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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Central Europe, i.e., Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and, for purposes of this Paper, Germany, is not now a single coherent geopolitical region. The first four countries—three in number before the breakup of Czechoslovakia—reclaimed their sovereign existence in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Empire in 1989. After decades of subjugation, they suddenly became independent actors, confronting a host of truly daunting tasks of “transition” from Soviet-style socialism, involving democratization, marketization, and with the demise of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO), foreign policy reorientation as well. Having been cast adrift by cataclysmic developments, all the former Soviet client states are now actively seeking new moorings against the danger of a political undertow in the wake of what they regard as the region’s “security vacuum.”

By contrast, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), a social market democracy from its establishment in 1949, remains anchored in Western alliance structures. These structures also embrace former East Germany, the ex-German Democratic Republic (GDR), once the lynchpin of the WTO. Reorganized as the five “new Länder” (federal states) of reunified Germany (from 1990), eastern Germany is presently caught up in its own wrenching process of socio-economic transformation.

Historically an area of latent instability, Central Europe has witnessed recurrent conflict, repeated foreign invasion, and persistent outside domination. Modern Germany has served on more than one unhappy occasion as a hegemonial power in the region. But whenever it has been weak and internally divided, Germany has also constituted an arena of instability, itself liable to foreign incursion. Thus security dilemmas, traditional and contemporaneous, bind together reunified Germany and the four ex-Communist countries of Central Europe.

Current Central European international relations, while free of violence, have not been exactly marked by comprehensive cooperation, much less regional integration. The Visegrad Group (first a Triangle, then a Quadrangle) has virtually ceased to exist; other arrangements, e.g., the Central European Initiative, are far too fissiparous in character and/or limited in function to serve the purpose. Many reasons may be adduced to explain this state of affairs. They include different modalities of and degrees of success in the “transition” from Soviet-style socialism, intra-state tensions (such as those that led to the partition of Czechoslovakia), residual and resurgent inter-state controversies (e.g., over the Hungarian minority in Slovakia), the clash of individual personalities of various post-Communist national leaderships, different calculations of the national interest in the
novel post-Communist setting of the renationalization of foreign policy, the involvement of domestic publics as a consequence of democratization, and the like. At bottom, however, one factor stands out above all the rest. Despite the long prehistory of the "idea of Central Europe" and the practical endorsement it received from members of the critical intelligentsia, truly a major sociopolitical force in the final decade of Communist rule, a common Central European identity has never really taken root. Instead, identity itself has become a contested political issue, within individual countries and between them, adding among other things, new cleavages to the traditional gulf between non-German and German conceptions of the region. Reunified Germany by itself cannot really be counted on as an effective catalyst for integration, either for Central Europe as a region or for Europe as a whole. Too many constraints, both domestic and international, preclude the successful exercise of such a function by Germany, now and for the immediate future.

If prospects for integrating Central Europe as a region (or else a sub-region) seem dim, the outlook for linking individual countries of the area to the larger framework of European integration (i.e., the EU) and to the basic Western security structure (i.e., NATO) is another matter. Assessments of the likelihood (and/or desirability) of either eventuality may differ but one thing is not in dispute: the very prospect of joining NATO and the EU constitutes a powerful influence (a crucial "exogenous factor") contributing to internal democratic development, including respect for human rights, avoidance of ethnic excesses, and restraint over national rivalries. By the very same token, however, frustration of aspirations to "return to Europe" could erode the very foundations of post-Communist political culture throughout Central Europe. In any event, it would be profoundly mistaken to take the security (in all its many present aspects) of the Central European countries (including Germany) for granted. Constructive engagement in European affairs on the part of the United States and creative American leadership remain absolutely essential.

INTRODUCTION

"If it did not exist, it would have to be invented" — a shopworn aphorism that one is tempted to apply to Central Europe. The temptation should be resisted. At present, Central Europe simply does not exist as a viable geostrategic entity; moreover, it is highly unlikely to be invented as such in the foreseeable future. To be sure, in the past—recent no less than distant—something called "Central Europe" (or, in a markedly different version, Mitteleuropa) may well be said to have existed, at least in the mind of those beholders who were wont to subject it to invocation and celebration; in that sense, Central Europe was prone to invention and reinvention at the hands of politicians, publicists, and poets (or, at least essayists with historical imagination). If once, why not now, or in the future?

The answer to this question lies in the politics of identity. The notion of identity (political, cultural, or personal) need not be elusive. One's identity is typically defined by the group or groups
to which one belongs or aspires to belong. Manipulation of the values and symbols that demarcate one's group or groups from all others enhance and strengthen identity but disagreements about valuational notations and symbolic representations can be dysfunctional to identity formation and maintenance.\textsuperscript{1} With respect to the international milieu, "all regions are socially constructed and hence politically contested."\textsuperscript{2}

The social construction of contemporary Central Europe draws upon a rich if contradictory history of ideas, the most important of which are briefly sketched in the first section of Part One of this paper. The entire enterprise owed much to the activities of dissident intellectuals who played a unique role thanks to traditional ascriptive claims and the novel political space that opened up with the decay of Communist rule. As the critical intellectuals constructed it, "Central Europe" was designed to stand in juxtaposition to the Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe of Yalta and Cold War vintage. It also served as metaphor for civil society, i.e., the network of socio-civic relationships, which is (or ought to be) independent of the political order. This conception of Central Europe had little in common with various notions of Mitteleuropa which also came to enjoy a revival in the 1980's in the German-speaking world (mainly West Germany, but also Austria, and even East Germany.)

The factors inhibiting the development of institutional features to augment social construction will emerge in the course of an examination of the Visegrad Group (VG), the Central European Initiative (CEI), the Central European Free Trade Area (CEFTA), and other, complementary as well competitive, configurations. Suffice it only to note at the outset that the concomitant political contestation has taken place in a vortex of highly idiosyncratic personalities and potentially volatile publics. As a consequence, the renationalization of the foreign policy (and, particularly, the security concerns) of the post-Communist countries may well prove destabilizing, especially if the much desired (and impatiently anticipated) ties to the West fail to materialize in the shape and within the time frame expected.

It is frequently argued that the role of bridge to Europe—or, perhaps better put, the function of catalyst for Central Europe's integration into the West—falls to Germany. Part Two of this paper deals with "Germany and (East) Central Europe." Choice of this title is meant to convey several things: First, official German pronouncements avoid the politically loaded designation Mitteleuropa, a term that nowadays is favored mostly by critics, domestic and foreign, of the ostensibly expansionist aims and hegemonial aspirations of unified Germany's Ostpolitik. Secondly, the idea of Central Europe does not particularly engage the attention of German geopolitical strategists; their calculations tend to focus on the individual countries of East Central Europe or else to juxtapose the region as a whole in its present state of arrested integration to sorely vexed, potentially menacing but also richly promising Russia where other (ultimately, more important?) German interests are thought to be at stake. Therefore, discussion ought to center on the ambivalence of Germany's role and
should stress constraints perhaps even more than compulsions. In the final analysis, recently (re-)unified Germany is caught up in its own politics of identity.

Although not per se a policy paper, this Report’s concluding section attempts not only to summarize the many complexities of the contemporary geostrategic situation of Central Europe but also to highlight some implications of the present state of affairs for Western policy in general and American policy in particular. The necessary beginning can only be made by acknowledging that Central Europe must be treated as something other than “a strategic and conceptual no-man’s land.”

PART ONE: The Politics of Regional Identity

THE IDEA OF ‘CENTRAL EUROPE’

What’s in a name? Actually, quite a lot. If “Eastern Europe,” a designation that came to enjoy widespread currency during the Cold War, may be said to have been invented by the philosophes of the French Enlightenment and “Mitteleuropa” to have been popularized by propagandists of German expansionism, the paternity of “Central Europe” remains rather less certain. Many ascribe it to Czechoslovakia’s scholarly President-Liberator, Thomas G. Masaryk, writing just prior to his country’s attainment of independence at the end of World War I; some prefer to credit other thinkers who also anticipated the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In either event, the notions of Central Europe advanced back then prefigured ideas of the region that were to be championed by dissidents in various East European countries in the decade preceding the region’s “Glorious Revolution” of 1989. This was the case as concerns prescriptions for domestic political society and with respect to views about the proper ordering of international relations.

Without going into the specific tenets of particular theorists of either period, the latter’s advocacy of a regional identity based upon authentic constitutional democracy sustained by a vibrant civil society and transcending national limitations constituted an outgrowth of earlier democratic, federative ruminations. At the same time, if “Central Europe” had originally been conceived as an antidote to Mitteleuropa, the idea’s reincarnation in the twilight of the Communist epoch, although not quite as consciously anti-German, nonetheless virtually ruled out Germany’s inclusion in the region. Not surprisingly, East European dissident thinking had little if anything in common with various mitteleuropäische dreams and schemes which had begun to surface in West Germany, Austria, and even East Germany. In fact, East European protagonists of a reborn Central Europe evinced scant interest in the FRG’s national concerns or its strategic preoccupations; for that matter, before 1989 they largely ignored both the plight and the aspirations of their fellow dissidents in the GDR.
Germany's omission from regional calculations before 1989-90 reflected both bitter historical memories and a general disdain for the sinews of international power, coupled with a pronounced anti-superpower bias. The latter was directed primarily (although not always exclusively) against the Soviet Union, the Great Enforcer of Europe's post-World War II division between East and West for which "Yalta" was the reviled code word. For some, anti-Soviet sentiments were leavened with anti-Russian reflexes, which in turn animated efforts to prove that the countries of Central Europe were not East European at all but rather European, i.e., Western. Hence, the subsequent popularity of Vaclav Havel's phrase, "return to Europe," and, incidentally, the current fear, on cultural no less than strategic grounds, of a resurgent Russia.\textsuperscript{10}

Apart from the omission of Germany and the exclusion of Russia (whether Soviet or post-Soviet), the idea of Central Europe lacked further geographic precision. Much as some visions of Mitteleuropa had once sought to embrace a broad belt of states from the German Reich through the Habsburg Empire to the Balkans, the Middle East, and on to Germany's African colonies, so too had Masaryk's early views toyed with the vision of a vast territorial expanse stretching from Scandinavia to the Balkans. Latter day protagonists have been no more certain of the geopolitical scope of the Central European project.\textsuperscript{11} Thus, although during the 1980's Polish intellectuals were less interested than their Czech and Hungarian counterparts in the idea of Central Europe, after the collapse of the Soviet Union many of them were quick to discover a Polnocentric Central Europe, embracing Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine.\textsuperscript{12} For their part, official Ukrainian spokesmen have waxed enthusiastic about joining Central Europe. Ukrainian nationalists have been adamant in insisting that their country is in fact Central European in culture and that Ukraine's history is inextricably bound up with European (as opposed to Russian) history. Romanians are prone to professions of outrage at what they regard as their arbitrary assignment to the Balkans. According to certain of its present-day savants, Romania lies at the very heart of Central Europe. Of the Yugoslav successor states, two (Slovenia and Croatia) proclaim themselves Central European to the core; others, Bosnia-Herzegovina (or rather, some of its Muslim and most of its Croat elements) and Macedonia (or at least certain Macedonians) also advance similar claims. Still other manifestations of Central Europe's geopolitical indeterminacy might be added. An observation of Milan Kundera, the renown Czech writer living in Paris, remains eminently applicable. A major contributor to the revival of Central European thinking in the 80's, Kundera suggested that rather than being a fixed geopolitical region, Central Europe constitutes "a culture or a fate [whose] borders are imaginary...."\textsuperscript{13}

For all of its ambiguities and contradictions, the Central European project propounded during the 1980's by various Czech, Hungarian, Polish and other proponents stressed a number of common themes -- truth, authenticity, tolerance, civility, cultural creativity, human rights, national diversity, international cooperation, and the like. Their treatment of all these themes has rightly been accorded
extensive coverage and commentary. This demands attention, however, are the major psychosocial aspects of much if not all of what passed for thinking about Central Europe; viz, a deep politico-cultural pessimism, unabashed intellectual elitism, and considerable disdain for the practical requirements of "mere" politics. I have discussed these three interconnected aspects elsewhere; here, however, it ought to be pointed out that gloomy predictions of the entrenchment of culturally stultifying Communist oppression to the great and possibly permanent damage of Central Europe's spiritual foundations, were all proved wrong by actual events.

Paradoxical though it may seem, the end of Communist rule and the collapse of the Soviet Union occurred far too quickly and far too soon for the solidification of a truly viable Central European identity. To make matters worse, the intellectuals' own elitism militated against widening the social basis of support for Central Europe in host populations whose political horizons were resurgently national and whose points of cultural reference increasingly American. (The latter was especially true for the younger generations, to the horror of their would-be intellectual mentors.) As for the self-styled intellectual elite's disdain for practical politics, whether expressed in the professions of "anti-politics" of a György Konrad or in the "meta-politics" of so many others, the basic proclivity itself ill-equipped the new actors on the Central European stage to tackle quite concrete problems of domestic democratization and regional organization.

To be sure, a transnational fraternity whose origins lay in informal contacts between the Polish KOR and Czechoslovakia's Charter 77 in the late 1970's, did develop into a larger grouping encompassing critical intellectuals and other oppositionist figures hailing from a number of different countries. These kindred spirits successfully coordinated efforts across national lines so as jointly to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian uprising (1986), protest against violations of the Helsinki accords (1987), foster underground ties between Poland's Solidarity and Czechoslovakia's Charter 77 (1987), demonstrate jointly against repression in Romania (1988) and petition on behalf of human rights in East Germany (1988-89). In all of this, members of the oppositionist fraternity may well have believed that they were nurturing the growth of a sturdy Central European identity. That this did not come to pass should not be attributed to the absence of either noble sentiments or the courage to act upon their convictions at great personal risk. Missing, however, was the wherewithal, in psychological predisposition and political finesse no less than in organizational talent, to tackle the many daunting tasks of building a new regional identity. The sundry pitfalls of the politics of Central European identity can best be treated after reviewing the regional initiatives that have been undertaken.
Visegrad--and Beyond

The grouping known as the Visegrad Triangle (later, Quadrangle) takes its name from a small but historically symbolic town near Budapest where the post-Communist leaders of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland met in February 1991 to subscribe to a set of common goals. In the ensuing years it has become almost impossible for participants and observers alike to agree as to whether Visegrad should be characterized as a "group" or a "club," merely an initiative or conceivably an alliance. Today, many regional actors and most outside commentators deem Visegrad to be a dead letter. The Visegrad Group (VG) seems increasingly to have given way to the politics of each country for itself.

If Visegrad has in fact come to naught, that may be because the ambitions of its original protagonists were too grandiose, the resources allocated to the achievement of stated goals insufficient, and the support proffered by the West inadequate. As stipulated at the constituent gathering at Visegrad and elaborated at subsequent summit meetings in Krakow (October 1991) and Prague (May 1992), the basic objectives ranged from completion of the dismantling of domestic Communist regimes and perfection of new constitutional democratic systems to the redesign of pan-European and Euro-Atlantic security structures and the economic and eventual political integration of Europe as a whole. In the pursuit of these goals, Visegrad's founding fathers neither possessed the requisite domestic political authority nor did they command the necessary assistance of a cadre of well trained professionals. On the contrary, the men of Visegrad constituted something less than fully empowered national leaders and, worse yet, they were served by bureaucratic holdovers of indifferent competence, questionable political reliability, and uncertain regional orientation. As for the support proffered by the West, the Czech Premier Vaclav Klaus, often regarded as the arch-villain behind the demise of Visegrad, has been wont to denounce the whole enterprise as an expedient foisted upon the Central Europeans by a West otherwise largely indifferent to their fate.

There is some truth to the assertion. Unprepared for the abrupt demise of Soviet-dominated structures like WTO and COMECON and unable to come up with an appropriate grand strategy, the West fell back upon rhetoric urging regional cooperation. In 1990-91 neither NATO nor the EC (later, EU) was ready to welcome applications for immediate membership from any of the former Soviet bloc countries. What better tactic than to urge them to do first things first--foster democracy, develop the market and actually cooperate with one another. While consistently resisting the "institutionalization" of regional ties, at the outset Visegrad leaders seemed to be convinced that their best chance to "return to Europe" lay in the coordination of individual efforts. However, some soon reached the diametrically opposite conclusion, namely, that Visegrad's very success at policy coordination could provide the West with an excuse not to embark upon an eastward expansion.
Calculations, both Western and Central European, were further complicated by the differential rate of transition between individual countries. Those countries that enjoyed (or whose leaders thought they were achieving) the greatest rate of domestic progress were the most likely to favor an individual approach to the EC/EU and NATO, while those countries that lagged behind advocated closer coordination of national efforts; hence, the recent ironic spectacle of a warm embrace of Visegrad by Meciar’s Slovakia in contrast to the studied aloofness of the Czech Republic under Klaus.

In retrospect, it is clear that the breakup of Czechoslovakia that occurred in January 1993 heralded the demise of Visegrad as a regional diplomatic construct. The “velvet divorce” created a new geopolitical landscape in Central Europe orienting the Czech Republic toward Germany and heightening tensions between two Visegrad members, Hungary and Slovakia, over minority and environmental issues. Other factors serving simultaneously to erode regional cohesion included the continued disparity in domestic political and economic development between member states, the disappearance posed by the Soviet Union as an external threat, and the disarray that afflicted the European Community in the aftermath of the overly ambitious Maastricht Treaty.

Although the Visegrad Four joined forces for a common appeal to the EC as late as June, 1993, bilateralism quickly became the dominant modality. There have been no regional summits since 1993. Continuing low to middle level defense contacts have increasingly been on a bilateral basis. The Clinton Administration’s Partnership for Peace Program (P4P) served to foster bilateral contacts between NATO and individual non-members. Bilateralism was also the order of the day in the scramble for the somewhat ambiguous status of Associate Member of the EU. Although it may be premature to pronounce the final obsequies, the search for the spirit of regional cooperation that originally led to the creation of Visegrad must now be pursued elsewhere.

The Central European Initiative (CEI)

Today’s CEI can claim a lineage that is at once longer than and yet also intersects with that of Visegrad. CEI antecedents go back to the Alpine-Adriatic Working Committee, a multi-national organization founded in the late 1970’s. Encompassing low level regional representation from what were then Western, neutral, and Eastern bloc states, the organization limited itself to non-controversial matters such as the coordination of environmental and health measures, the improvement of transportation linkages, the promotion of culture, tourism, sports, and the like. In November 1989 there was created under Italian aegis an association at the national level, known as the Danube-Adriatic Group. Two of the latter’s members, Austria and Italy, were also present at the somewhat chaotic and largely ineffectual April 1990 Bratislava summit where Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia agreed to proceed on to Visegrad. At a meeting in mid-summer 1990 the Danube-Adriatic Group reconstituted itself as the “Pentagonale,” expanded its list of technical projects, and
even proposed to consider venturing into the political realm.\textsuperscript{20} The group next met in July 1991 in Dubrovnik, where it renamed itself the "Hexagonale," so as to take official cognizance of the curiously belated accession of Poland.\textsuperscript{21} The very next year, with more than 100 projects either underway or else planned and with the promise of funding from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) for key infrastructural projects, the organization admitted three Yugoslav successor states, Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia, and charged its name yet again, this time to the Central European Initiative. Nor was this expansion to be the last. In 1993 the CEI admitted Macedonia and at the October 1995 summit in Warsaw, CEI Prime Ministers agreed to admit five more countries, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, and Belarus, bringing its total membership to fifteen.\textsuperscript{22}

An organization the size of the CEI is bound to be unwieldy. Even though, unlike the Visegrad Group, the CEI is not adverse to permanent organizational structures, it is still far from having attained effective institutionalization, as the persistent difficulties that blocking the establishment of a CEI Secretariat abundantly demonstrate. In the absence of a common Central European identity of the sort that might sustain a genuine regional community, any venture by the CEI into the political thickets seems destined to prove dysfunctional; indeed, it may well serve to exacerbate national conflicts, heighten ethnic tensions and even undermine the CEI’s earlier achievements in solving practical problems of a technical nature. Justifiably criticized for his dismissive utterances, Klaus may not have been too wide of the mark when he opined that “infrastructural projects are important but hardly achievable within the [CEI’s present] framework” and further cautioned against both bureaucratization through the creation of “formal and empty commissions and working groups simulating real activity” with “agendas like minorities...and human rights.” By reaching beyond its competence, Klaus and others argue, the CEI may well destroy its own limited effectiveness.\textsuperscript{23}

CEFTA

The Central European Free Trade Association (CEFTA) got started in March, 1993 (i.e., after the breakup of Czechoslovakia) on the basis of an agreement that had been reached some months earlier at a much postponed meeting of Visegrad economics ministers. Although it has been called “the world’s least known trading block”\textsuperscript{24} (sic), CEFTA constitutes the single most effective—and some might insist, the regions only really noteworthy\textsuperscript{25}—regional arrangement to date. Concluded with a view to reversing the precipitous decline in interregional trade that occurred between 1990 and 1992, the agreement envisaged a gradual elimination of customs duties in trade between the signatories. CEFTA was in no sense to be a customs union; each member remained free to conclude its own custom agreements with non-member states. Rather, CEFTA was to coordinate its members’ tariffs and align them with those imposed on goods from the EC to the
extent allowed by the latter's Association Agreements. CEFTA has also been regarded as a golden opportunity for members to acquire practical experience in coping with the demands and pressures of a free trade group, thus preparing them for eventual entry into the EU.26

At its inception in 1993 CEFTA envisioned the creation of a trade-barrier-free Central European market of some 64 million people. Two years later it agreed to accept Slovenia and conditionally encouraged Romania, Bulgaria, and the Baltic States to apply for membership. Yet, even though intra-CEFTA trade has grown, it still remains small in absolute volume and as a percentage of members' total foreign trade.27 With the collapse of the market for exports once guaranteed them by the Soviet Union, the Central European countries have had to compete with one another for Western markets and investment. Alas, their individual economies lack sufficient complementarity and there are additional non-trade barrier obstacles to intra-regional trade, including the shortage of hard currency, differences in the rate of individual countries' transition to the free market, low levels of disposable income everywhere and an overall consumer preference for imports from the West.28

Over and above all such considerations, there is the more basic question of the extent to which CEFTA fosters a common Central European identity. The answer to this question is related, in turn, to the issue of whether membership in the EU which everybody seems to want is more easily achievable on an individual country or a regional group basis. About this, views differ and disagreement is lively. In the final analysis, however, inasmuch as identity involves habits of the heart even more than calculations of the mind, the answer will almost certainly be determined much more by political passions than by considerations of trade.

Other Configurations

Three other sets of configurations interact with Central European identity; thus far each one has served to weaken rather than strengthen this identity. The first two configurations, one centered on the Baltic states and the other comprising the Black Sea countries, boast a measure of institutionalization that exceeds anything ever achieved by Visegrad (although not by the CEI).29 This is particularly true of the Council of Baltic Sea States whose agenda has focused on most of the very same infrastructual, environmental, and related practical concerns that preoccupy the CEI. The Council, on which Poland and Sweden have been especially active, is explicitly committed to "the creation of a Baltic identity." But it shuns military security matters, leaving the Baltic states as well as Poland to search elsewhere for security, with NATO if possible and with Germany alone should the NATO option not prove viable.30 For its part, the Black Sea Economic Community, a larger and more amorphous grouping, may have significant potential for the future; much depends on Turkey's presently uncertain ability to project its power and influence.31 For the time being, the Black Sea Economic Community (or, as it is also known, Economic Cooperation Council), has
apparently achieved little more than (for better or worse) to have temporarily deflected the regional attention of Romania and Bulgaria away from the CEI in particular and Central Europe in general.

The third set of configurations involves sub-national cross-border associations. The foremost regional example is the Carpathian (Carpatho-Tisza) Euroregion which encompasses districts athwart the border that runs between Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania. Founded in 1993 to facilitate trade contacts and administrative cooperation at the local level, the Carpathian Euroregion was viewed from its inception with suspicion by Slovakia and Romania both of whom regard it as a sinister instrument of Hungarian influence. Accordingly, Romania has boycotted the Carpathian Euroregion’s Representative Council and consistently refused to cooperate with its embryonic staff. For its part, Slovakia pulled out in 1995 and threatened its own Transcarpathian representatives with arrest. On balance, rather than circumventing ethnonationalist rivalries, this particular configuration has provided another arena for the forceful assertion of particularistic identities.

The experience of other cross-border arrangements has been somewhat more felicitous. This is certainly true of local Polish-Czech initiatives and, most notably, for Polish-German cross-border cooperation. Even more striking, however, is the role assigned to a much grander German-Polish relationship, one which links the two countries to France to form the so-called “Weimar Triangle.” The specifics of this novel triangulation aside, its symbolic significance is enormous, especially for Poland. By the very same token, however, for other members of the Visegrad Group, the Weimar Group also serves as a constant reminder of Poland’s territorial expanse, the size of its population, and its crucial geostrategic importance. As a result, it also contributes to the envy, resentment, and distrust that continue to bedevil the regional politics of Central European identity.

POLITICS, PERSONALITIES, AND PUBLICS

In a thoughtful article on the problematics of the EU’s eastern enlargement, George Kolankiewicz identifies four different national approaches to regional cooperation within the Visegrad Group. He characterizes Czech strategy as “minimalist,” the Hungarian stance “pragmatist and instrumental,” the Polish position as “maximalist and intrinsic” (i.e., cooperation as a substantive good in its own right) and Slovakia’s view as “essentialist” (i.e., a necessary prerequisite to domestic stability). Although instructive, this four-fold classification conveys too static and deterministic an interpretation; this particular take overlooks the dynamics of change generated from within the Visegrad countries as well as by grander international influences and it also slights the role of individual personalities in the arcane politics of Central European identity.

Most observers readily acknowledge the part played by Vaclav Klaus in thwarting regional cooperation. Professing himself a “Eurorealist” primarily concerned with the development of a robust domestic free market, Klaus quickly emerged as an outspoken critic of the entire Visegrad
project, dismissing virtually all multilateral regional arrangements, except CEFTA. Since mid-1992, when he became Czech Prime Minister, Prague has favored a go-it-alone policy toward the West to the point of deliberately snubbing its Visegrad regional partners. 37

Klaus has not been the only one to engage in such obstreperous behavior. Poland’s Lech Walesa, a vigorous protagonist of regional cooperation, often got carried away by his own enthusiasm. His eagerness to launch trial balloons into the highly charged spheres of defense and trade policy only emboldened the contrariness of Klaus and others. Both Prague and Budapest were quick to jump on a 1992 Walesa-inspired defense proposal that envisaged military collaboration involving the Visegrad states, the Baltics, Belarus, Ukraine, Romania, and Bulgaria (an eastern analogue to NATO, actually referred to as NATO-2). They also disdainfully dismissed Warsaw’s supplemental “Central European Trade Initiative,” designed to embrace countries as yet unconnected to Visegrad (in effect, an eastern analogue to the EC, hence packageable as EC-2). 38

It was almost inevitable that Walesa’s basic personality traits—coarseness, arrogance, conceit, and high handedness—would place him in conflict with Klaus, a highly trained, self-assured, coldly calculating, rather narrow minded technocrat. Indeed, as early as 1990 Walesa had also clashed with President Vaclav Havel, despite their common experience of active resistance to Communist rule, an experience, incidentally which Klaus did not share. The third member of Visegrad’s original triumvirate, Hungary’s first post-Communist Premier, Jozsef Antall, lacked the stature of a Walesa and the standing of a Havel; he also fell considerably short of the technological prowess of a Klaus. Bland and unassuming, Antall nonetheless manifested strength of character and skill at political maneuvering which his admirers chose to interpret as a great talent for conciliation. 39 But neither Antall nor his no less loquacious Foreign Minister, Geza Jeszenszky commanded any really profound vision of the Visegrad project. Non-demagogue though he was, Antall’s widely cited (but scarcely misunderstood) declaration that he considered himself to be the leader of all of the world’s 15 million Hungarians 40 called attention to the sizeable Magyar minorities living in neighboring Romania, Slovakia, and Serbia and raised the specter of territorial revisionism. Antall was, of course, making a calculated appeal to domestic ethnonationalist sentiments which he himself shared without yet fully recognizing the terrible toll such sentiments were to take in (ex-)Yugoslav, thereby incidentally also posing a considerable danger to Hungary’s own international security.

Antall got his comeuppance at the beginning of 1993 (during which year the Hungarian Premier was to succumb to cancer) when Czechoslovakia’s “velvet divorce” brought Valdimir Meciar back to power in Bratislava. As primitive and pugnacious as ever, this burly Slovak, so recently an undistinguished middle-level Communist functionary, emerged as the “father of his country” and the dominant leader of his newly independent state, now a member in its own right of the Visegrad group.
Meciar represented only one among many "figures of disruption" to crowd onto the post-
Communist stage; others of varying hues and stripes included the preposterous adventurer, Stanislaw
Tyminski, in Poland, the rabid racist, Istvan Czurka in Hungary, and his frenzied counterpart,
Gheorge Funar in Romania, to omit entirely a list of perhaps more readily recognized names that
might be compiled from the warring Yugoslav successor states. Even more to the point, however, is
the quality of leadership proffered the region by its major "figures of transition," i.e., Walesa,
Havel, and Antall. That leadership was altogether wanting. It was either prosaic (Antall), devious
(Walesa) or where visionary, also inept (Havel). One will search the Central European landscape in
vain for the likes of Schuman, Adenauer, and DeGasperi, the truly remarkable founding fathers of
West European integration.

Any deficiency of creative leadership necessarily enhances the importance of domestic political
processes and the institutional settings in which these processes are carried out. In fact, differences
in both facets as between individual countries proved all too significant and they have been further
magnified to the considerable detriment of any common Central European identity.

Although their historical roots run much deeper, all these differences can be traced back to the
distinctive manner in which each country rid itself of Communist rule. Poland did so after
prolonged negotiations which produced the compromise of mid-1989, leading to a change of regime
only when the retreating Communists lost control of their own forces. Hungary achieved the same
end as the result of intricate domestic diplomacy, a "negotiated revolution" that culminated in the
anti-Communist electoral sweep of March-April 1990. Czechoslovakia experienced a sudden,
unexpected "velvet revolution" in November 1989. Events in Prague quickly swept away a
seemingly well entrenched hardline Communist regime. Next came notable differences in economic
reform strategies, Poland opting for radical shock therapy, Hungary preferring to continue the
gradualist course upon which it was already embarked and Czechoslovakia rhetorically committed to
the first (with some variations) but tarrying at the start with the second. The Czechoslovak
contradiction was resolved by the country’s breakup, with the Czech Republic under Klaus moving
speedily ahead with marketization and Slovakia clinging to many of the vestiges of the discredited
collectivist economic system.

Many other differences continue to elevate domestic preoccupations over considerations of
regional solidarity. These involve policy differences in dealing with holdovers from the recent
Communist past, ranging from Czech measures of purge and retribution known as "lustration" to the
much more moderate and conciliatory Polish attitude of "live and let live." They also encompass
even more basic divergences in political outcome, including degrees of governmental stability,
innovative capacity in public policy, and fundamental constitutional arrangements such as those that
differentiate Hungary’s almost pure parliamentary model from the Czech Republic’s distinctive
parliamentary order with its admixture of presidential elements and juxtapose both to Slovakia’s
potentially dictatorial system as well as to the partisanship that continues to attend the protracted search for an acceptable mix of presidential-parliamentary government in Poland. 43

Finally, note must be taken of the powerful centrifugal pull generated by recent changes in the party political coloration of individual countries in the region. The return to power of the former Communists as reinvented (or at least renamed) political parties in both Poland and Hungary has led to the formation of left-center governments under Kwasniewski and Horn. These governments, while far from being in perfect alignment with one another, are at serious odds with Klaus' Thatcherite regime (whose ideological orientation may or may not be diluted as a result of the Spring 1996 Czech parliamentary elections). They also have little in common with Meciar's Slovak vision of what perhaps deserves to be called "chauvino-Communism." 44

Idiosyncratic domestic political patterns are compounded by weaknesses of civic institutions, deficiencies of social structure, and peculiarities of public attitudes. These three elements are obviously interrelated; together with unresolved divisions of class and status they foster cynicism, mistrust, and apathy. These sentiments, in turn, erode the incipient public sphere and corrupt various levels of political elites who are themselves still largely untutored in the exigencies of democratic civic culture. 45

All things considered, it is gratifying that public support for democracy and the market has not been eroded further than seems to be the case. Survey research data indicate some growth of dissatisfaction with the economic and, to a lesser extent, political facets of the "transition" away from Communism, with negligible differences between individual countries, at least in Central Europe. 46 In general, however, majority opinion throughout the region continues to support democratization and marketization. Unfortunately, there is no reliable data on attitudes toward regional identification, but that itself may speak volumes. As concerns support for integration with the West (i.e., membership in NATO and the EU), popular attitudes continue to be strongly positive. On the other hand, there has been a small but steady growth in the number of respondents who reject these ties. The trend exists everywhere in East Central Europe, including Poland and Hungary, two of the leading candidates for admission to the Western club. (As for Slovakia's anti-Western flirtation with Russia, that appears to be a calculated strategem of the Meciar leadership undertaken without reference to public opinion. In the very nature of the case, Slovak popular attitudes cannot be accurately measured and probably don't count for very much anyhow.)

No depiction of politics, personalities, and publics would be complete without mention of an absolutely key variable, i.e., the overarching international system. The region's new actors on the international stage remain what they have always been, namely, relatively small countries with sharply circumscribed power potential. All of them are cognizant of the limitation on their options imposed by the international milieu which so often in the past functioned as the decisive determinant of their own domestic development. As long as the West continues to enjoy its post-Cold War
hegemony in Europe and as long as the West maintains a reasonable degree of political cohesion, democratic values will almost certainly continue to hold sway throughout Central Europe. However, today’s Western-led international system differs in several important respects from past experiences of imperial domination. For one thing, given its own value system, the West dare not impose arbitrary imperial decrees; rather, it must strive for consensus through complex processes that inevitably confer leverage on the weaker parties. Moreover, the stability of the West can not be taken for granted. Its own domestic foundations are in constant flux if not permanent jeopardy. Although the West’s politics are nowhere near being a zero sum game, the situation may appear to involve precisely such a game, especially when viewed by Central Europeans in the unhappy light of their own experiences. The nub of the matter has been cogently identified by Andrew Janos who notes that while the West has all the necessary sinews of imperial power, it also “has weaknesses: hamstrung by domestic political considerations, it is less able than the ‘powers’ of yesteryear to mobilize itself militarily and hence to enforce by threats or action the high standards it sets for international behavior” and, he might have added, domestic comportment. To no country does this trenchant observation apply more than to reunified Germany whose role in Central Europe is unlikely to be as decisive as some hope and others fear.

PART TWO: Germany and (East) Central Europe

Germany’s national reunification in 1990 was as swift as the events immediately preceding it had been unexpected. After the sudden collapse of the Berlin Wall, a little less than a full year was required to synchronize dynamic political processes at the domestic and international levels (the ingenious “2 + 4” formula) so as to achieve an objective that had long been so elusive as to appear almost illusory. By much the same token, that very achievement instantaneously transformed the geostrategic picture at the very heart of Europe. By virtue of its size, geographical location, and economic strength, unified Germany loomed so large that it appeared to many observers, both East and West, to be on the verge of becoming once again “a hegemonic European power.” Even today, a half-decade later, some analysts still anticipate German domination, if not over Europe as a whole, then certainly over Central Europe.

For his part, the “Chancellor of German Unity,” Helmut Kohl, has always insisted that rather than aiming at a “Germanized Europe,” the Federal Republic strives for a “Europeanized Germany.” Though some critics dismiss this as mere rhetoric, Chancellor Kohl deserves to be taken at his word. However, the Chancellor’s formulation is far too simplistic. If “Bonn is not Weimar,” (as the Swiss journalist, Fritz René Allemann, expressed it in the title of his seminal treatment of post-World War II Germany), Berlin, unified Germany’s reclaimed capital, is certain not to be Bonn. But if the past is not prologue, the future is not the past; at least, it need not be. Much will depend on how Germany prioritizes its various foreign policy objectives and that, in
considerable measure, will turn upon domestic political considerations. To be even half-way plausible, any assessment of Germany's relationship to East Central Europe must therefore take account of constraints as well as choices.

Both constraints and choices are embedded in certain background conditions that the new, larger, unified Germany inherited from its predecessor, Bonn's West German Federal Republic. In the first instance, there is the matter of political leadership. To be sure, the FRG has enjoyed a remarkable succession of Federal Chancellors. With the notable exception of Erhard (1963-1966) and possibly Kiesinger (1966-69), all the others, Adenauer (1949-1963), Brandt (1969-74), Schmidt (1974-82), and Kohl (1982 - the present) have been figures of imposing stature at home and major actors on the international stage. Yet, even as the old Federal Republic lacked a genuine capital city (Bonn scarcely ranked as one, especially when compared with London, Paris, Washington, Moscow, etc.), so also was Germany conspicuously bereft of a sophisticated, cosmopolitan (weltoffene) political class, including anything approximating a self-assured foreign policy establishment (as distinguished from a highly competent, well-trained, if too legalistically oriented foreign service). And if this was true of West Germany, how much more was it the case for East Germany? (The GDR attained general diplomatic recognition only in the mid-70's and its ruling elite continued to practice its distinctively rigid version of self-quarantining "socialist internationalism" until November, 1989; i.e., to the very end.) Small wonder that at least one trenchant German observer should despair of his country's "political and foreign policy provincialism" and further complain that the "tendency towards provinciality...has become more apparent since unification." With this was true of West Germany, how much more was it the case for East Germany? (The GDR attained general diplomatic recognition only in the mid-70's and its ruling elite continued to practice its distinctively rigid version of self-quarantining "socialist internationalism" until November, 1989; i.e., to the very end.) Small wonder that at least one trenchant German observer should despair of his country's "political and foreign policy provincialism" and further complain that the "tendency towards provinciality...has become more apparent since unification."

Both post-World War II Germanies, the FRG in the West and the GDR in the East, were embedded from the outset in their respective cold war international alliance structures. Indeed, the gradual retrocession of the formal perquisites of sovereignty to each Germany was in every instance made conditional upon its simultaneous commitment to invest recovered sovereign rights in supranational bodies. Hence, with nationalism largely exhausted by Nazi excesses and the Third Reich's inglorious demise, the Federal Republic became something of a post-national state, sometimes adjudged to be the world's first "post-modern" political construct. West Germany's "national" identity, in so far as it existed at all, was predicated upon the FRG's constitutional democratic order, hence the self-congratulatory concept of "constitutional patriotism" (Verfassungspatriotismus). Even more to the point, the Federal Republic of Germany was said to be a country with no "national interest" of its own; Bonn's foreign and strategic interests were held to be inseparable from and indeed dictated by its Euro-Atlantic alliance ties (i.e., NATO) and its charter membership in the European Community (i.e., the EC/EU). In keeping with this logic, one of Helmut Kohl's advisors has gone so far as to proclaim that "the Staatsräson of a united Germany is its integration in[to] Europe."
For many decades NATO and the EC answered all the needs of FRG security, in the military, political, and socio-psychological realms. With the end of the Cold War, however, the issue of German security became more rather than less complex. In addition to recasting traditional military and political concerns, matters like the growth of terrorism, including the specter of nuclear terrorism, the threat of mass migration, the inroads of organized crime, the spread of environmental despoliation, and the challenge of international economic competition have added novel dimensions to the question of national security. If security connotes the absence of fear, the Germans have come to experience the opposite, the growing presence of a diffuse gnawing fear, the sense of dread and foreboding so uniquely conveyed by the German word, Angst. It scarcely needs to be added that an angst-ridden atmosphere is not particularly conducive to hard-headed, cost-benefit foreign policy choice-making, especially if accompanied by renewed soul searching about one's own national identity. All such intangible but nonetheless real factors are bound to exert subtle but profound influence upon unified Germany's new relationship with East Central Europe.

UNIFIED GERMANY IN SEARCH OF ITS OSTPOLITIK

In no other area of foreign policy activity have the existentialist dilemmas of the Federal Republic been mirrored more revealingly than in its Ostpolitik. At the outset under Adenauer, Bonn had virtually no eastern policy whatsoever; in averting its gaze from the East, the FRG behaved as if its raison d'etre, if not its very existence, were at stake and, in a sense, this indeed was the case. Accordingly, West Germany's grand old man displayed an unswerving determination to pursue integration with the West. Once that had been achieved, he argued, a Western "policy of strength" would compel Moscow to relinquish the "Soviet zone of occupation" (i.e., East Germany) and agree to Germany's reunification "in freedom," thereby opening up prospects for normal relations with the Soviet Union and its East European satellites. Before then, however, the FRG was not only to shun its eastern neighbors but also to sever ties with any other country that had the temerity to commit the "unfriendly act" of extending diplomatic recognition to the GDR.

Yet, despite the rigidity of Bonn's initial stance, enshrined in the FRG's dogmatic Hallstein Doctrine, Adenauer himself demonstrated a certain measure of elasticity. He went to Moscow in 1955 to hammer out an agreement establishing diplomatic relations between the FRG and the USSR in exchange for the release of German POWs still being held in the Soviet Union a decade after the end of the Second World War. Later, in his final years in office when the Berlin Wall threatened to cement Germany's national division, Adenauer broached the possibility of humanitarian initiatives toward the East and advanced a curious proposal for a 10-year "truce" in the Cold War between the two German successor states.

Adenauer's belated (and half-hearted) initiative reflected a growing German recognition that something basic had changed. If the Berlin Wall effectively destroyed the previously sacrosanct
tenet of "reunification through strength," Soviet-American detente following the 1962 Cuban missile crisis directly challenged Bonn's insistence that there could be no improvement in East-West relations before a satisfactory settlement of the German problem. Did not West German policy have to be revamped to bring it into alignment with the interests of its superpower patron? In the event, the process proved protracted and required a major domestic political upheaval before a real Ostpolitik was in place.

Following Adenauer's departure from the scene, Bonn devised a plan to isolate the GDR without deviating from the FRG's basic doctrinal principles. This ambitious objective was to be pursued by entirely modest and ultimately inadequate means: East Germany was to be kept under strict quarantine while the Federal Republic extended its favor to the other East European countries, in the form of trade ties, economic credits, cultural relations—but not formal diplomatic relations. Not surprisingly, this appeared to the Kremlin to be a brazen flanking move designed not only to isolate the GDR but also to subvert Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe as a whole. As a consequence, the Soviet-East German alignment grew tighter, scarcely the result Bonn had desired.

With the formation of the Grand Coalition (CDU-SPD) Government in late 1966, West Germany inaugurated a new, more comprehensive, and much more positive Ostpolitik, intended to proffer assurances to the Soviet Union and incentives to the GDR as well as to Eastern Europe. Bonn now offered to suspend the Hallstein Doctrine and establish full diplomatic relations with the communist governments of Eastern Europe. With respect to East Germany, it offered official negotiations at every level and on every subject, except on the GDR's formal diplomatic recognition as a separate state under international law. To the Soviet Union, it proposed a mutual reduction of force agreement (an offer also made to the USSR's Eastern European allies, including the GDR) and negotiations between NATO and the Warsaw Pact for a reduction in the level of their respective armed forces then stationed in Germany. This seemingly attractive package also came to naught because the Kremlin deemed it a direct threat to the Soviet hold over Eastern Europe. In 1967 Romania accepted West Germany's overture, but at the time rebellious Romania was a thorn in Moscow's side; in 1968 reform-minded Czechoslovakia evinced considerable interest in a rapprochement with West Germany, something that must have heightened Soviet fears of the potential disintegration of its entire strategic position in Europe.

As long as the Soviet Union attached overriding importance to the maintenance of cohesion and discipline within the Eastern bloc, West German détente overtures were doomed to failure. Only as other considerations (e.g., the dangerous deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations, the promise of Soviet access to Western technology and West German credits) entered into the Kremlin's calculations did the prospects for change improve. The advent of an SPD-led Government, headed by Willy Brandt, in October 1969 occurred under precisely such changed circumstances. For his part, Chancellor Brandt was prepared to reorder the various components of Bonn's new Ostpolitik so as to give
priority to Soviet interests. The better to accommodate these interests, Brandt expressed a willingness to accept the territorial and political status quo in Europe (although not to forgo efforts to change the status quo in Germany to ameliorate the consequences of national division with a view to eventually overcoming it). In late 1969, West Germany signed the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, renouncing any claim to nuclear weapons. On August 19, 1970, the Soviet-West German Treaty was concluded. One of its major provisions obligated both signatories to respect the territorial integrity of all states in Europe within existing frontiers, including the Oder-Neisse frontier and the border between the GDR and the FRG. The following December (1970) West Germany signed a treaty with Poland acknowledging that the Oder-Neisse line constituted Poland’s western frontier.

The center piece of Brandt’s entire Ostpolitik was put in place with the conclusion of a Basic Treaty (Grundlagenvertrag) between the FRG and the GDR in 1972. This intra-German “state treaty” occasioned great controversy, and barely squeaked through to parliamentary ratification a year after its conclusion. The whole complex of agreements with the East raised domestic political passions to a white heat. Recourse to the courts (a manifestation of West Germany’s legalistic political culture) by opponents of Bonn’s new Ostpolitik did little to help matters; on the contrary, the Federal Constitutional Court’s convoluted findings only exacerbated a situation already confused by recriminations about espionage and allegations of political corruption. Nonetheless, despite the fact that Brandt had to resign in the wake of a major spy scandal, his successor as Federal Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, continued to pursue Brandt’s policy toward the East. When Schmidt was replaced by Kohl in 1982, it fell to the CDU/CSU, which had earlier fought Brandt’s Ostpolitik tooth and nail, to make that very policy its own and carry it forward, especially on its Soviet and East German tracks. Indeed, despite all the hullabaloo at the outset about “change through rapprochement” (Wandel durch Annäherung), during the 1980’s Bonn’s policy was increasingly predicated upon the status quo. And, especially after Schmidt stepped down from the leadership of his party, the SPD in opposition surpassed the Kohl Government in the lengths to which it was prepared to go to accommodate the moribund Communist regimes of East Central Europe. In their shared preoccupation with issues of peace, stability, and trade in divided Europe, both government and opposition in Bonn gave short shrift to problems of human rights, intellectual ferment, and societal alienation in the East. As a result, the great “change” (die Wende) that took place in 1989 occurred not so much because of West Germany’s Ostpolitik but in spite of it.

In the event, Chancellor Kohl proved quick—critics would say too quick—to capitalize on the sudden revelation of Eastern weakness to press forward with a timetable for unification of Germany, in a process which was duly consummated on October 3, 1990. That Bonn’s leader, whose political career had seemed nearing its end only a short while before, should now assume Bismarckian airs as the self-proclaimed “Chancellor of German Unity” reflected the grandiosity of Kohl’s personal political triumph. Its quite considerable substance was also registered in his Government’s victory in
the all-German parliamentary elections of December, 1990 and again (although by reduced margin) in October, 1994. Still, these conditions, while clearly necessary and surely useful, were far from sufficient for the creation of a new Ostpolitik for a reunified Germany in a novel international milieu. The search itself has been troubled both by questions of international strategy and by considerations of domestic politics.

In the first instance, the primary issue is no longer or nor once again (yet) whether Germany belongs to the West, to the East, to both or to neither. Both elite and mass opinion subscribe to the notion that Germany is a Western country and this will doubtless continue to be the case unless the West itself disintegrates. More to the point are the problematic of the self-definition of Germany's special interests and its ability to shape its interests so that they do not clash with the interests of other Western countries. In this connection, recent manifestations of German self-perception as a Central European country (and even on occasion as regional Ordnungsmacht -- "policeman" would be too tame a translation) is upsetting to the East, disconcerting to the West, and confusing to the Germans themselves. The whole question boils down to whether the Federal Republic of now reunified (rather than merely West) Germany really needs an Ostpolitik of its own and if so, what importance it should attach to Russia as distinct from Germany's closer neighbors in East Central Europe. While German answers to the grander prior question may differ, the tendency of many ranking German officials to deny the existence of any differences of interest between the East Central European countries and Russia or even any fundamental distinction between them is either utterly disingenuous or else amounts to a piece of dangerous self-deception.

Even if the entire experience of Ostpolitik from Brandt to Kohl had not conditioned Bonn to give pride of place to the Soviet Union, the practical exigencies of German unification meant that the East Central European countries did not immediately matter nearly as much as Russia. Bonn's foremost immediate concern was to obtain the withdrawal of all Soviet forces from Germany (i.e., from the territory of the ex-GDR where some 400,000 Soviet troops were stationed) by December 1994, as stipulated by the 1990 Friendship Treaty between the USSR and Germany. Toward this end, Bonn committed considerable treasure (over 8 billion DM, to cover the costs of relocating Soviet personnel and equipment). By the date of the Soviet forces' final departure (actually a few months earlier than originally projected), the costs had risen and the bill for this item alone came to DM 14.4 billion ($10.3 billion). Still, this accounted for less than 15% of total German expenditures of DM 100 billion ($71 billion) in economic aid, credits, and guarantees extended between 1989 and 1994 to the former Soviet Union. Of the total Western aid to the Soviet Union up to the end of 1991, about 57% was provided by Germany.

At the end of 1991 Bonn's man in Moscow, Gorbachev, abruptly left center stage and the Soviet Union itself vanished from the map of Europe. Although the FRG soon came to feel that it could not forever continue to pour money down the Russian (or any other) drain, that did not
prevent Kohl from going out of his way to support (and cultivate) Boris Yeltsin, for Germany continues to regard Russia as "the key to stability in Central Europe, something it seeks with evangelical zeal." The point is not that Kohl's Russian policy has been excessively personalistic along lines for which successive American administrations have been tellingly criticized. Rather, German policy has been hamstrung by an eagerness to find symmetries where disjunctures exist. Whenever eastern asymmetries are recognized, Bonn has either experienced bureaucratic paralysis on policy priorities or else sought refuge in grand rhetorical formulations designed to obviate the need for tough choices. Of the former, one tell-tale example was the split in 1994 between Defense Minister Ruehe and Foreign Minister Kinkel on NATO expansion. While Ruehe urged early admission to NATO of the Visegrad states, Kinkel publicly cautioned against any moves in the name of enhanced security that would "decrease the security of those remaining outside NATO," i.e., Russia — a page right out of the book of his predecessor and political mentor, Hans-Detrich Genscher. A striking instance of the rhetorical approach was provided by none other than Kohl himself at the June, 1996 NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting in Berlin where the Chancellor declared that the relationship between NATO and Russia should "form the core of the future European security architecture" and went on to pronounce that since "Russia and Ukraine(!) are part of Europe, we must take their security interests into consideration."

Given this kind of outlook against the backdrop of domestic political opposition and continued internal bureaucratic squabbling, it is scarcely surprising that the promised German leadership of the Visegrad countries' anticipated forward march toward early EU membership should have proved so halting. This became only too apparent during the second half of 1994, when Germany held the EU Presidency. Ringing pronouncements from the very apex of the German policy-making establishment to the contrary notwithstanding, Bonn actually began a retreat from the idea of an early eastern enlargement of the EU. As a result, the Visegrad countries' membership in both NATO and the EU is no longer the group or regional issue it was once held (and still sometimes appears) to be; rather it has become a case by case matter. Certainly, Bonn has increasingly tended to treat its relations with the East Central European countries on an individual country basis. So much for a common Central European identity, with or without Germany!

At present, German relations with Poland are excellent. Residual issues -- the German Polish border, the problem of the German ethnic minority in Poland and the question of "mutual accounting" i.e., compensation for Polish slave labor during World War II and for the post-war nationalization of German property -- have now all been satisfactorily settled. In 1990 Bonn seemed reluctant to accept the Oder-Neisse line as permanent, something that provoked Poland to threaten to oppose German unification, but once that unnecessary contretemps had been resolved, other matters quickly took care of themselves. Warsaw has cultivated close ties with Bonn in all spheres including the military with the "Weimar Triangle," as already noted, enjoying extraordinary
symbolic as well as growing practical significance. Considering its bitter and brutal history, the Polish-German relationship today enjoys remarkably broad popular support. Germany has obligated itself by Treaty to champion Poland’s accession to Europe. This obligation has been frequently restated by Chancellor Kohl. During his June 1995 visit to Warsaw, Kohl promised that Poland would enter NATO and the EU before the year 2000, and the promise was reiterated on the occasion of President Kwasniewski’s euphoric return visit to Bonn in January 1996. Indeed, Kohl regards Polish-German reconciliation as the historic analogue to the Franco-German rapprochement presided over by Adenauer. This view is overwhelmingly supported by German public opinion, despite some recrudescence of traditional popular anti-Polish animosity and occasional incidents of German police brutality against Poles along the Oder-Neisse frontier. The general rosy state of bilateral relations is both exemplified in and enhanced by the steady growth of German-Polish trade and the high level of German investment in Poland which makes it Germany’s leading economic partner (now surpassing Russia) in the East.

German-Hungarian relations have also more than lived up to expectations. Free of the kinds of territorial and ethnic minority issues that have troubled German-Polish and German-Czech relations, the two countries looked back upon historical alliance ties and a traditionally rooted mutuality of interests. In the momentous events of 1989 Hungary played a crucial role; by dismantling the Iron Curtain and facilitating the mass popular exodus from East Germany to the West, Hungary contributed to the collapse of the GDR and thus to the unification of Germany. For this, Chancellor Kohl vowed, Bonn would be eternally grateful and as an earnest of its gratitude the 1992 German-Hungarian Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation committed the Federal Republic to assist Hungary in establishing a market economy and attaining full membership in the European Community Union. When the Hungarian economy began to flounder, Bonn came to the rescue in Oct. 1995 with a DM 1 billion loan to strengthen Hungary’s international financial credibility. This grant significantly augmented a German financial commitment to Hungary that was already in excess of $6 billion and further strengthened a bilateral relationship which successive Hungarian governments, including that of ex-Communist Premier Gyula Horn today, consider the cornerstone of present day Hungarian foreign policy.

By contrast with Poland and Hungary, German-Czech relations have suffered some serious setbacks and undergone a significant overall deterioration. To be sure, economic relations have developed apace. During the five year period Jan. 1990 - Dec. 1994, the FRG extended economic aid and credits totaling almost DM 5 billion ($3.44 billion) to Czechoslovakia, with an additional DM 1.975 billion ($1.411.2 billion) earmarked for the Czech Republic alone. For the first eight months of 1995, bilateral trade between Germany and the Czech Republic totaled DM 14.3 billion, only slightly behind the value of German-Polish trade (DM 17 billion) and far in excess of German trade with Hungary (DM 9 billion). An especially thick net of economic and commercial ties has
linked the Czech Republic to Bavaria. As these ties have involved such grey area arrangements as contract labor (both stationary and mobile) and the sub rosa acquisition of real estate and other forms of private property, a full and accurate record of the activities and their value is unavailable. What is beyond any doubt, however, is that for Bavaria and Bohemia, "propinquity pays."79

Even though Germany is far and away the Czech Republic’s most important foreign trade partner and notwithstanding Chancellor Kohl’s sustained robust sponsorship of the Czech Republic’s application for EU and NATO membership, political relations now range from barely lukewarm to downright frigid. This state of affairs is particularly sad if one looks back to the seemingly bright prospects of 1989-90. To be sure, the negotiation and ratification of a new German-Czech (Czechoslovak) Treaty proved protracted and difficult, only slightly less so than in the case of the German-Polish Treaty.80 Of course, "the thousand year relationship" between Czechs and Germans retained its own unique complications.81 Yet Vaclav Havel’s generous overtures, in the form of his remarkable Jan. 1990 speech apologizing for the Czech expulsion of the Sudeten Germans, and his early presidential visit to the FRG, promised a fresh start. Alas, Sudeten German spokesmen, strategically entrenched in the CSU, the semi-autonomous but vital Bavarian wing of Chancellor Kohl’s CDU, chose to interpret Havel’s conciliatory overtures as weakness and thus also as an open invitation to press the Sudeten Germans’ particularistic claims for a restoration of lost property and/or restitution in cash and to do so with renewed vigor and no small amount of arrogance. This, in turn, occasioned a predictable Czech backlash, with Czech public opinion registering a significant increase in anti-German sentiment.82 As a further consequence, Prague’s foreign policy came to manifest a kind of schizophrenia, oscillating between the determined quest for membership in European and Atlantic institutions and a recurrent inward-looking obsession with parochial Czech national concerns.83 President Havel’s Charles University Lecture of February 17, 1995 on the ambiguities and complexities of the centuries-old Czech-German relationship did little to advance the cause of reconciliation; most Czechs regarded (and many welcomed) Havel’s 1995 pronouncement as a studied retraction of the hand of friendship he had extended five years earlier. To make matters even worse, with the onset of parliamentary elections in 1996, Prime Minister Klaus took over some of the anti-Germanism of his radical right opponents, the Czech Republicans. This unfortunate political tack was accompanied by expressions of Klaus’ growing dislike of Chancellor Kohl to the point of the public airing of a growing personal animus between the two leaders.

Strained though they are, Czech-German relations seem almost idyllic compared to Germany’s relationship with Mečiar’s Slovakia. Although trade ties continue to grow, German investment in Slovakia has stagnated and Chancellor Kohl has gone out of his way to snub Prime Minister Mečiar by ostentatiously rejecting the latter’s repeated requests for a bilateral summit to discuss outstanding issues. Unlike the Czech case, none of these issues are historical in character; in fact, the relatively favored status of Fr. Tiso’s "independent" Slovakia within Nazi dominated Europe is a minor irritant
in Czech-Slovak relations and little more than a slight embarrassment in the Slovak-German relationship. At stake rather is Bonn’s dislike of the Meciar regime’s hesitant approach to marketization and its profound distrust of Bratislava’s basic political proclivities at home and abroad. Meciar’s cavalier approach to human rights and civil liberties, Slovakia’s discriminatory treatment of its Hungarian minority, and the country’s pathetically slow progress toward economic reforms all serve to disqualify Slovakia from consideration for early membership in the EU, at least in Bonn’s view.84

In assessing Unified Germany’s role in post-Communist (East) Central Europe, it is essential to understand Bonn’s vision of the Europe-that-is-to-be. At one level, a United States of Europe should be an FRG writ-large (although not German dominated). This is the Europe envisaged in the revised version of Art. 23 of the Basic Law (i.e., Constitution) which pledges post-unification Germany to seek and pursue European Union, almost as a matter of the FRG’s raison d’etat. As Garton Ash wryly notes, “the federalism the Federal Government advocated for Europe was Germany-style, decentralized federalism rather than the centralizing federalism of the ‘Euro-super-state’ so much feared in Britain.”85 In arguing the case for embedding Germany in Europe so strongly, Chancellor Kohl has seemingly championed a conception of an integrated Europe that is shared nowhere else in Central Europe. Vaclav Klaus, the increasingly anti-German Czech Thatcherite, rejects such a Europe as decisively as he rejects the Visegrad Group. Klaus is now fond of saying that the Czech Republic is of course in favor of joining Europe but not like “a lump of sugar thrown into a cup of coffee.”86 Hungary, under Gyula Horn, advocates Hungarian membership in the EU as long as the European Union does not become so well integrated and/or militarily adept as to threaten Russia. Hungary’s position postulates a loose federalism and also seems to imply a Russian right to veto policies Moscow may deem inimical to its interests. Even Poland, for a whole host of strategic, geopolitical, historical and symbolic reasons the lynchpin of Bonn’s new eastern policy, does not fully share Kohl’s conception of a united Europe. To be sure, Warsaw enthusiastically endorses the German initiated “Weimar Triangle” military-political project as an essential fulcrum for a united Europe. And why would it not, inasmuch as the Weimar grouping elevates Poland to the status of France, at least symbolically, and thus confers upon it additional political leverage with and/or over its Visegrad neighbors? Yet, the fiercely nationalistic Poles incline toward France in another way, viz., by preferring a Europe des patries rather than a Europe à la Kohl. And indefatigable champion of membership in the EU though Warsaw may be, Poland continues to prefer balancing its integration into Europe with its Atlantic connections, making less for a narrowly European than for a grander Euro-Atlantic strategy.87

Last but not least, even German public opinion, if put to the test, might well reject Chancellor Kohl’s “Maastricht Plus” vision of the European Union. Among other things--if not indeed central to them--is the German public’s concern lest the much vaunted and time tested stability of the DM be
sacrificed to an unpredictable European standard of monetary value (an EU, EMU, or some other).  

How then to draw up a balance sheet between choices and constraints in unified Germany’s relationship to post-Communist East Central Europe? The fact that some entries on both sides of the ledger are blurred renders the reckoning a rather daunting task.

On the one side, East Central Europe (Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, to specify the short list) is enormously attractive to unified Germany for economic reasons, as a new field for investment, the site of promising new markets and a source of supply, especially of skilled but relatively inexpensive labor. The vast quantities of economic aid comprising “German support for the reform process” in Central Europe can be disaggregated so as to highlight the degree of German economic self-interest at play. To do this would be in effect to agree with the presupposition that “in most parts of the world German national interests come down to a [single] proposition: business.” However, a no less plausible approach stipulates that “Germany’s primary interest in its neighbors to the East is not so much economic as it is political,” and its chief goal is “stability.” The latter rubric covers many different considerations, including migration. Small wonder that the urgency that has attended domestic German politics in relation to the whole question of “asylum seekers” should have led to German pressure on Poland and the Czech Republic to conclude elaborate treaty arrangements to control migration, “in effect, creating a small German subsidiary administration abroad.”

The specifics of particular agreements aside, the basic problematics revolve around considerations of Weltmacht-Deutschland and Modell-Deutschland, i.e., Germany as a global (or at least continental) power and Germany as model political economy. Taking the second of these two faces of contemporary Germany first, it should be noted how flattering, in view of all that has gone before in this murderous century, for Germany now to be looked upon as something akin to “the very model of a modern political economy” and simultaneously as an almost ideal constitutional democracy. The only problem is that the “German Model” is now in serious trouble, in large measure on account of a distended tangled web of domestic entitlements and restrictions that by enervating Germany’s ability to compete on the world market threaten the very foundations of its fabled “social market” economy at home. The Kohl Government’s recent efforts to legislate corrective measures (which may in any case come to naught) have been interpreted as heralding the end of the “consensus” politics characteristic of the FRG since its inception. Actually, the stakes involve much more than this; at issue is the entire web of structures and procedures and the whole ethos that have marked Germany’s neo-corporatist economic miracle. Neo-corporatist arrangements have clearly outlived their usefulness; they have, in fact, become counterproductive. If they are now to be scrapped—and that outcome is far from certain—that will herald the onset of openly adverserial politics and relationships, to which the Germans have a notoriously well ingrained
aversion. Whatever the outcome of long overdue socio-economic change in Germany, pressures for which were both exposed and exacerbated by the toll of national unification in 1990, the consequences for Germany’s standing as an international power are bound to be enormous. So much for Modell-Deutschland!

Unified Germany’s status as a Weltmacht, i.e., a major power, also entails no end of uncertainty. Outside Germany (especially in the Anglo-Saxon world), it is typically assumed that possessing most of the requisite material attributes of international power, Germany is now one, along with Japan and America (the United States being, in this view, the sole global Superpower, by virtue of its distinctive military prowess and nuclear assets). This gloss overlooks subjective considerations, in the case of Germany (as well as Japan) an aversion to the employment of military force, not to mention the acquisition of nuclear weapons. This has been manifested in a variety of different ways, including the protracted political and legal argumentations about the use of German armed forces “out of area.” It is only symptomatic that German strategic thinkers should have come up with a new term, ”Zivilmacht” ("Civilian Power"), as a kind of post-modern (or at least post-nuclear) version of the traditional “trading state.”

But there is more. A flight not so much “from history” as “into history” has left German opinion elites, much of what there is of a German political class, and therefore most of German public opinion allergic to power. The latter day "civilian power" amounts to nothing other than a "tamed power" in which Moralpolitik substitutes for and therefore becomes an easy escape from Realpolitik. While the most recent survey research suggests a certain degree of "geopolitical maturation," especially at the elite level, the underlying dilemma remains at the mass level, something that is of more than marginal policy significance in a political democracy, especially one that is awash in the excesses of "television democracy." Without going into the many findings of the extensive survey research--Germany has been called "die befragte Nation" ("the most polled nation")—suffice it only to note some highly symptomatic contrastive data. For example, Germans repeatedly rank East Central Europe at or close to the very top of areas of their country’s vital interests. At the same time, when asked what foreign country they would most like Germany to resemble, Germans have invariably selected Switzerland—prosperous, stable, and neutral. In other words, Germans are saying in effect, East Central Europe matters vitally to us but we’d really prefer to cultivate our own gardens and not get involved. The one egregious example of unilateral German "leadership," i.e., Genscher’s role in pushing the EC into unconditional diplomatic recognition of the independence of Croatia and Slovenia, brought such negative repercussions for Germany (to leave aside ex-Yugoslavia) as to strengthen the prevailing "culture of reticence" in unified Germany’s foreign policy.

Small wonder, then, that Germany is still in search of its Ostpolitik. As one perceptive commentator has noted, while there are specific policies toward East Central Europe, there is no
guiding vision or "much of an idea of what ought to emerge in the end." On the other hand, no
less shrewd an observer than Timothy Garton Ash has argued that Germany no longer needs an
Ostpolitik, that the concept itself is harmful insofar as it implies that the East will continue to exist as an "East" apart from "the West" that can only be reached via that self styled "bridge,"
Germany shades of the pernicious Schaukelpolitik of yore, i.e., Germany playing off East
against West and vice versa, losing a grip on its own geopolitical location and national identity in the
process. And that is precisely the rub. For Unified Germany is indissolubly linked to East Central
Europe in the wrenching politics of regional identity. Or, as Peter Pulzer put it in a brilliant article,
"Unified Germany: A Normal State?" normal by whose standards--German or other peoples?
Or is there now no difference? Perhaps we should let Nietzsche have the last word...Es
kennzeichnet die Deutschen, dass bei ihnen die Frage, 'was ist deutsch?' niemals ausstirbt! ("It
is characteristic of the Germans that they never cease asking the question, what is (it to be)
German.")

CONCLUSION

If the foregoing analysis is correct, the politics of identity in Central Europe will continue to
be highly volatile. The Visegrad Group must be considered a dead letter; it may have a role to play
with respect to trade and related technical matters, but it is unlikely to serve any grander purpose
such as the historical construction of an area-wide "security community" (à la Karl Deutsch) much
less a regional Central European identity. For its part, Germany, so recently (and imperfectly)
unified, is too beset by recurrent bouts of self-doubt (and real socio-economic problems) to serve as
a catalyst for new Central European structures and allegiances. Germany's motives in posing as a
champion of East Central European accession to NATO and entry into the EU may or may not be
suspect; its effectiveness as a motor of change in the present day European international system is
certainly open to question.

All of this has major implications for U.S. foreign policy. Questions about the desirability,
feasibility, timing, and modality of an eastward enlargement (i.e., expansion) of NATO, important
as all these issues are, can not be addressed here. Nor can various suggestions for alternative Euro-
Atlantic mechanisms, as fascinating as some of these may be. To be fully persuasive, any such
policy discussion presupposes a much more comprehensive and systematic analysis of Russian
strategic thinking and political attitudes concerning its former East European client states and unified
Germany than any undertaken to date. Utterly crucial at the present moment is a prior clear
recognition of the continued centrality of American involvement in European affairs and the absolute
indispensability of consistent, creative American leadership. Lest that assertion seem nothing more
than the utterance of a conventional piety, readers should know that research on this Project has
transformed the present writer into a true believer in (rather than a mere assenter to) the set of tenets
that postulate the ineluctability of U.S. involvement and the sustained urgency of American leadership. The alternative—a lack of direction, increasing chaos, and ultimately perhaps even violence—is simply too threatening to American national interests to contemplate or rather, once contemplated, to accept.

Of course, not every American observer of the European scene will agree. Indeed, some commentators—from Richard H. Ullman in the early 90’s to Michael Mandelbaum today—propose either that now more than ever before in recent history peace, stability, and probably also prosperity in Europe can be pretty much taken for granted (ex-Yugoslavia being an aberrant and embarrassing exception) or else that the much vaunted "security vacuum" in East Central Europe is a figment of somebody’s self-interested imagination. Such too clever-by-half arguments are willy-nilly reminiscent of medieval scholastic disputation. How can one really know how many angels can stand on the head of the proverbial pin without first asking (and taking seriously) the opinion of the angels themselves?

This is, of course, where the rather intangible and yet eminently practical matter of regional identity comes into play. An English commentator, sympathetic to the Germans, has conceived of a scenario in which, with European integration failing (and American policy abstaining), "Germany would cease to be a bridge and become a wedge driving forward in eastern Europe and dividing western Europe." This may be an updated variant of the old saw about NATO having been designed to "keep the Americans in, the Russians out, and Germans down," but in such truisms there is typically essential truth. As to identity politics, America’s creative leadership is a prerequisite to the successful attainment of what has to be the basic if daunting objective, i.e., the formation of multiple, complementary identities, so as to detoxify identity politics to the greatest extent possible.

Perhaps the final words on the whole conundrum belong to Vaclav Havel, the symbol of so many different aspects of the contemporary East Central European dilemma. In speculating about the future of Europe, the dissident, playwright, philosopher, President mused that that much harassed and repeatedly convulsed continent, Europe, might yet serve as "a model of how different peoples can work together in peace without sacrificing any of their identity" and "thus help create a new global pattern of coexistence." In a delicious expression of typically Central European irony Havel remarked elsewhere that the same Europe has "entered the long tunnel at the end of the light." He would, of course, be the first to insist that the way out of the tunnel depends in quite substantial measure on the United States.
SOURCES

In addition to conventional primary and secondary print sources—books, journal articles, and newspapers, all selectively cited in the endnotes. I have utilized the incomparable resources of the RFE/RL Archives (Munich, 1993; later, Prague). Other survey research data sources that were consulted include the Central and Eurobarometer, The New Democracies Barometer (Paul Lazarsfeld Society, Vienna), various polls conducted by the Financial Times (London), the United States Information Agency (Washington, D.C.) and Gallup Hungary Ltd. The Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) daily publication was enormously helpful and I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of my former graduate student, Dr. Stephen R. Burant, now of INR/US Department of State for collecting relevant FBIS materials for me. I have also utilized the RFE/RL Daily Report and its successor OMRI Daily Report as well as the RFE/RL Research Report series and its slick but still serious successor, the twice-month publication, Transition (Prague).

All this reading was supplemented by field research and personal interviews, the most fruitful of which were at the RFE/RL Headquarters (Munich), Spring-Summer, 1993; in Prague, the Central Europe Institute (R. Kucera) the Czech Institute of International Relations, and the Faculty of Social Science, Charles University, June 1993; in Warsaw, the Polish Institute of International Relations (PISM) (A. Kaminski and H. Szlajfer), Center of International Studies of the Polish Senate (J.M. Nowakowski), and the Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences (E. Wnuk-Lipinski) June 1993; in Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, May 1993; in Zagreb, the International Relations/Social Sciences Faculty of the University of Zagreb, the Croatian Council for the European Movement, the Political Section of the Ministry of Defense of Croatia, all May, 1993; in Bucharest, the Group for Social Dialogue, the Association of International Law and International Relations, the Euro-Atlantic Center of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, all June 1993; in Bonn, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the German Bundestag, June 1994.

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ENDNOTES

1. For an earlier presentation of some of these points, see my “Lands In-Between: The Politics of Cultural Identity in Contemporary Eastern Europe,” Eastern European Politics and Societies (EEPS) 3:2 (Spring 1989) pp. 176-197, esp., pp. 178-9. The literature on political identity is growing but is far from uniformly satisfactory. For one thoughtful treatment, see Anne Norton, Reflections on Political Identity (Baltimore and London, 1988).


3. The phrase is Henry Kissinger’s. For this characterization of the region, see his Diplomacy (New York, 1994), p. 825.


5. Larry Wolff, Inventing Eastern Europe (Stanford, 1994), passim: Wolff’s book is a highly relevant (and altogether delightful) intellectual history of “the map of civilization on the mind of the Enlightenment,” the subtitle of his important study. For a different approach, stressing geographic, environmental, socioeconomic and related factors, see A. Garrison Walters’ brief but provocative chapter, “Why Is There an Eastern Europe?” in The Other Europe (Syracuse, 1988), pp. 110-131.


7. Especially the theorist of federalism (à la the Austro-Marxists, O. Bauer and K. Renner), Oszkar Jaszi. On Jaszi and the gulf that separated him from Friedrich Naumann, the German patriotic publicist of Mitteleuropa during World War I, see Ferenc Feher, “On Making Central Europe, EEPS 3:3 (Fall 1989), pp. 420-1.

8. This felicitous turn of historical phrase is Gail Stokes.’ See his The Walls Came Tumbling Down (New York and Oxford, 1993), pp. 131-167.


10. Iver B. Neumann, “Russia as Central Europe’s Constituting Other,” EEPS 7:2 (Spring 1993), pp. 349-369

11. A sampling of this uncertainty may be found in George Schöpflin and Nancy Wood, eds., In Search of Central Europe (London 1989). One contributor to this collection stresses a preference for the quest for the grail of humanism over the elusive search for a geographic definition. See Egon Schwartz, “Central Europe--What It Is and What It Is Not,” op. cit., pp. 143-156.


16. E.g., Milan Kundera, Vaclav Havel, Adam Michnik, Czeslaw Milosz, Miklos Haraszti, Danilo Kis, György Dalos, Jiri Dienstbier, et. al.


20. A fuller treatment of these background developments may be found in Alfred A. Reisch, “The Central European Initiative: To Be or Not To Be?” RFE/RL Research Report 2:34 (August 27, 1993).

21. On the curious (but conspicuous) failure of the “Pentagonale” to admit Poland, see Terry, loc. cit., p. 382.

22. These developments are treated in greater detail in two unpublished papers, “A New Regionalism in Central Europe?” and “Central European Approaches to the European Union,” both by my Ph.D. student, Matthew Rhodes.

23. The text of Klaus’ speech (in English) may be found in Czeba zahraniční politika: Dokumenty, October 1995, p. 623 as quoted by Rhodes, “A New Regionalism...” p. 5. Cf. the sarcastic dismissal of the CEI delivered by Czech Deputy Prime Minister Jiri Weigel in an interview of October 25, 1995 in which called the CEI “an empty organization,” adding “nobody knows anything about it” so that “there’s no problem” in enlarging it. I am grateful to Matt Rhodes for providing me with an English translation of the Weigel interview.


25. This is the current official Czech position. Klaus has frequently reiterated that in his view there is no Visegrad, only CEFTA. At a press conference following the Warsaw CEFTA Summit, Klaus
stated that "Czechs translate the term 'Visegrad' as CEFTA." FBIS-EEU 94-228, November 28, 1994, p. 3.


34. In response to a Czech reporter's question as to whether the CEI constituted "a platform preparing for membership in the EU and NATO, Polish Foreign Minister Olechowski answered that "The CEI has spheres [of activity]...that are a kind of preparation for membership in West European organizations. In this context, the Weimar Group (France, Poland, and Germany) is of primary importance for Poland, but cooperation within the Visegrad Group and the Central European Free Trade Zone is also(!) important." FBIS-EEU 94-228, November 28, 1994, p. 1, italics and exclamation mark added.


36. Ibid., pp. 483-4.


38. For their part, the Poles stressed that these proposals were not meant as an alternative to or to compete with NATO and the EC/EU. See Terry, loc. cit., and Latawski, pp. 25-6.
39. J. F. Brown is one such (measured) admirer, see his evaluation in Hopes and Shadows (Durham, 1994), p. 36.


41. This felicitous phrase is J. F. Brown's, Hopes and Shadows, p. 41. ff.

42. Ibid., p. 39.

43. Two journals, the Journal of Democracy and the East European Constitutional Review (University of Chicago Law School), are particularly helpful in tracking constitutional developments and discussing the merits of different institutional arrangements.


46. I have used schedules of public opinion survey research data published in Central and Eurobarometer, The New Democracies Barometer (Paul Lazarsfeld Society, Vienna), polls conducted by the Financial Times (London), USIA (Washington, D.C.) and Gallup, Hungary, Ltd., as well as surveys undertaken by various research institutes in Warsaw, Prague, and Budapest.


48. Of the many secondary accounts, one of the very best is Elizabeth Pond, Beyond the Wall: Germany's Road to Reunification (Washington, D.C., 1993). The matter has also been handled in great detail and to good effect by two Bush Administration ex-insiders, Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft (Cambridge, MA, 1995).


50. For one recent example, see James Kurth, "Germany and the Reemergence of Mitteleuropa," Current History, Nov. 1995, pp. 381-386. A more nuanced assessment may be found in Gary L. Geipel, "Germany and the Burden of Choice," Ibid., pp. 375-380.

51. Thomas Mann would no doubt have appreciated the irony of the Federal Chancellor utilizing for transparently political purposes a rhetorical device of a celebrated modern German writer who had once proclaimed himself an "unpolitical" man (or Mann if the pun be allowed, as it should, for there was also his egregiously political brother, Heinrich Mann).

52. Erhard had been a phenomenal success, of course, as Minister of Economics under Adenauer. Under Erhard's aegis, West Germany developed a "social market economy" and experienced a remarkable Wirtschaftswunder (economic miracle), the sinews of what came to be widely celebrated as Modell-Deutschland (the German Model) of political economy.


55. Quite fittingly, the new journal, Internationale Politik (actually and also quite fittingly a new name for the venerable Europa-Politik founded fifty years earlier) devoted its entire second issue to what its editor, Werner Weidenfeld, termed "the new agenda," and its front cover tauted as "the new risks" of international relations. See Internationale Politik (Bonn) 50:2, February 1995.


57. Further discussion may be found in Hans-Peter Schwarz, Adenauer Der Staatsmann: 1952-1967 (Stuttgart, 1991).


59. The whole story is superbly told by Timothy Garton Ash, In Europe's Name (New York, 1993). Ash's insightful analysis is especially tough and telling on the SPD's "second Ostpolitik," i.e., its readiness to appease East Germany's ruling Communist elite. Small wonder that Ash's ironic account should have caused such a stir in Germany generating even more controversy than Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's more recent, much hyped, but scarcely novel study Hitler's Willing Executioners, which treats a quite different subject.


61. For an example of the facile equation of Russian and Central European interests on the question of the eastward expansion of NATO, see Klaus Kinkel's remarks to the NATO Foreign Ministers Conference held in Berlin, June 1996, as cited in The Week in Germany (New York), June 7, 1996, p. 1. A background treatment from the German point of view is provided by Fred Oldenburg, "Germany's Interest in Russia's Stability," Berichte des Bundesinstituts f. ostwiss. u. int. Studien, Cologne, 33-1993.


63. Focus On... "German Support for the Reform Process in the Former Soviet Union and the Countries of Central, Southeastern and Eastern Europe" (New York: German Information Center March 1995), a highly useful compilation of data.

64. Drummond, loc. cit.

65. The Economist, July 13, 1996, p. 45. The phrase "with evangelical zeal" may constitute an example of English overstatement with respect to Germany; "with dead seriousness" might be a more accurate description.

67. As quoted in the Financial Times (London), June 4, 1996. Kohl's comment seems totally oblivious of Ukraine's key role in Russia's psychological as well as strategic opposition to the expansion of NATO. This point is well developed by Anatol Lieven, "Russian opposition to NATO expansion," The World Today (Vol. 51, Oct. 1995), pp. 197-199.


73. "German-Polish Relations...," The Week in Germany (New York) January 12, 1996.


76. Focus On..."German Support for the Reform Process..." loc. cit., p. 4.

77. Focus On..."German Support...." March 1995, loc. cit.


79. "Propinquity pays," The Economist, Feb. 20, 1993, pp. 67-68. When the present author suggested in an interview in June 1993 with the then Deputy Director of the Polish Institute of International Relations that the Czech Republic might select "East Germany" as its new name, he retorted instantaneously and without a smile that a better name would be "Czecho-Bavaria."

80. A brief but good discussion may be found in Müller, "German Foreign Policy After Unification," in Stares, ed., op. cit., pp. 146-150.

84. The Slovaks for their part regard Bonn as "one of the motors of (Western) criticism of Meclim's domestic policy," see Sharon Fisher, "Turning Away From Slovakia," Transition 2: 3 (February 9, 1996), pp. 38-41.
86. OMRI Daily Report, Part II, EE, 5/10/96. At an election rally in May, 1996, Klaus asserted that he "did not wish to be a citizen of Europe 10 or 20 years from now." "I want to remain a Czech citizen," he added, "and pay Czech taxes." Klaus stated that he opposed a common European currency because "Czech citizens could end up paying common taxes, not in Prague but in Brussels." ibid.
87. The foregoing is based on my conversations with ranking Polish security specialists and my interviews at the Polish Institute of International Relations (PISM), Warsaw, June 1993 and subsequent correspondence with several of its members. See also Roman Kuzniar, "The Geoeconomic Factors Conditioning Poland's Security," The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs (Warsaw) vol. 2, no. 1 (Winter 1993), pp. 9-28 and subsequent discussion of the basic issue in that journal and elsewhere, especially by Antoni Z. Kaminski.
89. See the breakdown of German economic aid and assistance by category as well as by recipients country, Focus On... German Support for the Reform Process... loc. cit. (en. 63).
91. Hans-Peter Schwartz, "Germany's National and European Interests" (loc. cit., p. 101.
95. The locus classicus for this interpretation is now Ralf Dahrendorf, Society and Democracy in Germany (Garden City, NY 1967).


108. Ibid., p. 17.

109. See, for example, the suggestions of Charles Kupchan, "For an Atlantic Union." Foreign Affairs Vol. 75, No. 3 (May/June 1996, pp. 92-104.

110. A good start, but no more than that, has been made by Angela Stent, "Between Moscow and Bonn: East-Central Europe in Transition," in Hardt and Kaufmann, eds., op. cit., pp. 441-456. Ronald H. Linden of the University of Pittsburgh intends to undertake a research project on "Russian attitudes towards its former allies in East Europe."


