

# The two plus four negotiations essay example

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## **Essay for Lesson 11: German Reunification**

### Introduction

The division of Germany into West Germany and East Germany emerged as a stopgap solution for the woeful state of the nation following its defeat in the Second World War. With the United States (US) ultimately gaining full control over West Germany, East Germany increasingly became alienated towards it, as it went under the influence of the Soviet Union (USSR). West Germany, officially the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), rapidly grew into one of the most politically and economically influential nations in Europe representing the democratic interests of the US in the region, while East Germany, officially the German Democratic Republic (GDR), went seemingly the other way. East Germans became increasingly disillusioned by the way their politicians have promoted communism in the GDR, characterized by oppressive measures and sheer inequality in living standards. The Stasi, the secret police unit of the GDR, closely monitored East Germans and purged those who are suspected or proven dissidents, while politicians of the nation enjoyed living standards that are way superior compared to the average East German. West Germans, on the other hand, enjoyed the benefits of political and economic reforms brought forth by the democratic influence of the US. Therefore, discontentment among East Germans increased the prospect of unification of the FRG and GDR - an issue that was never written off in consideration, only further complicated by political differences. Nevertheless, eventual unification of the FRG and GDR following the symbolic collapse of the Berlin Wall did not completely result to favorable circumstances, as problems that continued to alienate matters between the Western and

Eastern sections of Germany remain unresolved (Brockman 80-108; Fulbrook 243-257).

The “two plus four” negotiations held by the FRG, GDR, France, United Kingdom (UK), US and USSR in 1990 sought to resolve matters for the future of a reunified Germany while formally recognizing its full sovereignty. To formalize German reunification, parties to the “two plus four” negotiations considered two options from the Basic Law of the FRG - Articles 23 and 146. Article 23 provided for the incorporation of new states via majority voting, while Article 146 stipulated formal reunification of the FRG and GDR through the creation of an entirely new constitution. Considering that Article 146 requires a longer period for formally reunifying the FRG and GDR, the “two plus four” negotiations opted to use Article 23 instead to facilitate German reunification quickly via incorporation. Whereas Article 23 emerged as a practical choice for German reunification, in that it enabled the FRG to take over the five former GDR states under its Basic Law (as amended) and effectively retain its membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), United Nations (UN) and the European Community (later known as the European Union), several political and economic problems continue to plague Germany following reunification (Fulbrook 243-257; Turner 225-255).

## **Reunification Sentiments throughout Germany**

The reunification of the FRG and GDR did not translate to the complete resolution of political and economic problems that alienated the Western and Eastern parts of Germany from one another. Given that the FRG and GDR thrived within different economic status quos prior to German reunification,

it is profoundly important to consider the effects of a complete takeover of the economic system of the FRG unto the newly incorporated states in the East. GDR, having been under a communist system, guaranteed full employment to all East Germans, although the exclusion of the nation from market forces have disabled the development of East German labor in terms of skills. Therefore, when the GDR was dissolved as a result of German reunification, the market-driven status quo of the FRG provided the East German workforce with fewer opportunities for work due to the competitiveness of its West German counterpart. Moreover, Germany encountered problems with regard to dealing with restitution and compensation claims filed by West Germans for their properties in the East expropriated by the GDR when it was still in force. Not all restitution and compensation claims have been resolved to this day. The government of the FRG also dealt with issues on integrating former economic assets of the GDR when the TREUHAND, the official organization tasked to perform the foregoing, fared poorly due to corruption and fraud, hence entailing the poor economic performance of Germany in the 1990s (Fulbrook 243-257; Turner 225-255).

### **Assessing Article 146 as an Alternative to Reunification**

Clearly, the “two plus four” negotiations decided to use Article 23 of the Basic Law of the FRG to expedite the process of German reunification - a move perceived at the time as highly practical compared to using Article 146. Through Article 23, the FRG formally constituted a reunified Germany without losing its membership statuses to the UN, NATO and the European Community and consuming more time in creating a new constitution in place

of the Basic Law of the FRG. A reunified Germany, under the FRG, therefore became an immediately recognized fully-sovereign state. However, it is noteworthy to consider that reunification through the incorporation of former GDR states into the FRG did not immediately result to a politically and economically viable scenario East Germans may have perceived prior to reunification (Fulbrook 243-257; Turner 225-255).

Considering Article 146 as an alternative to formalizing German reunification thus emerges as a sensible area to explore. Despite being touted as a more time-consuming option for reunifying the FRG and GDR by members of the “two plus four” negotiations, Article 146 provides for the prospect of introducing a new constitution for a new German nation reunifying the West and the East. Such would therefore result to the abolition of both the FRG and GDR and entail the new Germany to reapply as a member of the UN, NATO and the European Community. Initially, the idea of forming a constitution entirely from scratch for a reunified Germany may, on face value, appeal to Germans - Western or Eastern in origin, highly frustrated with the problems brought forth by reunification facilitated by Article 23. But a closer analysis shows that Article 146 would not have prevented the same problems that actually plagued Germany as it went through an Article 23-facilitated reunification process and, as feared by members of the “two plus four” negotiations, may have even worsened the case for reunifying the FRG and GDR. The problems encountered by Germany following reunification via Article 23 were not entirely legal in origin, but are rather consequential to the systemic differences of the GDR to the FRG and may therefore exist even with Article 146 used for reunification. GDR, having been under communism,

naturally had to adjust to the market-driven system of the FRG - a prospect that involves having to improve the competitiveness of the East German workforce. Moreover, problems on restitution and compensation of private and public properties in the Eastern states formerly constituting the GDR may be resolved through the assignment of competent officials, as there are sufficient findings denoting corruption and fraud as the main reason why Germany has failed to resolve the foregoing problems early on in the 1990s. Therefore, it is unnecessary to think of Article 146 as an alternative to Article 23 for German reunification, for such may have introduced less efficient and effective processes and results. Given the inevitability of the foregoing problems, solutions duly lie on increasing the competence of FRG officials (Fulbrook 243-257; Turner 225-255).

### **Conclusion: Has Germany Truly Become Reunified?**

Several systemic differences that prevailed throughout more than 40 years of separation have brought forth negative repercussions to a reunified Germany. It is important to note that while Germany has formally sealed its reunification, birth pains attributed to numerous systemic adjustments may continue to plague the nation. With just over 20 years following reunification, Germany will inevitably continue to encounter problems as a reunified nation. Through greater competence among officials tasked to fix various political and economic woes attributed to reunification, Germany would be able to fortify its status as a reunified nation in the years to come.

## **Works Cited**

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