build pressure for a more controlled process.

#### Ending World War II: A German Peace Treaty and Related Security Issues

The Soviets will certainly use the six-power forum to press for negotiation of a peace treaty. Gorbachev stressed in *Pravda* on 21 February that the six powers would examine the foundations for a peace treaty, which he described as necessary under international law. Gorbachev wants and needs a peace treaty as part of the unification process. He and his spokesmen have related in the starkest terms the impact memories of World War II continue to have on the Soviet public. Unification without a peace treaty would sharply irritate these exposed nerves and heighten domestic fears that a resurgent Germany would eventually threaten the security of the USSR.

If Bonn is reluctant to move toward a peace treaty, the Soviets will look to the West for support. They probably believe that Paris and London share their interest in a final settlement. They will use the argument of appeasing the Soviet public to try to convince the Germans that a treaty is the price for settling outstanding security issues, such as the eventual withdrawal of Soviet forces. As a bid for German agreement, they might suggest that the treaty be negotiated and signed by both Germans, endorsed in CFE, and then ratified by the unified state as testimony to the new Germany's international acceptance.

Discussion of a treaty will raise security questions other than those related to Germany's future relations with NATO:

- The Soviets will insist that a treaty include provisions recognizing the postwar borders, arguing that there is widespread support throughout Europe for such guarantees. Any reluctance on Bonn's part to make a written commitment on borders would be portrayed as evidence of bad faith.
- Moscow is also likely to raise in the two-plus-four forum the issue of limits on German national forces and arsenals. The Soviets may want to incorporate any such negotiated conditions into a peace treaty to lend them additional legal weight.

- The status of foreign forces in Germany will also be addressed, with Moscow seeking an extended timetable for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from East Germany.
- Moscow undoubtedly wants the issue of nuclear weapons in Germany resolved alongside unification. The Soviets might view CSCE-convened mandate talks for negotiations on strategic nuclear forces (SNF) as sufficient to guard their interests.

#### **Border Guarantees**

Soviet public statements on the conditions necessary for unification have increasingly put the greatest emphasis on formal German recognition of the permanence of postwar borders. The Soviets have claimed that such guarantees are essential to calm fears of a resurgent Germany in the USSR and elsewhere, and gaining them is almost certainly one of Moscow's minimum security requirements. Gorbachev said in *Pravda* on 21 February that only an "act of international law" could provide the necessary guarantees. The Soviets' preferred vehicle is clearly a peace treaty formally ending World War II, which could also incorporate other constraints on a united Germany. Faced with stubborn German opposition to a treaty, the Soviets might ultimately accept an alternate act of international law, such as an agreement under the auspices of the CSCE. They have insisted, however, that a unilateral act by the Germans would not be adequate to meet the legitimate concerns of the USSR and Germany's other neighbors.

#### **Limits on German National Forces**

The Soviets almost certainly want to see restrictions on the manpower and arsenals of the German armed forces. Although CFE Ambassador Grinevskiy told the NATO Secretary General that the six powers should "raise and resolve" the matter, the question of ties to NATO has a higher priority, and the Soviets probably will not introduce this issue early in the six-power process. Restrictions on German national forces could legitimately be dealt with in new European arms reduction talks, which may drop the bloc-to-bloc approach in favor of national ceilings. The Soviets might feel that a six-power commitment to

negotiating such limits in CFE would be more palatable to the Germans and less likely to leave a residue of hard feelings between Moscow and the new state.

#### **Foreign Forces in Germany**

The resolution of the issue of foreign forces is a particularly sensitive one for Moscow. The Soviets need to avoid the appearance of being expelled from East Germany and losing it to the West. Moreover, as Shevardnadze and other Soviets have said publicly, the immediate absorption of so many troops from Eastern Europe would pose severe social, political, and economic problems domestically. Grinevskiy has proposed 1995 as the date for having all foreign forces out of Europe, and Moscow clearly wants a timetable at least that long, particularly for its troops in East Germany. Shevardnadze delineated Moscow's opening position on this issue in his address to the Canadian Parliament, saying that Soviet forces in East Germany are a different matter than those elsewhere in Eastern Europe and that "they are staying." Moscow might prefer to leave settlement of the issue to another forum but would probably at least seek six-power endorsement of the recent provisional agreement between the United States and the USSR on ceilings for stationed forces in Europe as a means of preempting counterproposals at the Vienna negotiations or demands from a new East German government for a quick unilateral Soviet withdrawal. Faced with demands for speedy withdrawal of their troops, the Soviets might claim that recent CFE agreements on stationed forces had settled the issue until a new agreement is hammered out in that forum. They probably would also argue that the question should be resolved as part of a peace treaty or at a CSCE conference.

Moscow would prefer that foreign forces in both parts of Germany be reduced reciprocally. Linking Soviet and NATO forces in Germany remains Moscow's best argument for the legitimacy of its own troops. Moreover, an asymmetric reduction would be more

difficult to sell at home than mutual cuts. Nonetheless, Moscow might be able to tolerate a phased asymmetric reduction, provided other fundamental security guarantees had been agreed. Soviet willingness to acquiesce could be enhanced if NATO—and especially US—forces in Germany were substantially reduced while Moscow retained at least a token presence throughout most of the unification process. In this case, Moscow would argue for a firm commitment to a deadline for withdrawal of all foreign forces and transition to a new security order.

#### Denuclearization

The Soviets undoubtedly want the question of nuclear weapons in Germany settled before unification is finalized and may ultimately turn to the six-power process if they have made no progress elsewhere. They may expect that antinuclear sentiment in Germany will prevent modernization of NATO's theater nuclear forces and eventually lead to an independent German commitment against any nuclear weapons in Germany. Some SPD members are already calling for the removal of all nuclear warheads as part of the security arrangement for a united Germany. The Soviets may also calculate that other players will respond positively to renewed proposals for SNF negotiations now that there has been progress on conventional force cuts. Soviet officials are examining options to bring SNF to the fore, and Moscow may seek to set up CSCE approval of a mandate for SNF negotiations this fall.

#### Germany and NATO

The overriding question for Moscow is Germany's future security status, including whether the new German state can continue its ties to NATO. This is a sensitive domestic issue for Gorbachev, who risks the charge of saddling the USSR with a major strategic defeat. Politburo member Ligachev's recent warning about German unification in a Central Committee debate and reports that some military leaders are critical of Gorbachev's policy illustrate the point. Although there has yet to be a groundswell of criticism of Gorbachev's German policy, some Soviet officials and academics have expressed the fear that German unification could trigger an offensive based

on the cry, "Who lost Eastern Europe?" The Soviets therefore will weigh carefully the political and military trade-offs.

#### The Hardline Option

Several Soviet spokesmen have staked out a strong public position favoring German neutrality and firmly rejecting continued membership in NATO. This almost certainly will be Moscow's opening stance in the two-plus-four talks. German neutrality would clearly be easier to sell to the Soviet public than any scheme permitting continued German ties to NATO and might defuse tensions within the Soviet leadership. Moreover, the Soviets undoubtedly believe that the presence of a powerful united Germany in NATO could destabilize the military balance in Europe likely to result from a CFE agreement, particularly if unification takes place before the "politicization" of NATO and a shift to new European security structures have begun.

If the Soviets decide the advantages of neutrality outweigh the possible drawbacks and push aggressively for a neutral Germany, they might expect that unfruitful talks at the six-power level would move the question to the CSCE forum, where they would hope to generate support for this option as a step toward creating a broad European security order. They might also calculate that they could exploit a strong showing by the SPD in the East German elections and sentiment in favor of neutrality among socialists in both East and West Germany to increase pressure on Kohl to change his position. If Kohl remained firm, they might even try to delay resolution of security issues until after the West German elections in December in the hope that the SPD would win and offer Moscow a better deal.

A decision to stand fast on a demand for German neutrality would nonetheless have serious drawbacks. Moscow could not expect to find support among the three Western allies, all of whom have publicly opposed the option. Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary have also spoken against German neutrality, although they probably would not favor full NATO

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**What Do the Soviets Mean by Neutrality?**

*Moscow has not clearly defined neutrality. Soviet commentary on the four-step plan for unification proposed early in February by East German Prime Minister Modrow emphasized his references to military neutrality. This may have been intended to equate neutrality with nonmembership in military alliances or in the military components of such alliances. Soviet statements have not, however, consistently linked neutrality and the question of German ties to NATO. There have also been few references to neutral status on the model of existing neutral states.*

*CPSU International Department head Valentin Falin gave his definition of neutrality in a mid-February interview in Der Spiegel:*

*The term neutrality has been defined too narrowly. For us, neutrality means that any new military danger must not emanate from German territory—from Germany itself or from foreign powers—toward neighbors, Europe, or anybody else. This is all.*

*Falin's comments suggest that the Soviets are more interested in restrictions on Germany's ability to pose a military threat to stability in Europe than in its formal status as a neutral.*

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membership either. More important, a tough stand would risk damaging future relations with Germany if the USSR were perceived by the German public as trying to block unification. The Soviets would probably also worry that their insistence on neutrality would build German public support for rightwing extremist parties and for unilateral action to unite the Germanys.

**Looking for a Compromise**

Moscow's need to have good relations with a united Germany most likely will lead to a flexible approach in the talks. Despite their stated preference for neutrality, Shevardnadze and others have said publicly

that the Soviets are willing to discuss various options. Private Soviet comments indicate that the issue still has not been finally settled in Moscow. A few Soviet officials have said that they do not regard neutrality as obtainable or necessarily in the best interests of the USSR. They have expressed uneasiness at the prospect of a Germany unconstrained by any alliance ties and said that the continued presence of some US forces might be a positive influence during—and possibly for a while after—the unification process. Moscow therefore might ultimately view some ties between Germany and NATO as a useful constraint on independent action by the new state.

The Soviets are probably prepared to use the six-power forum to determine what the traffic will bear and are likely to raise neutrality as a bargaining chip rather than as a minimum condition. They may hope that an extreme opening position will induce the other participants to search for a solution more palatable to Moscow than the demilitarization of the eastern part of a united Germany in NATO proposed by Foreign Minister Genscher. They may also expect to exploit any differences among the Western powers on the extent and duration of Germany's ties to NATO to secure a compromise.

The Soviets probably expect that the other players will raise some of the alternatives to the Genscher plan that have surfaced in the international media and that the Soviets have undoubtedly debated among themselves. These include continued ties to both alliances, a political membership in NATO on the French model, and the demilitarization of the alliances. There is little evidence on which to base predictions about the development of the Soviets' position during the end game, and much will depend on how events in Germany evolve. Ultimately, a plan that called for Germany to move sequentially through several of the suggested schemes might be viewed by the Soviets as meeting their security and domestic concerns:

- For example, during the first stage, the Germanys would maintain ties to their respective alliances while carrying out the initial stages of economic and

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political unification. US and Soviet forces would remain on both sides at or below the level stipulated in the US proposal—195,000.

- During the second stage, the two Germanys would be united in a confederal state, and both alliances would sharply reduce their forces in Germany. The Soviets might complete their withdrawal while some NATO troops remained, although they probably would insist on a token Soviet presence at least until the next stage. At this point, East German ties to the Warsaw Pact would lapse, but no NATO forces would be stationed in eastern Germany. This might resemble the plan proposed by Genscher in which the eastern portion of a united Germany remaining in NATO would be demilitarized.

- As full unification approached, West Germany would withdraw from the NATO military command but retain political ties to the alliance—the “French model.” Foreign troops would be reduced to a token presence, and eventually all foreign forces would leave. Moscow might expect that the outcome would be, in effect, a neutral Germany because the alliances would wither away or be altered beyond recognition.

- Ultimately—by mid-decade according to the timetable called for by Grinevskiy—a stable transition to a unified Germany would pave the way for

development of a new European security order that would include a prominent role for the United States and the USSR.

The Soviets are probably not prepared to table the details of a sequential approach as an opening move, but would view an agreement on transitional arrangements as a possible outcome of bargaining with the other players during negotiations. Whatever their initial position, the Soviets are likely to see some sort of phased approach leading to a wholly new security order—either by design or evolution—as a satisfactory outcome. A compromise on transitional arrangements would meet Moscow's desire to remove its forces from the GDR gradually and avoid the image of giving up the spoils of war. The US forces—and perhaps a token Soviet force—would remain as a constraining influence throughout the unification process, but at force levels that could not be described as threatening. Germany would retain ties to the West and act as a conduit to the East. Soviet relations with the new German state would not be undermined.

Moscow would come under considerable pressure to settle for less if the other key players coalesce around something akin to the Genscher plan. Gorbachev's penchant for making sudden asymmetrical compromises when faced with a tough Western negotiating stance suggests that he would acquiesce to the French model or even a Genscher-like plan if there were little chance of a better deal and if he were confident of withstanding the inevitable criticism from hardliners in the party and the military. As part of this arrangement, however, Gorbachev would insist on provisions for formal border guarantees, an extended timetable for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from East Germany accompanied by significant reductions in US forces, and a Western commitment to begin the construction of a new security order. The Soviets might also hold firm on securing restrictions on German national forces and arsenals and a settlement of the question of nuclear warheads in Germany.