

Optimised Study Guide — German Reunification

Optimised, exam-focused study guide for German reunification and the impact of the end of the Cold War on Germany (Unit 4, Elective 1, Component C05-U4E1). Grounded in the 2020–2025 SCSA exams and marking keys, especially the 2022 Q14 on the impact of the end of the Cold War on Germany and the 2025 Q11 source set using Kohl's ten-point plan. Covers the road to reunification (the March 1990 GDR election, Kohl's ten-point plan, the Two Plus Four talks, the NATO/Soviet troop deal, October 1990 unification), and the political, economic, social and global impacts. Leads with exam priorities and marking-key expectations.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 made German reunification almost unstoppable — but turning two states back into one was a vast political, diplomatic and economic undertaking. This topic is examined both as the *process* of reunification and its *impact*, and recent source questions have used Chancellor Kohl's own words.

The marking-key steer. The 2022 essay — "*Analyse the impact of the end of the Cold War on Germany*" — wants the **political, economic and global** impacts together. The 2025 source set used **Kohl's 1989 ten-point plan** and required candidates to note what such an optimistic source *omits* — the opposition to reunification and the lasting East–West economic and social disparities. Cover both the achievement and its costs.

How this content is examined

- **Essays.** The impact of the end of the Cold War on Germany; the process and significance of reunification.
- **Source analysis.** Kohl's reunification speeches and diplomatic sources require you to judge their reliability and what they leave out.

Answer the verb. Analyse the impact = identify and weigh the consequences across categories (political, economic, social, global). For sources, always consider *purpose* and *omission* — Kohl presents an idealised picture.

1. The road to reunification (1989–90)

- After the Wall fell, all main parties in the **GDR** backed some form of reunification at the first free East German election (**March 1990**).

- **Kohl's ten-point plan (Nov 1989)** set out a path to unity, tied carefully to European integration and "overarching security structures."
- **The "Two Plus Four" talks** (the two Germanys plus the US, USSR, UK and France) produced the treaty enabling unification. Crucially, **Gorbachev conceded a united Germany's NATO membership** in return for financial aid to withdraw Soviet troops.
- The East's communist political, economic and legal systems were dismantled; reunification was completed in **October 1990**.

2. The political impact

- A single, sovereign Germany re-emerged as a **new global power** and the dominant economic force in the European Union.
- European security had to be re-thought, with NATO expanding eastward over the following years.

3. The economic and social impact (the costs)

- **Huge cost:** massive capital transfers were needed to rebuild the East. West Germans resented the "**solidarity tax**."
- **Eastern collapse:** uncompetitive former-communist industries closed; unemployment and underemployment reached around **20% in the East by mid-1990**, breeding **Ostalgie** — nostalgia for the security of the communist past.
- **Social strains:** migration and disruption fed a resurgence of **racist, neo-Nazi groups**; East-West disparities persisted for decades — exactly what Kohl's optimistic 1989 vision did not anticipate.

4. The global significance

- Reunification was the concrete symbol that the **Cold War was over** and Europe's division healed.
- It reshaped the continent: a more powerful Germany at the heart of an expanding EU and NATO.

5. Historical perspectives

- **Whose achievement?** Kohl's diplomacy and the ten-point plan, vs Gorbachev's restraint and the internal collapse of the GDR (the 2025 sources debated exactly this balance).
- **Triumph or troubled?** A historic peaceful unification, or a rushed absorption of the East that left lasting wounds (Ostalgie, inequality, extremism)?

6. Recurring exam question patterns & what high answers do

- **"Analyse the impact of the end of the Cold War on Germany."** High answers: weigh political, economic, social and global impacts, balancing the achievement against the costs.
- **Source questions on Kohl:** assess reliability by noting the idealised tone and the omission of opposition and lasting disparities.

Recall self-test. Can you:

- Sequence the road to reunification (Wall falls → March 1990 election → Kohl's plan → Two Plus Four → October 1990)?
- Explain the deal over NATO membership and Soviet troop withdrawal?
- Explain the political impact (a new global power, dominant in the EU)?
- Explain the economic and social costs (solidarity tax, ~20% Eastern unemployment, Ostalgie, neo-Nazi resurgence)?
- Explain the global significance for the end of the Cold War?
- Assess a Kohl source for purpose and omission, and debate whose achievement reunification was?