

NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION AND GERMAN UNIFICATION

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Certified that the dissertation entitled **National Self-Determination and German Unification**, submitted by **Ms. Caralyne Edna Khongwar**, is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University, or any other University and is her own work.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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P r e f a c e

The concept of self-determination has again become a very important issue in the post Cold war period, in which we are witnessing the re-emergence of several traditional factors, such as ethnicity, religion, race and language. These factors play a key role in European politics at present as also in the global arena, throwing the ideological factor into oblivion.

Nationalism and national self-determination have been the basis for disintegration of imperialism in Europe in the nineteenth century, but it could not lead to the democratization of the newly emerged nation states. Thus the world saw two World Wars in quick succession, and in both these cases, Germany had been the aggressor state with its imperialistic and dynastic ambitions. The latter was followed by a cold war, dividing the world, and Europe in particular, into two ideologically opposed blocs. Germany, which was undoubtedly its most obvious victim, as well as the epicentre was also divided into two states, with opposite ideological and political orientation and set up - The FRG was an example of a liberal democratic state with free market economy, supported and occupied by the allied powers, and the GDR, which was set up on communist lines and whose sole aim was for

transformation of the East German society into a socialist society, formed part of the Soviet bloc for four decades. The division of Germany was also consolidated by the involvement of the two German states in the opposing alliance systems, such as the NATO and Warsaw Pact. Though one of the most important aims of the West German Constitution [The Basic Law] was to bring about unification of the two Germanies, it was absolutely impossible as long as the Superpowers [and their respective allies] remained antagonistic to each other. Thus for the duration of the Cold War, Germany remained divided.

However, unification of Germany four years ago, marked the end of the cold war and, ironically, this also signified the end of hostilities between the two superpowers - the USA and the USSR. But this factor, though very important in itself, which brought about unification [as elaborated in the following chapters], was not the only one which brought to an end the partition of Germany.

The goal of unification of Germany was sought to be realized on the basis of national self-determination and democratic participation. German unification on 3 October 1990, fulfilled this aim in a peaceful manner with support and assurance from both the the three western allied powers and the Soviet Union.

Though in the forty five years of separation, the two German states have evolved distinct separate identities with opposite forms of political systems, ideological beliefs, social and economic structures as well as moral and ethical values, yet this did not hinder the smooth process of unification. Of course, one should not ignore the fact that West Germany's diplomatic skills and tact also played an important role as well as its economic power, but nevertheless, it was undoubtedly a daunting task for even the most experienced and skilful statesmen. Two separate and very different societies sought to be integrated on the basis of one factor - that of common national identity as well as shared history, and culture.

The democratization process was introduced by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union. His 'New Thinking' as well as his concepts of *glasnost* and *perestroika* opened up the communist world to ideas from the west which in turn also liberated the people in these countries from the shackles of totalitarianism such that they could freely express their opinions and political desires which were, of course, demands for democracy and political participation - an expression of self- determination.

In the GDR, the communist government which had for long played down any reference to unity with West Germany, and was intent in its aim to create a distinct German Socialist society, [the German part de-emphasized] different

from the west, succeeded, mainly because of forcible ideological indoctrination and suppression of free information. Yet the people did not lose their sense of national unity, the only hindrance was that they had not been able to give expression to it for more than four decades. However, in 1989 when the Berlin wall fell, the East Germans took to the streets and revolted against the regime which suppressed them for so long, raising slogans and demanding their rights as a people, as a nation. This was, in a way, brought about partly by the East German government's intransigent, hardline stand and its refusal to follow Gorbachev's lead; that is, to introduce more liberal reforms.

Public anger, on the continued repression reached new heights, and channelized through opposition groups formed in the wake of liberalization of the USSR and other East European regimes developed into organized demonstrations and protests, though some took the form of massive exodus to the West through the open borders of Hungary. Increasing numbers of East Germans participated in the demonstrations and the East German regime, inspite of the changes made in leadership as well as structure and set up, could not stand up against the force of public anger and demands. Thus the fall of the Berlin wall was followed soon after by political and electoral decisions to hasten the process of unification.

Ultimately, despite the tough Two Plus Four negotiations and also differences among political parties in FRG on the modalities and pace of unification, East Germany was merged with the Federal Republic, through Article 23 of the Basic Law.

Thus nationalism and sense of German identity on the part of the Germans, their quest for national self-determination and struggle against an alien and superimposed ideology, the desire for democracy, for a western like pluralism, parliamentary democracy and rule of law, as well as the acute desire for an economic betterment and a better standard of living [which they had seen in the west became, all in all, a powerful force and the one which eventually brought down the SED government in East Germany.

This study is a modest attempt at analysing the role of nationalism and national self-determination in bringing about German unification. Nationalism, and national identity [on the basis of race, language, ethnicity and religion] are once again emerging as powerful factors, and key players in national as well as international politics. Nations and states are made and unmade on the basis of one or a combination of these factors.

The main objective of this study is to highlight the importance of the concept of national self-determination, and its increasing use as an instrument by

groups all over the world to demand separate statehood and breaking away from established internationally recognized states. It also aims to point out the very obvious but curious fact that from among all the states and nations in the international arena, Germany is the only country which has benefited the most from the application of this concept. It is also the only incident in which national self-determination is the cause of integration rather than disintegration, playing a constructive instead of its usually negative and destructive role, as it happened in the case of Yugoslavia.

The study is also meant to point out the dangerous implications of the misuse of the concept of self-determination as well as the need for more in-depth analysis of the concept which ever since the French Revolution has never stopped to stir men's minds about freedom and nationalism, as well as providing politicians and power hungry individuals a tool for creating mischief and most alarmingly , bloodshed, tragedy and suffering.

This study is mainly within a conceptual framework. It is mostly based upon the information gathered from secondary sources, books and articles published by various authors, as well as journals and newspapers and some primary documents and speeches, available in Delhi.

This study is mainly divided into four chapters: In the preface, an attempt is made to highlight the emerged importance of the concept of national self-determination and the problem of its potential being misused. Thereafter aim and objectives of the study have been discussed.

Chapter One has seven subdivisions: Section one deals with the concept of self-determination and section two traces its origin. It attempts to trace its evolution since its first democratic stirrings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Various manifestations and forms of self-determination which have emerged in the past recent history have been listed and discussed.

Chapter Two is an attempt to interweave nationalism with German political history, from its first unification under Bismarck, right through the two world wars, and upto the division of Germany and establishment of two diametrically opposed systems.

The actualization of German unification took almost everybody, and even the main players and negotiators, by surprise. The confluence of different events, the systemic changes as well as the force and extent of consciousness of national identity have been discussed in Chapter Three. In addition, the actual process (though not in detail) has been traced in order to highlight the play of the factor of nationalism in the process of unification.

The Fourth Chapter consists of reflections on the future of the concept of national self-determination, analysis of its potential in future national as well as international politics and also proposal for a more indepth and analytical study of this very potent force in world politics. A summary of the factors which played an important part of the German unification as well as a query as to Germany's new position and stand in the changed world order forms part of this concluding chapter.

**THE CONCEPT OF
SELF-DETERMINATION**

*Behind every struggle, even the hardest,
there is life and recovery*

Carl. J. Burckhardt.

1.1 Definition

The desire to be in control of one's own life, to be able to determine the course of one's own life is one of the basic human psychological needs which when politically articulated, becomes self-determination.

Self-determination is one of the major concepts on jurisprudence, political theory and international politics. Self-determination advocates the idea that a homogeneous people have the 'right' to determine its own destiny as a distinct sovereign nation on the right to maintain its national tradition within a larger political entity.¹

The Oxford English dictionary defines self-determination as the "action of a people in deciding its own form of government, free determination of statehood, postulated as a right".²

¹ Yonah Alexander and R. Friedlander, eds., *Self Determination: national, Regional and Global Dimensions* (Boulder, Colorado: 1980), p.xi.

² Oxford English Dictionary, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p.919.

Self-determination is also taken as an expression of political will to rule one's own self and not to be ruled by others, which Dov Ronen believes to be a basic human aspiration.³

At the core of the concept of self-determination lies the basic human aspiration to be 'free' or to be 'free from' what they perceive as others'⁴ political oppression. In other words, the presence of consciousness of identity as a group or otherwise, perceived different from other groups in the same political entity on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, religion, region, etc.

Harold Johnson in his article "Self-determination: West European Perspectives", distinguishes between 'mutual' and 'external' self-determination. He says the first concerns the right of the people to form a national unit. The second concerns the right of the national unit to determine its own destiny primarily in the form of a state. The concept of nationalism has come to be associated with the latter.⁵

The most popular view on self-determination implies that the fulfilment of

³ Dov Ronen, *The Quest for Self Determination* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1979), p.7.

⁴ Ibid., n.3, p.7.

⁵ Harold S.Johnson, "Self-Determination - Western European Perspectives" in Y.Alexander and R.A. Friedlander, *ibid.*, n.1, p.81.

self-determination is the bringing about of an ideal situation (freedom) in which a citizen can fully develop his personality to his full potential. Thus, in a way, the motivation behind the quests for self-determination is usually an idea, or image of an ideal situation.

At the root of the concept of self-determination lies a consciousness - a particular group's consciousness - of its own special identity, which differs from other groups' identities on the basis of varied criteria, indicated earlier, plus a feeling of deprivation and a consequent transfer of this consciousness into a movement which, when politically articulated, usually becomes a movement or quest for self-determination.

Historically, the concept of self-determination emerged simultaneously with the emergence of the concept of 'nation' and the consciousness of nationality which carried with it an intense nationalism. Nationalism has been described in the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* as

a political creed that underlies the cohesion of modern societies and legitimizes their claim to authority. Nationalism centres the supreme loyalty of the overwhelming majority of the people upon the nation-state, existing or desired".⁶

⁶ David Sills, ed., *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, (London: Macmillan, 1968), p.63.

Anthony Birch has said that nationalism is the most successful political ideology in human history which, in the two centuries since its first formulation in the writings of European philosophers, has caused the political map of the world to be completely redrawn.⁷ Though the concept of nationalism ranges from mere self-assertion by a solid and generally accepted community to an aggressive ideology stemming from unsatisfied, irredentist expansionism, "the basic idea of present day nationalism is formation and perpetuation of a nation state" ...⁸

Surprisingly, nation-state emerges as a force to be reckoned with in Britain and France under monarchical absolutism in the sixteenth century. But then the limits of the nation-state could not be defined clearly, for its expanse then had to be in consonance with the political ambitions of the ruler. Under such a political dispensation, there was no democratic delineation of national interest, which in any case, had to bear the complexion of dynastic interests of the monarch.

In contradistinction to the foregoing, nationalism was the by-product of political liberalism, which sought to subvert the monarchical/imperialistic

⁷ Anthony Birch, *Nationalism and National Integration* (London: Unwin, 1989), p.3.

⁸ Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The German Dilemma*, Translated from German by Richard Barry (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), p.253.

hegemonic designs, and in the course of the 19th century, under the new revolutionary zeal provided by the French Revolution, a hard struggle had to be waged to bring about a systemic change from monarchical absolutism to democratic pluralism. It is in this sense that national sentiment came to be acclaimed as the very foundation of the modern state, as something naturally inherent in the formation of any human community, it was regarded as the supreme virtue of any political entity,⁹ and every people awakened to nationalism sees political self-determination as its goal.¹⁰

1.2 Origin of the Concept of Self-Determination and the Different Forms of Self-Determination

The French Revolution of 14 July, 1789, unleashed forces which broke and swept away the centuries old entrenched belief of the "divine right" of Kings. Consequent upon the storming of the Bastille, the French National Assembly, in August of the same year, "passed the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the citizen, which proclaimed, among other things, popular sovereignty and the right to resist oppression".¹¹

⁹ K.Bracher, *ibid.*, pp.253-54.

¹⁰ David Sills, *ibid.*, n.6, p.65.

¹¹ Dov Ronen, *ibid.*, n.3, p.1.

The French Revolution forcefully embodied and proclaimed the principle of popular sovereignty and altered the then prevailing conception of the State. "... the divine right of Kings, ... was not only discredited but was also replaced by the divine right of the people."¹² The Principle of Popular Sovereignty which the French Revolution established was modified and translated into nationalist movement associated with the emergence of the nation-state in Western Europe in the 19th century and later on to sweep through Eastern and Central Europe.

But Dov Ronen says that while the age of self-determination was born in the French Revolution, it had been in the womb of history long before; men of action contributed to its multi-directional development, and a long line of philosophers enhanced its intellectual stature. Since the Revolution, the idea has spread throughout the world, unifying peoples into nations, prompting revolution, crumbling empires, freeing colonies, and threatening modern states.¹³

The French Revolution was a turning point in human political history, for it symbolized the recognition of the right of the 'ruled' as such to turn against the

¹² Alfred Cobban, *Nation States and National Self-Determination*, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1969), p.40.

¹³ Dov Ronen, *ibid.*, n.3, p.6.

'rulers'. Throughout human history, numerous uprisings have occurred, but not before the French Revolution, not even in the aftermath of the American Declaration of Independence, did the idea of the right to self-Determination take root.¹⁴ Dov Ronen says that the idea of self-determination could not have been born without the secularizing spirit of the 18th century, which freed the minds of individuals from the bondage of institutional religion.¹⁵ He lays emphasis on the individual 'self' at the core of the concept of self determination -- that the 'self' in 'self- determination' is the singular individual human being and that the quest for self-determination at its core is not a national or any other group aspiration of the individual human being to the vague notions of 'freedom' and "the good life". The consciousness of being a nation came much later even though nations, ethnic groups, linguistic groups, religious groups, etc., having same values have always existed. It became sharpened with the presence or the perception of a threat from other groups, speaking different languages, possessing different values, social mores and customs. Only then, the perception of 'us' and 'them' was born and "once a people is awakened to nationalism, it sees political self-determination as its goal..."¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid., p.7.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.8.

¹⁶ David Sills, *ibid.*, n.6., p.65.

The French Revolution is the most important milestone in the history of self-determination because with the French Revolution, the doctrine of popular sovereignty is proclaimed and according to this view, government should be based on the will of the people; and that the right of self-determination of a nation is its legitimate right to preserve its existence as a unique social group.¹⁷

With the French Revolution, the era of nation building started in Europe. People's emotions were aroused and loyalty of people is turned towards the nation instead of the King. The emergence of the concept of the State, especially helped by the writings of German philosophers, facilitated this transformation. But the philosopher who exerted the influence most in this respect was Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), who preached the rights of man. His book, *The Social Contract*, has been called the "Bible of the Revolution".¹⁸ It says "man is born free, but one finds him everywhere in chains", and goes on to say that governments should be made by the people for themselves, and that there is no divine right of Kings. This sparked off people's and mass movement in France and afterwards in the whole of Europe, and Kings had eventually to give way to this popular power. Revolution took

¹⁷ Yale Tamir, "The Right to Self-Determination", *Social Research*, (New York), vol.58, no.3 (1991), p.565.

¹⁸ D.H.Lawrence, *Movements in European History* (Oxford, 1971), p.237.

place and a structural change took place in Europe where political organization was established on a new line based on democracy and spurred on by the mass movements with the new ideas of democratic pluralism and popular involvement.

Thus the idea of democratic self-determination was linked hand-in-hand with the growing sense of political participation. For example, in 1791-92, plebiscites were conducted before the incorporation of Avignon and Venaissin and of Savoy and Nice into France. Leaders who have been quick to take on this idea and use it as a basis to augment their own empires like Napoleon, have also played an important role in European history, in the dissolution of the old Society with its kings, clerics, and local rather than national loyalties, and have stressed upon it to foster a common allegiance by the masses to themselves.

Karl Deutsch has proposed 'social mobilization' as the engine for spreading the concept of nationalism and national consciousness. From national consciousness to national self-determination, it is just one step away. Hinsley also said that during the 18th century "in all the territorial bodies-politic,... the sole test of being a nation, of nationhood was coming to be possession of and

submission to a territorial, administrative state".¹⁹ However, with the emergence and consequent consolidation of the nation-state system in Europe, the question of international status also came up. The "focus" then became "the independence of a people within the international system"²⁰ (of national states).

The onset of the Industrial Revolution in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries had also released new force which sought to fight the social and economic injustices which were identified with the hold of the monarchy and aristocracy and people were awakened to their right to fight against their political and economic oppression. Dov Ronen says that this fight went on two fronts: "The national fight for political freedom and the social struggle for economic reform".²¹ Many political and social theorists of this century like Thomas Paine on social reforms, William Godwin on social and political institutions, Saint-Simon on economic reorganization, Louis Blanc, Charles Fournier, Pierre Proudhon, Robert Owen, and of course Karl Marx, propounded ideas which became the forces behind the structural change that took place in Europe and helped to create the nation-state system with popular participation

¹⁹ F.H. Hinsley, *Nationalism and the International System* (London: Hodden & Stoughton, 1973), p.41.

²⁰ Harold Johnson, "Self-Determination: Western European Perspectives" in Y.Alexander & R.Friedlander, *ibid.*, n.1., p.32.

²¹ Dov Ronen, *ibid.*, n.3, p.2.

based on liberal democratic ideals out of the existing monarchical, non-representative - ruled state system.

The French Revolution of course fired other revolutions like the February 1848 revolution in France, which restored the republic and introduced a new constitution. In the Austro-Hungarian Empire, there was a struggle for liberal reforms by the middle class of Austria, while the Magyars and the Czechs rose against their foreign rulers as oppressed minorities. While there was a struggle for liberal reforms and national liberation in the form of German unification in German, the 1848 revolution took the form of liberal protests against reactionary rule and national opposition to Austrian rule in Lombardy and Venice in the Italian Peninsula, led by Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi.

The ideas of the French Revolution -- translated now into nationalist movement, proceeded to sweep through Central and Eastern Europe. Slav nationalism arose in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and in the Balkans. The ferocious suppression in 1876 of the Bulgarian revolution against the Turks prompted Serbians and Montenegrins to go to war against Turkey. The result was the independence of Serbia, Montenegro, Rumania and Bulgaria. There also emerged secret societies, such as "Union of Death", which aimed at the

national unification of the Southern Slavs (Yugoslavs).²²

The principle of popular sovereignty, expressed as the right of self-determination, was widely recognized by the end of World War I.

Dov Ronen however says that the "change is not because of the French Revolution per se, which merely symbolizes it, but because of the stage at which the evolution of the idea of human freedom had arrived in that period."²³ Ronen has identified the existence of several types of self-determination which he says have appeared in five different manifestations since the French Revolution. These are:

- i. *Nineteenth Century (German, Italian) nationalism.*
- ii. *Marxist class struggle.*
- iii. *Minorities' self-determination associated with the ideas of Woodrow Wilson.*
- iv. *Anti-colonialism.*
- v. *Today's 'ethnic' quest for self-determination.*

²² Dov Ronen, *ibid.*, n.3, pp.3-4.

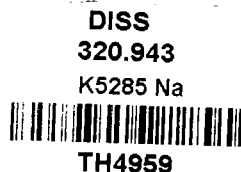
²³ *Ibid.*, p.7.

1.3 Nineteenth Century Nationalism and National Self-Determination

Ronen says that with regard to the concept of national self-determination, there has been quite a few difficulties because of the tendency to use the term nationalism broadly, most times in place of the "quest for self-determination", which he defines as 'the aspiration to rule one's self, not to be ruled or controlled by others, and also in place of 'decolonization', 'ethnic awakening' and so on.²⁴ But Ronen says that the terms, nation, nationalism, and national self-determination may appropriately be used for the German, Italian and other movements in the nineteenth century Europe and for later movements elsewhere that followed the pattern of unification of diverse entities in the face of foreign 'them'. From the late eighteenth century onwards, the right to self-determination especially stirred Germans and Italians, who had come into close contact with French people and culture during the upheavals of the Napoleonic wars. Hans Kohn writes, "concepts of the French Revolution as they spread to Italy and Germany, were eagerly learned from France. But the emphasis shifted; the tyrants to be expelled were French influence and French armies of occupation; the liberty worshipped was not so much individual freedom from authoritarian government as national freedom from foreign governments".²⁵

²⁴ Ibid., pp.26-77.

²⁵ Hans Kohn, quoted in Dov Ronen, *ibid.*, n.3, p.27.



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Dov Ronen says that the 'us' of the people, as opposed to 'them' of the authoritarian ruler changed in the nineteenth century to the 'us' of the German and Italian nations opposed to the 'them' of the French nation and other foreign rule. He also went on to say that the German concept of 'Volk' probably expressed best what nation came to mean. The connotation of the word embraces the German sense of history (Historismus) of this Volk, it emphasizes national uniqueness and the German people's unifying sense of community. The German 'nation' gives the state an indivisible homogeneous content,²⁶ and through their philosophers, poets and intellectuals, the Germans expressed the wish to free themselves and their culture from French domination, exacerbated by the Napoleonic wars. During this period, the Germans and Italians, and other Europeans were pursuing national self-determination. Russia, France, and Britain went along with the principle of national self-determination when, during the 1820s, they supported the Greeks' rebellion against Ottoman rule. The revolutions of 1848, particularly that of the Magyars in Hungary, struggled against the alien Austrian rule. In 1867, Hungary, undisturbed by its own internal ethnic heterogeneity, won an important battle in its quest for national self-determination from Austria by obtaining virtual autonomy.²⁷ Dov Ronen also says that national self-determination is unifying, integrating and centripetal. (In these

²⁶ Hans Kohn, *ibid.*, p.28.

²⁷ Dov Ronen, *ibid.*, p.28.

characteristics, Ronen says, it differs from disuniting, disintegrating and centrifugal ethnic self-determination and from Wilsonian minorities' self-determination of World War I). Moreover national self-determination inspired peoples, Germans, Italians, Greeks, to create modern nation-states. In sum, Ronen says, "nationalism is a type of quest for self-determination that bridges over religious, ethnic, and linguistic differences and thus functions as a centripetal force in pursuing its goals".²⁸

1.4 Marxist Class Self Determination

Though class conflict is not commonly analyzed in the context of self-determination, Ronen chose to classify Marxist struggle as a type of self-determination on the basis of an 'us' and a 'them' identity consciousness of a group perceived to be suffering from oppression (in this case, economic oppression). For Marx, Ronen says, the alien rule is the oppression by the owners of the means of production and establish the true community of 'us'; a communist society. All elements of the quest for self-determination, he says, are present in the Marxian version, he says: the self-identity of a group of people, (the proletariat); the alien rulers (the owners of the means of production); and the 'message' (Marx's interpretation of the right to self-determination). This type of quest for self-determination was a competition of national self-determination in the 19th century, which found expression in the

²⁸ Dov Romen, *ibid.*, p.28.

1848 revolution as well as in the discussions among Rosa Luxembourg, Otto Bauer, Lenin and others at the time of World War I.²⁹

1.5 Wilsonian Self Determination of Minorities

Although Woodrow Wilson never made a comprehensive statement on self-determination in his speeches or in his writings, yet the expression "self-determination" is inextricably connected with his name. However, the idea itself was not originally his, but it stemmed from Fichte's '*selbst bestimmung*' and the references and allusions (mainly during the years of 1917 and 1918) to it are scattered. As one reported in the New York Times, Wilson had said:

National aspirations must be respected; peoples may now be dominated and governed only by their own consent. Self-determination is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of action, which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril.³⁰

The famous Fourteen Points, pronounced by Woodrow Wilson at a joint session of the US Congress on 8 January 1918, though not mentioning self-determination, made specific references to it in five points. A striking characteristic of Wilson's self-determination is that it is basically applicable to "those nations and territories whose destinies had to be resettled in one way

²⁹ Ibid., p.30.

³⁰ Woodrow Wilson, *New York Times*, 12 February 1918.

or another because they had been unsettled by man".³¹ The basis of Wilson's self-determination was democracy and rights of national minorities. The national minorities identity was adopted by President Wilson as the appropriate means of achieving self-determination in Europe. Wilson suggested the formula of self-determination as a solution to the problems of the boundaries of Europe (after the first World War), the future of Germany, the threat of Bolshevik influence in Europe, and the maintenance of peace among nations.³² It also became one of the principles of the League of Nations when it was established in 1920. Wilson's principle of self-determination was utilized to facilitate the territorial adjustment during the peace negotiations and the principle became one of the principles for which the Allies in World War II avowedly fought.³³

1.6 Decolonization - The Quest for Self-Rule

The Atlantic Charter, signed by 15 representatives of governments in September 1941, reaffirmed the commitment to self-determination, which by now has international recognition. The Charter of the United Nations, the Covenants on Human Rights, the Declaration on the granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (General Assembly Resolution

³¹ Dov Ronen, *ibid*, n.3, p.32.

³² *Ibid.*, p.32.

³³ Harold S. Johnson, "Self-Determination: Western European Perspective" in Y.Alexander & R.Friedlander, eds., *ibid.*, n.1., p.88.

1514 (XV), 14 December, 1960) and a lot more of other declarations recognize people's right to self-determination. Unlike those following World War I, these declarations were specifically aimed at colonised countries. Under the principle of a people's right to fight against colonial rule, ten new states had been born in Asia by 1955 (India, Pakistan, Ceylon, The Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Korea and Indonesia) and the successive independence of scores of new African states began in 1957. Decolonization has shown that the right to self-determination is not restricted to one race, not based on the size or economic and political preparedness of a group nor even on a common culture, a common history, *but on the human right not to be ruled by other peoples.*³⁴

1.7 'Ethnic' Self-Determination

In 1976, Pierre L. Van der Berghe wrote, "Everybody began to talk of the 'revival' of ethnicity... Now everybody (or nearly so) is on an ethnic kick".³⁵ But as recent as the 1960s, Walker Connor complained that the question of ethnic identity tended to be ignored in the literature on integration and nation-building theory. But since then, there have been a profusion of ethnic conflicts and calls for self-determination by groups based on cultural and ethnic identity. Ronen says that although the terms are not new, the

³⁴ Ibid., pp.5-6.

³⁵ Paul Van der Berghe, quoted in Dov Ronen, *ibid*, n.3, p.40.

widespread activation of an "ethnic identity", with at least implicit separatist demands vis-a-vis the political centre of a sovereign, independent, modern (nation-)state, is new. This potentially separatist role of ethnic identity was born roughly in the second half of the 1960s.³⁶ The dominant role of ethnic identity (or disintegration) emerged as the process of integration slowed down at about the same time in North America, Western Europe, and in the non-Western World - in the mid-60s.

It is not as if ethnicity has been 'reborn', but the 'political role of ethnic identity is emerging as an available aggregating identity by which to challenge the political centre. Ethnic identity, originally an historical phenomenon, assumes a political role when it becomes the most readily available group identity for the realization of individual aspirations for goods and freedoms.³⁷

Walker Connor also coined the term 'ethno-nationalism' which refers to the exercise of the right to self-determination by an ethnic group. The terms also implies "internal discord predicated upon ethnic identity," says Connor. The cases of Biafra, Bangladesh, the Scots, Quebec, the Basques, Eritrea, all are examples of ethnic self-determination struggle. *However, Dov Ronen says that the ethnic groups are not the cause of the quest for self-determination, but its effect.*³⁸ The groups that rise in the quest for self-determination are seen as disintegrating forces, balkanizing forces, but Dov Ronen says that "these

³⁶ Ibid., p.40.

³⁷ Ibid., p.40.

³⁸ Ibid., p.40.

groups are no more or less disruptive, no more and no less violent than other groups in the past, for they too are engaged in fighting an age old opponent - the political centre.³⁹

Thus, as Ronen says, there are now several types of self-determination which can be used or misused in several ways. Used in the most positive way, self-determination subserves the political value of democratic pluralism, which permits productive, mutually enriching co-existence of different composite societies. Notwithstanding the widely varying views expressed on ethno-nationalism, it has to be acknowledged that the concept is most appropriately used when a community of people fight for their liberation from an alien people who have held their imperial rule through arbitrary means. The profound impact of the French Revolution in Europe unleashed forces of liberalism and strengthened the concept of democracy which is at the base of self-determination. It was a result of this that several new states (which emerged when the imperial systems of Europe collapsed) gained unification, propelled by the idea of nationalism and national self-determination.

The concept of self-determination though resting on the ideas of democracy, itself has in turn strengthened the concept of democracy. The current widespread perception that a people should have the right to determine their

³⁹ Ibid., p.52.

political status now forms an inextricable part of any democratic state. The concept of self-determination has also seen the liberation of many a people under colonial rule and the spread of democratizing tendencies and ideals universally.

In very recent times, we have seen the power and use of self-determination as evident in the unification of Germany on 3 October 1990. H.S.Chopra says,

The concept of national self-determination has doubtlessly been basic to German unification. This is one solitary example in Europe where the use of national self-determination meant not only the liberation of the GDR from the shackles of an ideological imperial power, but also its reunion with the FRG, thereby providing an answer to the German national question in the larger interests of European unity and security.⁴⁰

However, self-determination can also be a powerful force of disintegration if misused as can be seen in the case of Sudetanland when Hitler took over the area in the name of self-determination of the ethnic Germans living there during the Second World War, and also in the case of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the CIS states in our times. Self-determination can be a very destructive potential enemy of many a well-established state system, engaging various ethnic groups in a state of inter-necine warfare, which is a very unhealthy and undemocratic development.

⁴⁰ H.S.Chopra, "Unification and After", *World Focus*, (New Delhi), vol.13, no.4., April '92, p.4.

**THE GERMAN QUESTION AND
THE RELEVANCE OF NATIONAL
SELF-DETERMINATION**

*Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was likely to give offence.*

*Robert Frost
Mending Wall*

2.1 Unification of Germany under Bismarck in 1871

Joseph Tenenbaum in his book *Race and Reich* had said that "it is difficult to trace the beginning of German nationalism..., but whatever the origin, it seems an established fact that until the 19th century, the Germans were the least nationality-conscious of all the peoples of Central and Western Europe."¹ Yet in 1971, Germany was unified under Bismarck, which was a triumph of national self-determination and a reinforcement of the power of national consciousness. Nationalism was especially considered as an attribute of the French Revolution, which then has also often been marked as the fountainhead of the quest for self-determination.²

But in the course of German history, unifying attempts have often been made by many monarchs and emperors, the first great one was launched by the

¹ Joseph Tenenbaum, *Race and Reich, The story of an epoch*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1956), p.5.

² Dov Ronen, *The Quest for Self-determination*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p.9.

Holy Roman Emperor, Ferdinand I, during the Thirty Years War, and finally abandoned by 1648. Some historians have attributed Germany's late emergence as a nation-State to the lack of national consciousness and particularist tradition.³

Louis L. Snyder in his book, *Roots of German Nationalism*, had remarked:

The sense of German nationalism however, was for the most part left unsolved by the Hapsburg dynasty. Only with the octopus-like expansion of Prussia, its Hohenzollern dynasty and its able Junker agricultural nobility gave direction to the formation of what may be called Prusso-German nationalism. The roots of later German national consciousness was expressed in this Prusso-German symbiosis which gave German nationalism its form and content".⁴

Even at the time of the French Revolution, there was no perceptible expression of German nationalism. The French Revolution had found no adequate echo in the German lands and principalities. But it was the defeat at Jena which acted as a catalyst, igniting the spirit of nationalism in Prussia and which inspired Johann Gottlieb Fichte to address the people (German People) on nationalism and patriotism, giving it a moral and spiritual overtone by saying it was a part of the "Eternal Will", and inspired the nation in sacrifices for "the

³ David Calleo, *The German Problem Reconsidered* (Cambridge University Press, 1978), p.4.

⁴ Louis L. Snyder, *Roots of German Nationalism*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), p.VII.

divine trinity of race, language and nation".⁵

Whatever has been said of the belated emergence of the German sense of nationalism and the emphasis on cultural nationalism which flourished in the time of Fichte and Herder, it can be said without doubt that the economic factor has been the most important factor in early German nationalism. With the formation of the Customs Union in 1834 and its renewal in 1865, Prussia was economically united with the many small German States, which later on led to cultural and political unity brought about by festivals as well as development of forms of political organisation transcending state boundaries.⁶ Much of the credit of the 1871 unification of Germany goes to Count Otto von Bismarck (who played the nationalist card initiated by the Liberals).⁷ With great skill in foreign policy and equally skilful economic and militaristic strategies, Bismarck succeeded on 15 January 1871, to proclaim a United German Empire under King William I of Prussia. However, the conducive environment for Bismarck's move was prepared by the early German nationalists who were themselves intellectuals like Friedrich List, Johann Gottfried Herder, Fichte, Hegel, and of course the French Revolution and

⁵ Joseph Tenenbaum, *Ibid.* n.1, p.6.

⁶ Mary Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, (Cambridge: 1992), p.114.

⁷ In fact, Mary Fulbrook went so far as to say that 1871 was less a result or expression of any budding German nationalism than form of Prussian expansionism Mary Fulbrook, *ibid.* n.6, p.114.

Napoleon himself. Before Napoleon's incursion into Germany, it was considered only as a geographical expression alluding to some three hundred separate political units. Napoleon helped simplify the political structure, but with his rule came influence of the French ways of life in Germany against which Herder (one of the earliest German nationalists) expressed his opposition. He urged his fellow Germans to cease their imitation of French ways and turn instead to the contemplation of their own national heritage. He also called for a return to German native roots and for an accent upon the life of the Volk.⁸ Jahn, Fichte, the German brothers and Hegel, including List, were all instrumental in the discovery and reviving the German spirit and solidifying German nationalism.⁹ List has been particularly important in influencing Bismarck in his drive for national unification. His propaganda for *Zollverein*, which was to include all German states, fired the imagination of Germany's political leaders and administrators and turned their thoughts to a unified political economy.¹⁰

However, the nationalist demand for unification of Germany had existed even before 1871. According to Ferenc A. Valli, prior to the establishment of the Bismarckian Reich, Germany was essentially partitioned only politically but

⁸ Louis L. Snyder, *ibid.* n.4, p.3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.4.

this did not affect spiritual and cultural unity between the inhabitants of the different German states. He also added that while Germany was divided, there continued to exist basic unity through German art, literature and science following the end of the 18th century. Writers, poets, scientists, administrators and students frequently emigrated from one German State to another and their circulation prompted the development of a common German cultural and spiritual heritage.¹¹ Napoleon had, in a way, done Germany a favour in that his grand political design resulted in the development of cultural cohesion¹² much before its political unification. The wars of liberation against France before 1815 also served to transform the cultural nationalism fostered by Herder into political nationalism, which however, could not subdue the local and regional loyalties which continued to be very strong and important. The year 1848 is known as a year of revolutions in Europe,¹³ and in Germany also, revolutionaries belonging to different strands were making political demands, one group of nationalists, among them demanded unification of Germany, but without any success. A.J.P. Taylor called 1848 "a turning point where Germany failed to turn". But even at this early stage, the notions of freedom, independence and self-determination were well used by the liberals

¹¹ Ferenc A. Valli, *The Quest for a United Germany*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1967), p.262.

¹² Ibid., p.263.

¹³ Mary Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, ibid. n.6, p.103.

in Germany (extending support to the duchies against their takeover by the King of Denmark) as well as by Bismarck, as seen in the referendum held in Schleswig-Holstein in 1864 (with Austria's active support). However, in 1871, when German unity finally came about "it was more an exercise from above, brought about by a treaty among the princes, rather than by a popular decision from below".¹⁴ It was a triumph of Prussian patriotic fervour and militaristic nationalism rather than a vindication of liberal ideals of freedom and self-determination.

2.2 End of World War I and Consequent Liquidation of Imperial Systems

Notwithstanding the treaty, peace continued to elude Germany as well as Europe as a whole. There was also a shift from liberalism. The state power was concentrated in the hands of a few top men - the Emperor, the Chancellor, ministers, senior officials and leading figures in the army¹⁵ which eventually proved to be catastrophic for German, as well as European, politics. However, united Germany continued to rapidly grow strong and powerful economically and politically and proved to be a force in European and world affairs.

¹⁴ A. Kappler and Adriane Grevel, eds., *Facts about Germany*, (Frankfurt: Societäts Verlag, 1993).

¹⁵ Mary Fulbrook, *ibid.*, n.6, p.190.

The First World War in 1914 was also sparked off by an incident involving the question of Nationalism (the assassination of the Austrian heir - Archduke Franz Ferdinand by a Bosnian nationalist), which induced Germany to use the opportunity for territorial expansion, until finally in 1918 it was defeated militarily leading to a political collapse, which then impelled Germany to become a republic. The Treaty of Versailles which formally ended the war in 1918 is particularly important, for president Wilson's Fourteen Points which, for the first time in world politics, mentioned self-determination of the people. With the Treaty of Versailles there also came about liquidation of the imperial systems in Europe and the growth of the party system and political democracy. However, the Weimar Republic was seen as a "republic without republicans".¹⁶ And though multi party system existed, there were popular forces more or less hostile to a democratic state in Germany. Without doubt these anti-democratic tendencies and Prussian militaristic attitudes played a part in facilitating Hitler's rise to power in 1933. The peace of 1919 bore heavy costs to Germany, for it had to surrender the Saarland, the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine and the Rhur area to France. It is however, noteworthy that the population of the Saarland voted overwhelmingly in favour of its return to Germany in the referendum of 1935.

One could perhaps say that in the aftermath of the First World War, with the

¹⁶*Facts about Germany*, ibid. n.13, p.93.

liquidation of imperial systems in Europe, the principle of self determination became applicable and it transformed Europe into Europe of the nation states. That however, did not mean that Europe automatically became the mainspring of political democracy. Indeed, throughout the inter-war period democracy continued to be on trial in Europe. However, the concept of self-determination stirred up the movements for liberation in the European colonies (outside of Europe) during the inter-war period, of which the resultant political change occurred only after the Second World War.

2.3 Use and Misuse of the Concept in the 1930's and during the Second World War

There is, however, no gainsaying the fact that the concept of self-determination has not always been used in a constructive way. In fact, it has often been misused. The most important incident which eventually led to the outbreak of the Second World War, was the German occupation of the Sudetanland in Czechoslovakia in 1938, in the frenzied application of self-determination of the Germans living there. In pursuit of his aim of creating a lebensraum for the Germans, Hitler rode roughshod over principle of self-determination, encouraged by the jingoistic notions then sweeping through Germany. However, it was obvious that Nazi nationalism and ambitions differed from the more conventional considerations and aspirations of orthodox German

nationalists.¹⁷ It was, however, pathetic that the champions of liberalism, France and Britain, owing to their narrow political considerations, allowed the misdeed to happen by looking the other way and ignoring the violation of right of the self-determination of the victims by Hitler.

With the invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, the Second World War began and it lasted five and a half years. It was won by the Allied Powers only after enormous destruction of life and property in Europe as well as in other areas where war spread between the Allied Powers and the Axis Powers.

It is also well known that both the First and Second World Wars were fuelled by overzealous nationalism. Perhaps, nationalism itself is not such a pernicious doctrine. For, in its healthy form, it is basic to the continued survival of each nation. Excessive nationalism, which impinges upon the genuine national interest of other nations has to be condemned. This is only a degenerate form of nationalism, which seeks to assert its superiority over others in terms of race, ethnicity, religion and creed, resulting in the contest for power and thus war.

It may also have to be acknowledged that nationalism itself was the basis for disintegration of the imperial systems in Europe and the founding of the

¹⁷ Mary Fulbrook, *ibid.* n.6, p.190.

nation states. Yet ironically it (albeit its degenerate form) also became the basis of fascism and Nazism as opposed to democracy and republicanism. It has often been said that the Weimar Republic was a Republic without Republicans.

2.4 Dismemberment of Germany and Establishment of FRG and GDR

The end of the Second World War was brought about by the defeat of Germany which consequently led to its dismemberment, after seventy years as a united and powerful nation. The victorious powers, the US, the UK, the Soviet Union and France assumed supreme authority and occupation of the territory of Germany. Germany was divided among them into four occupation zones and Berlin also into four sectors after the Postdam Conference in 1945 with the Western Allies occupying western side of Germany and western part of Berlin and the Soviet Union, the eastern part of Germany and eastern Berlin. Though the Allied powers had a common aim in disarming and demilitarizing Germany, it was not long before differences among them began to show up. The act of the Soviet Union in expanding its own as well as Poland's frontiers towards Germany resulted in a much reduced German territory. But what dismayed the Western powers and ultimately became the basis of the cold war was Stalin's decision to Sovietize and set up Communist, Socialist System in its zone of occupation. This, and differences on many other issues sealed the cold war relations which had been developing between the Soviet Union and

the Western Allies.

It also resulted in the amalgamation of the provisional decision and arrangements of the victors over Germany and thus foundations of different systems and different attitudes were laid in Western and Eastern Germany by the occupying powers of the respective zones. But even until 1949, there was every reason to believe that the division and redrawing of the country's borders were only temporary. However, with an increasing chill and an ever-widening hiatus in ideological orientation between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies, this soon proved to be otherwise. In fact, the inception of the FRG in 1949 was soon followed by the formal establishment of the GDR. For the next four decades, two very different Germanies emerged, with opposing systems of government.

The formation of the government of the FRG was "started as a proposal at the six-nation London Conference in 1948 for the creation of a government encompassing the Western occupation zones."¹⁸ The three Western governments called upon the West Germans to convene a constituent assembly that would draft a constitution for a new government and submit it to the population for ratification. This new government would operate, they specified,

¹⁸ Henry Ashby Turner Jr., *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, (Yale University Press, 1992), p.33.

within the confines of an occupation statute that would closely circumscribe its authority and reserve sovereign powers to the occupying countries.

This proposal initially encountered considerable hesitation in German political circles. Many political leaders in Western Germany viewed with dismay the drastic limitations which the draft occupation statute would impose on the authority of a new German government. It seemed to them that they were being asked to set up a mere regional administrative apparatus for the convenience of the occupiers. The apparatus's acceptance would cast doubt on their commitment to the goals of a unified government for the entire country. There was a widespread reluctance to write a new constitution for only part of the country, as the occupying powers proposed, lest that make eventual reunification more difficult...¹⁹

However, the Berlin blockade of 1948-49 convinced the West Germans that the Soviets were more interested in their own Communist expansion and some of the West German politicians sharing the same views as the Allied powers insisted that "the best hope for a united and free Germany lay in establishing a new government for at least part of the country so as to bring about political stability on a democratic foundation and ensure rapid economic recovery."²⁰ Thus, on 23 May 1949, the FRG officially came into being with the constitution known as "Basic law" in order to emphasize its provisional character.

A week after the proclamation of the Basic Law in Bonn, a people's council appointed by the peoples Congress approved a draft constitution for the

¹⁹ Ibid. n.17, p.34.

²⁰ Ibid., p.34.

formation of a separate East German government. Then, on 7 October 1949, following installation of the first cabinet of the Federal Republic, the Peoples' Congress unanimously approved the formation of a German Democratic Republic (Deutsche Demokratische Republik). The SED (which was formed by the merger of the East German SPD and the KPD) became the major party overshadowing the non-Marxist parties which however underwent transformation into an authoritarian party dominated by functionaries subservient to Moscow.²¹ Along with these organizational changes came an important ideological shift on the part of the SED. Its founders pledge to seek a distinctively German path to socialism was soon forgotten. Instead, the goal became emulation of the USSR and construction of a people's democracy similar to that of the regimes set up with Soviet backing in Eastern Europe.²²

While in Western Germany the allies were busy in re-educating the people in liberal democratic ideas and were laying the foundation of democratic system, in the GDR indoctrination in Marxism began. Leninism in schools and universities became a compulsory part of the curriculum and repressive methods of rule were soon applied throughout GDR by the SED-dominated civil administration. Those holding or aspiring to positions in the bureaucracy, judiciary or the school system had to pass ideological tests. An elaborate

²¹ *Facts about Germany*, *ibid* n.13, p.102.

²² Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., *Ibid* n.17, p.47.

political police apparatus kept the population under close surveillance.

Though in formal respects, the governmental institutions provided for by the Constitution of the GDR generally paralleled those of the FRG, with the existence of the Parliament as the chief authority and a system of proportional representation under a secret ballot, adult franchise (all citizens over eighteen years of age were entitled to vote), yet the two Germanies emerged to be two very different States, with one being the ideological antithesis of the other, as well as in the social and economic aspect. A cursory explanation of this phenomenon is that the two Germanies were each respectively mirrors of the Western liberal system and Soviet authoritarian system and that they were the countries which were the by-products of the cold war and also where the cold war manifested itself most intensely.²³

From the 1950's the FRG developed into a politically stable and economically prosperous capitalist its democracy and in the east, the GDR proved to be economically the most "progressive" and productive state of the Communist bloc, and one of the Soviet Union's strong supporters and allies.²⁴ Although very real, the division of Germany was not conceived as irreversible. The existence of two Germanies only became consolidated in a series of stages: the

²³ Ibid., pp.47-48.

²⁴ Mary Fulbrook, *ibid*, n.6, p.204.

failure of reunification initiative in 1952, the incorporation into a range of economic, political and military alliances in the East and West respectively in the course of the 1950s and the regaining of full sovereignty in 1955, the building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961, when division was literally sealed in concrete, with the closing of the last means of escape from east to west, the Ostpolitik of the early 1970's, which culminated in mutual recognition in 1972 and entry as full members of UN in 1973, and the development of relations between the two German States in the later 1970s and 1980s, which were distinctively different from the relations between any other two separate and sovereign States.²⁵ Meanwhile throughout all these years, nearly five decades - the German question - the issue of German division - was a burning question which was tossed into the forefront with the East German revolution of 1989 and the opening of the Berlin Wall.

2.5 FRG's Deutschland Politik and GDR's Abgrenzungs Politik

During the 1950s, 1960s and until the time Willy Brandt took over as the Federal Chancellor, West Germany refused to recognize the existence of East Germany (GDR) and continued to think of itself as the only Germany, representative of all the German citizens, and of GDR as just a zone; the eastern zone or the 'Soviet Zone', or as 'Central Germany', to distinguish it from the territories beyond the Oder-Neisse line. Accordingly, most Germans

²⁵ Mary Fulbrook, *ibid.* n.6, pp. 211-212.

foresaw reunification as *Anschluss* of East to West Germany. The Basic Law, dedicated to "preserve the national and political unity" of the German people, even provided for an extension of its own application to "other parts of Germany...on their accession" (Art. 23).²⁶ However, the GDR was increasing its efforts to detach itself from West Germany and emphasizing its independent socialist Communist status even as West Germany was gradually perceived as a partner (rather than a defeated enemy) in the Western cause of economic reconstruction, establishment of market economy and a political system based on democratic liberalism and freedom of choice. Thus, the GDR's construction of the Berlin Wall (to prevent East Germans from migrating to the West), and the making of laws restricting visits to the West such as a difficult visa procedure as well as the de-emphasizing the concept of Germanness and a stress on the sense of Community of Socialist workers. The socio-economic order was characterized by nationalization of major sectors and even agriculture was characterized by Socialist enterprises. The GDR continued to emphasize its Socialist-Communist character and the drastic hardening on these lines were seen especially during the June 1953 uprising as well as in 1968, after the attempted revolution in Czechoslovakia, which frightened the GDR and made it tighten its laws, more and more conforming to the Soviet model. "It was natural therefore that the SED leaders were seen in the West as henchmen of the detested occupying power and oppressors of

²⁶ Ferenc A, Valli, *ibid.*, n.11, p.263-64.

their own countrymen",²⁷ remarked Alfred Grosser.

With the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Federal Republic and the Soviet Union in 1954, there were two rival German Ambassadors in Moscow. To prevent the situation recurring all over the world, with the two German States, appearing on an equal footing in international life, the Federal Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer declared to the Bundestag on his return from Moscow that the establishment by any other state of diplomatic relations with the "so called German Democratic Republic" would be considered an unfriendly act by the Federal Republic since it would contribute to accentuating the division of Germany, and thus contradict the aim of the FRG which is eventual establishment of a United Germany. This marks the origin of what came to be called the "Hallstein Doctrine". In 1957, the FRG proclaimed its opinion that a peaceful reunification of Germany could only take place through a rapprochement between the two German States. In spite of the GDR's continuing efforts to cut itself off completely from the West, the German question and debates on the division and possible ways of reuniting the two Germanies went on. However, with the GDR's intransigent position and with no positive signal from the Soviet Union (which was commonly known to be

²⁷ Alfred Grosser, *Germany in Our Time, A Political History of the Post War Years*, Translated by Paul Stephenson, (London: Pall Mall, 1971), p.317.

directing foreign policies of its bloc members), it was all in vain. But in April 1969, when Willy Brandt became West German Chancellor, all that changed. Taking advantage of the detente and a better atmosphere between the East and the West, he initiated a series of changes in policy, the most famous of which was his Ostpolitik. It was along the same lines that De Gaulle had pointed, "we are to advance from a detente to an understanding, and from that to a state of cooperation".²⁸ This, as well as the renaming of the Federal Ministry of All-German Affairs into Ministry of Internal German Relations also, in a way, was a very important development for it signified the fulfilment of a certain line of development and the abandonment of the idea of Germany a single state.²⁹

The concept of status quo was central to the Ostpolitik policy and Chancellor Brandt seemed prepared to accept facts as they were, from the Polish frontier, to the division of Germany into two States³⁰ and giving East Germany (the GDR) a recognition of the reality of its existence. Thus, in some political circles of the FRG, there was criticism that accepting Ostpolitik and Status quo meant removing all hope of change. However, even in the midst of negotiations and during as well as after the signing of the Basic Treaty in

²⁸ Alfred Grosser, *ibid.* n.26, p.322.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.324.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.325.

1972, the Federal government never missed the opportunity to reiterate its intention to pursue German unity on the basis of free self-determination of the German people. But while the GDR and especially East Berlin benefited both materially and financially from the follow up agreements to the Basic Treaty, but on the other hand the East German regime, meticulously kept its ideological distance.³¹ Nonetheless, the FRG continued its policy of openness and Brandt's successors, Helmut Schmidt and Helmut Kohl, continued their efforts to improve relations.

However, the 1980s was marked by fresh conflicts in Eastern Europe and an increasing coolness between the two super powers. The 1980s was also characterized by an escalation in arms race and the FRG had to maintain a difficult balancing act between being loyal to its Western partners and keeping good relations between the two Germanies. At around the same time when West Germany was shaken by a deluge of peace movements and the emergence of the Greens, protest groups in East Germany, which through the initiative of the Church, (turning swords into plough-shares), had become more and more vociferous since early 1982, which would eventually lead to the disintegration of the entire Socialist system.³²

³¹ *Facts about Germany*, p.112.

³² Alfred Grosser, *ibid.* n.26, p.324.

Thus it could be said that from 1973 (the start of Ostpolitik) to 1989, inter-German relations were concerned less with potential reunification and rather more with the improvement of relations between the two countries as separate States having a unique state of relationship,³³ (though of course the aim of the FRG for eventual unification was always in the background).

2.6 Systemic Change and Disintegration of the USSR

The historic new systemic changes, brought about in the late 1980s by Mikhail Gorbachev through his Perestroika, Glasnost and his "New Thinking" released cataclysmic results in the world of international politics and in Europe especially which ultimately led to the crumbling of the Soviet Empire and the toppling of the Communist government of the GDR. A wave of revolutions swept Europe and East Germany, especially, which arose like a nemesis for the GDR government after a lapse of nearly four decades since the unsuccessful uprising of June 1953. This time the GDR could not count on the Soviet Union for support in quashing the protests and revolutions of the people against an oppressive government which had kept them away from their relatives and which had split families by a concrete wall for nearly four decades.

It should not be forgotten that the German question had been central to the Cold War, which by 1948 was in full operation. Because each of the Superpowers have irreconcilable differences and each side having their own

³³ Mary Fulbrook, *ibid.*, n.6., p. 716.

piece of Germany moulded in accordance with their own ideological orientations, the question of German unity, though kept alive throughout, was definitely daunting as each side was unwilling to relinquish their own hold over their possessions. Thus, for forty five years, the Cold War raged on, with Germany as its epicentre, only to be ended by the collapse of Communism in USSR and its (Communism's) consequent defeat in the GDR, culminating in the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989.

Conditions were set, in order that Germany may be unified again, and the USSR was especially anxious that the United Germany, even if it has to be a member of NATO, would stand committed to its renunciation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons as well as the reduction of the conventional forces by forty per cent. Although this particular condition was originally conceived as a step and part of the CFE agreement in Europe, it "was now to be dealt with as an element in the overall arrangements leading to unity".³⁴

³⁴ Karl Kaiser, "Germany's Unification", *Foreign Affairs*, (New York), vol 70, no1, 1991, p. 198.

**ACTUALIZATION OF
GERMAN UNIFICATION**

*Healing is a matter of time but it is sometimes
also a matter of opportunity*

*Hippokrates
Precepts - Chapter I*

3.1 German Nationality and Resurgent Nationalism in the 1980s

A West German national consciousness had developed which formed the underpinning of the federal government's foreign policy in the 1970's.¹ The issue of national identity and national consciousness also worries many modern Germans; "rightly", says Harold James, "since the concept of Germany has an obviously peculiar history".² "The new, post war - peculiarity of German nationalism is often thought to be simply its non-existence".³ This statement may not be absolutely right, for the question of German nationalism and German identity has to be looked at in the context of the post ~~S~~ ~~e~~ ~~c~~ ~~o~~ ~~n~~ ~~d~~ ~~W~~ ~~o~~ ~~r~~ ~~d~~ ~~W~~ ~~a~~ ~~r~~. "After the Second World War, in the later 1940's, German identity appeared severely discredited, even to many Germans. This is easily the most striking case of reaction to the immediate past. For a while, it seemed that there had really been a 'zero hour' (*Stunde Null*) in which Germanness was

¹ V.R.Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.230.

² Harold James, *A German Identity, 1770-1990* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), p.1.

³ *Ibid.*, p.1.

removed from the lexicon of political conduct".⁴ Even at the very start, at the beginning of the emergence of German nationalism it was more of "a natural awakening that took place among a relatively limited cultural class".⁵

"German nationalism had appeared first without any political content, as an expression of a sense of cultural community...(and only) as a reaction to the French Revolution, to invasion and occupation by the revolutionary and Napoleonic armies..., it acquired a political edge".⁶

However, the common impression that Germans are the least nationality conscious is absolutely wrong. Even Harold James had, in so many words, said later in the same book (see footnote 2), that Germans themselves were obsessed with the nationality question and "insistently pose themselves the question - what constituted national identity?".⁷ It could be said that the Germans were not permitted or rather they did not allow themselves to prevent political nationalism so soon after the defeat for they were trying to win back the world's, especially the western nations' confidence in them as democrats and not to raise suspicions about a possibility of re-emergent chauvinism. Thus the Germans, in the post Second World War period appeared a subdued lot, a defeated nation who would rather, for the time

⁴ Ibid., p.216.

⁵ Ibid., p.38.

⁶ Ibid., p.216.

⁷ Ibid., p.217.

being, forget about nationalism because it had been too recently associated with Nazism and totalitarianism which had led them to ruin and humiliation. However, to say that German nationalism does not exist (at least in the immediate post war period) is to be totally wrong for V.R. Berghahn says as early as the 1950's, groups and ex-servicemen's associations began to mushroom and they were basically all nationalists with visions of their country's future.⁸ The very fact that the main aim of early West German leaders, especially Konrad Adenauer, had been reunification of Germany and his policy of West Germany being the sole representative of all Germans stood testimony to that fact that the concept of a German identity, of German nationality and German unity was very much alive throughout the 1950's and 1960's, as was evident from the sporadic debates on the German question and German unity. ~~and~~ Though the attempts to unite East and West Germany around the conference table to discuss the problem of German unification were never completely abandoned, the overall political climate between the superpowers was such as to make a breakthrough impossible.⁹

It was only in the 1970's that a different trend emerged in the West German foreign policy which hinged on the oneness of the German identity, whether in the East or the West. However, it could be said that even though

⁸ V.R. Berghahn, *Ibid.*, n.1, p.211.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.233.

the cultural and spiritual unity cannot be denied it has always been a tendency of the Germans to be politically divided. Ferenc A.Valli in 1967 said that during the 1960's and 1970's (and in fact till the moment of unification in 1990), Germany was not only divided politically, but culturally and spiritually as well. The exchange of persons and ideas was artificially impeded by physical barriers and thus the division between the two parts of Germany was relatively more strict and calamitous than any previous political separation.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the consciousness of a German ethnic identity had never been completely lost and it was present in the German mind and especially in the hearts of German political leaders like Konrad Adenauer who felt that it was their duty to keep alive this consciousness on behalf of their fellow Germans in the east who were increasingly indoctrinated in communist ideology and suppression of their Germanness. However, though the consciousness of a German ethnic identity was always there, there was hardly any indication of a German nationalism or a German national pride. In fact there was every indication to the contrary. Public opinion surveys conclude that most Germans had less national pride than other European peoples. It could even be said that the Germans looked for other alternative ways, such as concentrating their efforts on economic success, to establish their legitimacy as a nation.

¹⁰ Ferenc A.Valli., *The Quest for a United Germany.*, (Baltimore, John Hopkins press, 1967), p.263.

The 1980's, however, saw a resurgence of nationalism and ethnic pride worldwide and Germany was also not immune to this trend. The Federal Chancellor, Helmut Kohl himself remarked at his acceptance speech when presented with the Jawaharlal Nehru Award at New Delhi, that "after the collapse of communism, nations are recalling their national ethnic and religious traditions". The 1980's also saw an ascendance of nationalism of pride in their ethnic identity and their economic achievement despite total destruction forty years earlier, in West Germany, which, as a consequent fed more fuel into the national German question and gave more urgency to the issue of German unity. This was all but in the West, for the Germans in the East were not free to express themselves under a rigid totalitarian regime. It showed while West Germany was established on the basis of democratic liberalism with the main aim of eventual All-German Unity, the G.D.R. was established primarily with the aim of strengthening and expanding communism, even if it had to do so by applying force on the people, backed by the military might of the USSR. It was only with the collapse of Communism in the USSR that the people of the GDR could demonstrate and express their views and opinion on the question of German identity and German unity. Thus, we can say that it is only in consideration of the GDR that the emergence of nationalist consciousness can be termed new where-as the phenomenon has an element of continuity in the West German area, where it

was always expressed in speeches of political leaders and especially the Chancellors who have continuously worked towards German unity on the basis of German ethnic identity.

3.2 East Germans' Democratic Awakening

The changes in East - West relations which marked the end of the cold-war ideological conflict and which ultimately brought down the barrier separating East Germany from the West Germany were started by the structural and systemic changes in the Soviet Union which Gorbachev introduced when he came to power - *glasnost* and *perestroika*. These structural reforms within the communist system soon proved to be detrimental, for soon they led to the collapse of the whole communist system. Even before disintegration of the USSR, there was a rapprochement between the West and Gorbachev, which allowed for thawing of relations. At the same time, while Gorbachev was moving closer to the West, the GDR witnessed mass exodus of people to West Germany, taking advantage of the open borders of the reform-minded Hungarian political regime. "The really serious cost of the Wall was the people's basic right to travel; the wall had worked", according to H.G. Peter Wallach and Ronald A Fransisco because it had kept the GDR's citizens in the GDR.

They toiled and created a system that outperformed that of every other communist country in the world.

Nevertheless, everyone in the GDR knew that things were better in the West. West Germans were the salient reference, and the GDR never fared well in the comparison.¹¹

Thus when Hungary offered an open door to vacationing GDR citizens for the first time in 1989, East Germans were quick to take the opportunity to use it (Hungary) as a thoroughfare to the West. By September 1989, around seven thousand GDR citizens travelled from Hungary through Austria to West Germany. "All this seemed incongruous with the experience of the Soviet bloc, since 1953, when any challenge to the stability of the communist regime was summarily erased with Soviet tanks. The policy was even formalized in 1968 as the 'Brezhnev Doctrine.' But in 1989, the USSR did nothing and said nothing except that the matter in Hungary concerned only the states involved".¹²

The collapse and failure of the GDR regime (the SED-Socialist Unity Party) could not be attributed to a single event but rather was the result of many events that lay far beyond the control of the country's leaders which constantly and increasingly pressured the GDR from below, such as, "...the mass exodus of East Germans to the Federal Republic, the constantly increasing articulation

¹¹ H.G.Peter Wallach and Ronald A. Francisco, *United Germany - The Past, Politics, Prospects*, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1992), p.28.

¹² Ibid., p.29.

of public criticism through newly formed opposition groups and the mass demonstrations".¹³ The pressure to act, which emanated from the fugitives and the increasing international attention forced Honecker to yield to the demands of the refugees step by step. "A second catalyst of this phase of upheaval, which set the direction for the political developments was the activities of the initially illegal opposition groups".¹⁴

Though opposition groups had existed in the GDR since the mid 1970's and increasingly in the 1980's under the Protestant Church, most of them acted singly and it was only by 1989, in the light of the mass exodus that many of them got united. In Leipzig, a 'New Forum' was created, and in Berlin, 'Democracy Now'; both called upon the East German people to remain in their own country and fight for a better future from there itself. The political leadership of the GDR initially responded to the demonstrations and actions of these opposition groups with bans and arrests but under the pressure of protesters and demonstrations it was forced to set those arrested free. Simultaneously with the mass exodus and the formation of oppositional groups whose activities are spread throughout the GDR, went the growing mass demonstrations which started early in October. Hannelore Horn remarked that

¹³ Hannelore Horn, "Collapse from Internal Weakness - The GDR from October 1989 to March 1990" in Dieter Grosser, ed., *German Unification - The Unexpected Challenge* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1992), p.56.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.57.

they were the third and most important component that brought the SED regime to its knees,¹⁵ (the first two being, the mass exodus of East Germans to the Federal Republic, and the constantly increasing articulation of public criticism through newly formed opposition groups).

However, in the views of the GDR political leadership, "the real culprit was Gorbachev".¹⁶ Having relied on the Brezhnev Doctrine, the GDR felt betrayed when no support was forthcoming from the USSR to stifle and crush the upheavals. On his part Gorbachev decided that the communist system needed structural reforms in order to be able to achieve the kind of economic success which the Western nations had evidently attained. However, Honecker was openly contemptuous of Gorbachev's policies, and cited East Germany's economic success as evidence that no changes were needed. In the autumn of 1989, Honecker became a victim of his own intransigence.¹⁷

One of the reasons for the collapse of the SED regime could as well be its inherent weakness, which led the SED leaders to retreat rather than defend the system in the face of the onslaught by the people, for the political leadership and legitimacy of the system of the GDR had never been accepted

¹⁵ Ibid., p.58.

¹⁶ H.G.Peter Wallach and Ronald A.Franscisco., Ibid, n.11, p.35.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.34.

by an overwhelming majority of the population.¹⁸ "The denial of human rights and civil rights, the repressive control of the people's educational and professional development and the destruction and disregard of customary values, as well as the lack of economic efficiency, all caused dissatisfaction with, and rejection of the system.... It increased after the building of the Berlin wall..., No longer could active political opponents withdraw by escaping; rather they formed a genuine and growing potential for opposition. In this sense, the building of the wall proved indeed to be a boomerang".¹⁹

Consequently, as a reaction to the pressure in 1989, the inflexible rigid Honecker was replaced by Egon Krenz who started implementation of Perestroika in the GDR as an appeasement to the growing opposition, which however brought out serious divisions within the SED, thereby weakening the credibility of the SED leadership. Hannelore Horn has said that "the political inflexibility of a super-annuated party unity, opportunistic self-destruction and an increased knowledge of the unlawful and irregular behaviour of leading officials weakened the ability of the party to act to such a degree that it fell into a state of paralysis. The effective downfall of the SED meant that the political system lost its Central supporting pillar, and thus the crucial

¹⁸ Hannelorn Horn, *Ibid.*, n.13, pp.59-60.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.60.

transformation of the system occurred ,²⁰ thereby resulting in a democratic government in the first and last democratic election ever to take place in the GDR (March 1990), which ultimately paved the way for a peaceful, bloodless unification of Germany on 3rd October 1990.

3.3 A Mandate by the East Germans

"When the desire for democratic liberty and national-self- determination concur, the combination can be irresistible and revolutionary. In Central Europe - including East Germany-by contrast, the communist rulers denied both self-determination and liberty".²¹

This was exactly the situation and the mood of the people in East Germany in 1989. This exact set of circumstances was of course brought on by many events but most importantly, the withdrawal of the USSR from the cold war, which left communist countries previously under its shade, unprotected and unsupported in their repressive action on their own people and which presented them with a *fait accompli* so that they either follow suit and implement reforms (like Hungary), or like the GDR remain intransigent till the eleventh hour which by then the people had already realized that they could

²⁰ Ibid., n.13., p.61.

²¹ David Gress, "The Politics of German Reunification", in *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, 38:1 (1991), p.141.

get more than just reforms within the same system. The goal and demands of the protests and demonstrations, shifted from liberal reforms in the GDR, to free elections, to unification with the FRG. As before, people demanded free elections, the overthrow of the SED regime, the punishment of criminal and corrupt members of the old leadership and demonstrators not only shouted "we are *the* people" but later on also "we are *one* people" and "Germany, united Fatherland".²²

The politicians and political parties in West Germany seemed to sense and understand the mood of the people and the situation and were quick to react. Political parties from West Germany began making moves towards the numerous parties which have sprung up in the East and began forming alliances with them. The West German CDU (which had formed an alliance with the GDR's CDU) presented a political packaged deal: "Vote for the GDR's CDU, (or) Alliance for Germany, and you will also gain the FRG's CDU commitment to rapid unification:".²³ With the landslide victory of the CDU and its allies in the 18th March, 1990 elections to the Volkskammer the path was cleared for the SPD-CDU coalition to pursue negotiations with Bonn and to continue steps to unify the two countries in 1990. It was thus clear that the

²² Dieter Grosser, "The Dynamics of German Reunification", in Dieter Grosser, ed., *German Unification, The unexpected Challenge*, (Westport: Berg Publishers, 1992), p.17.

²³ H.G.Peter Wallach and Ronald A. Francisco, *Ibid.*, n.11, p.54.

people of the GDR wanted to end their long separation from the rest of Germany and that the rest of the world might now accept the restoration of a whole Germany,²⁴ and the result of the March 1990 elections was a clear mandate of the people.

3.4 Unification: Self-Determination Fulfilled

The success of the East Germans CDU made the task of negotiation for economic unification between the two Germanies much easier. Lothar de Maiziere (the leader of the grand coalition in the GDR) and Helmut Kohl had already agreed that the two Germanies would enter monetary, economic and social union on 1 July , 1990. There would be a currency exchange rate of 1 Mark = 1 Deutschmark for wages, pensions and the first tranche of private savings. Otherwise it would be 2:1, though the decision on the exchange rate was taken for political and psychological reasons rather than economic grounds (the East German mark was to be drastically over - valued in order to maintain morale and keep the population in the East)²⁵; it nevertheless failed to stop the rapid increase of emigration to the West and the rapid deterioration of the Eastern economy. The question of property rights, a blazing issue, was left out of the economic treaty.

²⁴ Ibid., p.59.

²⁵ Jonathan Osmond, *German Reunification. A reference guide and Commentary* (Essex: Longman Group U.K.Ltd. 1992), p.61.

The negotiations toward the Economic Treaty were soon intertwined with those for a Treaty on political unification. On 12 April, de Maiziere coalition had clearly agreed to pursue unification under Article 23 of the West German Basic Law. The fact that emigration to the West was once more increasing helped to persuade both sides of the need for action. The choice of article 23 also prevented a rapid fulfilment of the desire to unify. This article included for just such an eventuality, allowed the Federal Republic government to simply accept additional Länder under the Basic Law. The alternately acceptable constitutional procedure, unification under Article 146 of the Basic Law would have required a constitutional referendum for creating a new nation under a potentially new constitution. Simplicity though not comprehensive settlement of political issue between the two seemingly sovereign nations, was served by the acceptance of the Article 23 solution. The territory of the GDR would simply accept the conventions of the Federal Republic.²⁶

However, German unification was not just a matter for the Germans themselves. Before the total unification of the two Germanies, settlement with the occupation power was necessary. The two states were each strategically crucial to the military and economic alliances of East and West, the Warsaw Treaty Organisation (Warsaw Pact) and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) on the one hand, and the North Atlantic Treaty

²⁶ H.G. Peter Wallach and Ronald A. Francisco, *Ibid.*, n.11, pp.69-70.

Organisation (NATO) and the European Community (EC) on the other.

The main concern of the governments in Bonn and East Berlin was whether the Soviet Union would allow absorption of its ally, the GDR, into the Federal Republic and if so, on what terms. The evidence by 1989 was that President Gorbachev was applying the so-called 'Sinatra doctrine' of allowing the communist states of eastern Europe freedom of manoeuvre to do it "their way", but the complete disappearance of the GDR and the possible extension eastwards of NATO territory was perhaps too much to expect of him.²⁷

But Gorbachev's declining power and the Soviet Union's desperate financial plight in 1990 was quickly seen as a golden opportunity by Helmut Kohl who had visited Moscow in mid July 1990 and which finally decided Soviet Union's stand on the unification. Although Soviet Union was the external power which had to be conciliated, a general agreement (of the occupation powers) on the status of united Germany was essential. The Americans were more positive, but they were concerned about Germany's commitment to NATO and the future of United States' troops in Germany. The US President George Bush then proceeded to announce a programme of Two-plus Four talks which drew together the two German republics and the four occupying powers in the first official meeting held in Bonn on 5 May 1990, and negotiations continued in

²⁷ Jonathan Osmond, *Ibid.*, n.25, p.65.

Berlin, in Paris in July, and in Moscow in September. The Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany was signed on 12 September 1990. "This document was in effect a belated treaty concluding the Second World War. It brought to an end the Wartime allies' remaining responsibilities on Germany and it pledged Germany to recognize the Oder-Neisse border with Poland and refrain from making any territorial claims whatsoever against other states".²⁸

Simultaneously and coordinated with the international negotiations, was the negotiation between the two Germanies on the issue of political unification. Although not without difficulties and problems, it took less than two months, July and August, and on 31 August 1990, the voluminous unification treaty was signed; at midnight on 2-3 October 1990, the German Democratic Republic ceased to exist and its territory joined the Federal Republic of Germany. Under the terms of the unification treaty, the united city of Berlin became once more the capital of the country.

3.5 All German Elections

The first of all German elections in a united Germany was carried out in a restrained and sober manner. The issues involved in this particular election were different from the issues in the public opinion polls of December 1989 and

²⁸ Ibid., p.67.

the March 1990 elections in the GDR. Unification then was the leading election factor, a fact which the CDU promptly realized. Though the excitement of the unification coloured the thinking of the Germans, yet there also came a realization that unification and its consequent effect, in particular economic, would not be easy. The ruins; economic, ecological, organizational, - of the GDR were a burden the people of all of Germany had to carry. Issues like employment, jobs and the economy were the leading issues. The CDU, which was in favour of strengthening unity, irrespective of the cost of the unity, was given a massive mandate by the people of all of Germany, in contrast to parties like the Green and the SPD which thought that the cost of unification might be too huge and thus favoured gradual process. However, majority of Germans who voted for the CDU knew that the cost of unification would affect everyone as did the supporters of other parties, but they were also "the most likely to say that they were proud of being German in a United Germany; that they saw unification as opening up job opportunities, and that they disagreed with negative suggestions on the potentialities for success for Easterners".²⁹

Thus inspite of all the foreseen difficulties and economic costs of the unification, the Germans went ahead and voted in favour of total unification, thus fulfilling the dream of one nation - one country. For the Easterners, it was triumph, after nearly forty five years, to be able to have a say and decide

²⁹ H.G.Peter Wallach and Ronald A. Fransisco, *ibid.*, n.11, p.84.

the outcome of their future, to pick and choose their own leaders and finally be able to express their political will freely. The unity - the reunification of Germany could thus be termed as an achievement through free self-determination of the German people, in particular the East German people who had been denied this essential political right for so long. It also in a way indicated the fact that the people in the GDR did not lose their sense of unity and sense of Germanness despite the Wall and the GDR's Abgrenzungs policy.

CONCLUSION

*How easily men could make things better than they are -
if they only all tried together!*

Winston Churchill

Germany's unification on 3 October 1990 was a clear triumph of self determination. It "has doubtlessly been basic to German unification".¹ The concept of self determination, which has fascinated and occupied the political man ever since the French Revolution, has come to occupy centre stage again in the contemporary post-cold war politics. In almost every continent different communities of people are demanding the right to be masters of their own destinies, for the attainment of 'liberty' and 'happiness'; that is to enjoy self-determination.

It may be asserted here that the German unification came about not so much due to the force of any one factor, but a combination of several factors, not least being the cultural, spiritual and linguistic unity and homogeneity of the Germans, *the feeling of Germanness*, and the need to be politically united as a nation. Ofcourse, many a scholar would deny, (even Germans themselves) that there is anything such as the feeling of Germanness and perhaps believe that Germans (especially the younger generations) like to think of themselves as Europeans, having more in common with other young West Europeans than

¹ H.S.Chopra, "Unification and after", *World Focus*, (New Delhi), vol.13, n.10.4, April 1992, p.4.

with Germans living in the ex-GDR. Yet the innate potential and might of race, language and culture should not be ignored as a political force in the shaping up of a nation. Germans themselves only belatedly adopted this mode of thinking as is evident from the slogans heard in the revolution in East Germany in 1989 which started with 'we are *the* people' and only later on asserting 'we are *one* people', when the demand shifted from reform within the GDR to unification with Germany. The early leaders of the FRG like Konrad Adenauer had rightly maintained that Germans are one nation and that only the West German State legitimately represents the German nation and acts on its behalf. But the GDR (and its people, the East Germans) was separated not only by a simple political barrier but by an ideological barrier, which for 45 years sought to transform the society in East Germany so as to make it a different nation. This design, however, did not succeed, and when the opportune moment in 1989 came, the East Germans, impelled by the force of common language, and the woes of the past history brought them back into the embrace of the West Germans.

That self-determination is inextricably linked with democracy and liberalism is well known. The East Germans fought for democracy and liberal reforms and revolted against the communist regime on the basis of self-determination, which not only brought reforms in the existing GDR structure but ultimately brought about unification of the two Germanies. The desire for increasing

participation of the East Germans in democratization of the polity, which had been repressed for too long by the communist regime (imposed by the Soviet Union) and which was run only by the elite of the SED (Socialist Unity Party) eventually brought down the party hard-liners and paved the way for unification.

Ofcourse, the success of the East Germans' struggle for the exercise of their Self-determination and realization of their desire to unite with FRG, depended crucially upon the concurrence of the four War-time Allied Powers, the USA, USSR, Britain and France. In any case the speed and vigour with which the East Germans moved towards their unification with the FRG was so unprecedented that the allied powers also had no option, but to accord approval to their national unification. In this context, the Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, played a key role, which helped in German unification. Perhaps, without his support, German unification could have been a difficult feat to be realized.

As in most other political power games, here in this case as well, there was a deep link between the Soviet support for German unification, and their dire need for economic and technological assistance so as to fulfil their programme of economic reforms, *Perestroika*, and of democratization. There is no gain-saying the fact that the USSR had reached the stage of bankruptcy due mainly

to more than four-decade-long arms race with the USA. In the late 1980s, systemic collapse took place, and the Soviet Union then had to look towards the West, particularly to Germany and the USA for assistance to help it in successful transition from the state planned economy to free market economy. Gorbachev's 'New thinking', and his concepts, *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* set the trend for democratization of the communist bloc which eventually broke asunder. Process of democratization and of economic reforms began on speed in almost all the countries of Central East Europe. It was often said that if any one political leader has to be identified as the one responsible for setting Central-Eastern Europe on the track to democratization and breakdown of communism, this is Gorbachev.

German unification, accomplished in peace and freedom as has been assured by the western powers in the Paris Treaties of 1955, was an historic event, without any parallel in this century. Perhaps, it is a truism to say that German unification came about in a state of absent-mindedness. However, one other factor that has facilitated this event has been democratization of the West Germans for more than four decades. It is equally correct to state that the democratic thinking and democratic procedure in the FRG helped make unification peaceful as opposed to the usually destructive and violent ways through which most peoples in other areas are fighting for self-determination

these days.²

Another fact which strikes one while analysing the case of German unification is that the two Germanies were economically powerful in their respective blocs. West Germany was consistently the only country in West Europe which enjoyed an impressive surplus in balance of payments, and the GDR was then considered as the most industrially advanced state among the communist countries. As such, the two Germanies when united, formed the most economically powerful, culturally, and ethnologically, homogeneous entity. In other words, even if today, united Germany has to bear heavy cost of unification, yet this is paradoxically the only country in Europe which exuberates immense self confidence for emerging industrially the most competitive entity, next only to Japan and ahead of the US on the industrial plane.

Unification of Germany on the basis of Self- determination as well as the outbreak of many a conflict involving different ethnic groups in different countries fighting for self-determination has once again made this concept a hotly debated topic in different world regions. "The drive towards

² A study by William.J.Dixon reported in an article, "Democracy and Management of International Conflicts" in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, (California), vol.37, no.1, March 1993, has traced the link between democracy and peaceful settlement of disputes in international relations.

self-determination could produce a new world order or a future of chaos, or some of both".³ This was a journalist's anxious warning in 1992 when the ethnic conflict in Sarajevo reached unparalleled heights, causing the death of hundreds of people. But Sarajevo is just one among the hundreds of instances around the world where ethnic conflicts are breaking out every day, where people of different ethnic origins are either fighting the centre for independence or fighting each other in order to get control of the area, or country, or power in a country. The irony is that all these conflicts are based on the right to self-determination, so that a people, or an individual can develop to his full potential. However, instead of leading to situations conducive to development, most of these conflicts have led to disintegration of law and order, wide-spread bloodshed, misery, breakdown of economic activities, and also of emerging political processes and then fragmenting well established countries into smaller units, even if ethnologically more homogeneous, but then entrapped in a vicious circle of continuing political intolerance of minorities, breeding hatred and xenophobia.

It is also ironic to note that Germany, which benefitted the most from the concept of Self-determination, was the first to extend support in undue haste to the independence of Croatia and Slovenia from Yugoslavia, which led to

³ George T.Church, "When countries come apart", *Time* (New York), June 22, 1992.

large scale internecine ethnic feuds, thereby creating conditions of political instability in the region. Apropos, a question that needs to be examined is whether self-determination should be availed of even by small segments of population of a country, as and when they feel they are not getting a fair deal from the political establishment of a multi-ethnic state, or such demands should be discouraged in the larger interests of political stability, peace and also economic development on a larger basis.

It has been remarked by many a scholar and journalist - (one prominent scholar is John Lewis Gaddis - a Professor of History and Director of the Contemporary History Institute at Ohio University) that there seems to be two main trends evident in the post Cold War world - One trend is towards integration, uniting sovereign countries in economic groupings that also have political ties,⁴ e.g., EC (now the E.U), and the other trend is towards fragmentation splitting up existing nations into smaller and smaller ethnic pieces. This latter trend, says George T.Church,⁵ seems to be stronger, and the basis of these movements with a trend to disintegrate countries and regions is self determination.

⁴ John Lewis Gaddis, in his article, "Towards the Post Cold War World", *Foreign Affairs*, (New York), Summer 1991, vol.70, n.2, p.103-104.

⁵ George T.Church, A Correspondent of Time Magazine.

Finally, there has been a legitimate fear that national self-determination of a people may be misused ("as Hitler had done to disintegrate Czechoslovakia in the late 1930's, in pursuance of his well publicized irredentism")⁶ Without doubt, the concept as such can be misused by politically ambitious local and regional leaders or politicians, who usually play on the sentiments of the people and use race, ethnicity, religion or language, as issues to provoke separatist tendencies and feelings in the majority of the people, with the sole object of making political gains. This tendency is also encouraged by neighbouring countries or others who have interests in seeing the break-up a particular country. Thus it is important for scholars, academicians as well as political leaders to understand that the concept of self-determination is a very powerful tool which could be used either to build up and integrate a community of people, as the Germans have done, or to destroy an existing state as has happened in the case of Yugoslavia, and create chaos and disorder.

However, "a man must have a nationality, as he must have a nose and two ears, a deficiency in any of these particulars is not inconceivable and does occur from time to time, but only as a result of some disaster, and it is itself a disaster of a kind".⁷ To do away with nationality and ethnicity as a solution

⁶ H.S.Chopra, *ibid.*, n.1, p.4.

⁷ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p.6.

to the current problem of ethnic conflict and separatism is indeed impossible for nationality has become an inherent attribute of humanity or seems to have appeared as such.⁸ But it is indeed a pressing problem and one which we see increasingly evident when nationalism is turned into an ideology of hatred, right-wing militancy and ethnic or religious obscurantism which invariably led to large scale genocide, and destruction of human resources. In united Germany, xenophobia has reappeared, and neo-nazis have become a problem to the political leaders who are working to strengthen democracy in that country. Alvin Toffler, in his book, 'The Powershift' had said that a "characteristic of the Dark Age Village was extreme Xenophobia - hatred for the foreigner, even for those in the very next village. With the coming of the Smokestack era, individual and mass loyalties were gradually transferred from village to nation. But xenophobia, chauvinism, hatred of the outsider, the stranger, the foreigner, continued to be a tool of state power".⁹

In the final analysis the following conclusions could be drawn:

First, that German unification came out of the democratic awakening of the East German people who then, being conscious that they would have universal

⁸ Gellner says that having a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but has come to appear as such.

⁹ Alvin Toffler, *The Powershift*, (New York: Bantam 1990), p.374.

support moved fast to exercise self-determination and realized their goal of unification in peace and freedom, within the framework of the European Union. "United Germany will be a European Germany", says Helmut Kohl.

Thirdly, through demand for self-determination have brought political integration in Germany, the economic problems it faces now as a consequence of unification could be disintegrative. The economic inequality between Easterners and Westerners, (the Osis and the Wesis, as they call each other) and the resentment of Westerners by Easterners and vice versa, pose as a potential problem to Germany, and could create factors for movements for economic self-determination.

Thirdly, generally, and often vaguely it is believed that self-determination is basically linked with the democratic process. In some places, however, there may be justification. This may particularly be so when an elite that dominates the political system, and discriminates against the minorities, who, owing to their alienation resent the absence or the feeling of denial of political participation, and then feel impelled to ask for self-determination. This happened in the case of Bangladesh, which broke away from Pakistan on almost the grounds mentioned afore.

Fourthly, owing to its varying positive and negative facets, it is necessary that an in-depth analysis of the concept of self-determination should be undertaken, so that due justice is done to the oppressed communities in different world regions, without, however, causing political instability, and fragmentation, which may bear inbuilt dependency for political survival and of economic development upon the external factors, which, in any case, could be neo-colonialism in another form.

Finally, in the post-cold war period, in which the rivalry between democracy and totalitarianism is replaced by the context between the forces of integration and fragmentation, unfortunately, the forces of fragmentation, based on narrow considerations of race, religion, language, nationality and even economic and regional considerations, seemed to be gaining ground over the integrated forces. No country is immune from the disintegrative effects of nationalism - not even the west, with their stable democratic systems. The Irish question, the Basque problem in Spain, the rivalry between the Flemings and the Walloons in Belgium, the emerging Scots nationalism in the UK, are but a few cases threatening political stability and disintegration in the politically stable west. The American presence in the Phillipines is becoming increasingly tenuous in the face of growing nationalism, and similar pressures are building up in South Korea. Nationalism is even becoming an issue in Japan. The Canadian confederation also came close to breaking up in 1990 over the

separatist aspirations of Quebec. All of these cases have one common factor running through them - Self-determination. Thus the need for scholars as well as statesmen to be aware and vigilant over rising militant nationalism and it's link with self-determination.

In the face of afore mentioned, it may be appropriate to end this study with the following quotation;

... the nation, which indulges towards another an habitual hatred or an habitual fondness, is in some degree a slave.

- from Washington's Farewell Address to
the People of the United States,
17 September 1796.

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