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Détente in Europe, 1962–1975

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The main purpose of this chapter is to argue that European détente was, first and foremost, a *European* project. While there is no denying the significance of the United States and the Soviet Union in the shaping of Europe's fortunes in the 1960s and 1970s, détente actually began (and continued far longer) in Europe. In some ways this should be no surprise to any student of the Cold War: after all, the Cold War had commenced to a large extent in the Old World and would, in the late 1980s, wither away there as well. So, why should the "middle cold war" have been any different? In fact, one can push the argument slightly further: while the division of Germany lay at the heart of the Cold War division of Europe and the unification of that country marked the end of that era, then something profound took place in the status of Germany as a result of the *Ostpolitik* practiced, in particular, by West German chancellor Willy Brandt (1969–74). It was ultimately his policy of multiple "openings" – most significantly to the USSR, Poland, and East Germany – that ushered in an era of détente in Europe.

More precisely, the basic argument in this chapter is that the relaxation of East–West tensions in Europe was a result of a European challenge to the excesses of bipolarity. Some of these challenges came in the form of nationalistic needs – be it Charles de Gaulle's effort to lift France's international status or, most significantly, Willy Brandt's pursuit of *Ostpolitik*. There was, as Henry Kissinger observed, no obvious unity among Europeans beyond their general resentment of being treated as pawns by the United States and the Soviet Union in a game of global geopolitics.[1] Yet, as such agreements as the Harmel Report of 1967 and the Davignon Report of 1970 would indicate, most Europeans

1 This is a reference to the Year of Europe controversy that followed Kissinger's April 1973 speech in which he declared that the United States had "global responsibilities," while the Europeans were limited to having "regional interests." See Jussi M. Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 275–77.

agreed with each other on the general need for improved East–West relations and better interallied cooperation. The most evident culmination of the new era in European politics during the period discussed in this volume was the conclusion of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in 1975. It was there that Europe's postwar era finally came to an end.

The shadow of superpowerdom

The early 1960s saw some of the worst crises of the Cold War. In 1961, the issue of divided Berlin and the persistent brain drain of young East Germans to the West ultimately resulted in the erection of the Cold War's most grotesque symbol, the Berlin Wall. A year later, another drama unfolded in the Caribbean after American planes photographed evidence of Soviet nuclear installations in Cuba. For a few weeks, the world – or at least those Americans tuned in to the coverage of the crisis – held their breath as a nuclear exchange appeared imminent. Both crises were, fortunately, solved (or at least diffused) through diplomatic channels. Yet, if the term "bipolarity" carried a true meaning, it was there and then, in the crisis-ridden early 1960s, when the Soviets and the Americans confronted each other "eyeball to eyeball," as Secretary of State Dean Rusk put it during the Cuban missile crisis, that bipolarity had the potential of escalating into a true global confrontation.

In Europe, the twin crises of 1961–62 were cruel reminders of the central role that the Soviet Union and the United States continued to play in determining the course of international relations. It may have been the Germans (East and West) that were most immediately touched by the tension over Berlin; it was surely the Europeans (East and West) that would suffer most should war break out. But it was Soviet and American tanks that faced each other at Checkpoint Charlie in the fall of 1961. A year later, no ally – not even Britain despite the ruminations of London's erstwhile ambassador David Ormsby-Gore – was truly consulted in the course of the Cuban missile crisis. Nikita Khrushchev, for his part, had naturally seen little point in asking the members of the Warsaw Pact for their views on the matter. Europeans appeared as powerless bystanders in crises that had the potential of destroying not only their way of life, as nuclear theorists reminded people in the age of mutual assured destruction (MAD), but all kinds of life.[2]

Consequently, the Cold War appeared primarily, if not exclusively, as a game which could be decided only by the two principal protagonists.

2 See James Hershberg's chapter and Marc Trachtenberg's chapter in this volume.

Europeans were held hostage to the irreversible division of their continent, confirmed by the presence of Soviet and American troops in the center of Europe, and by the guardianship of officials in Washington and Moscow over massive and ever-growing nuclear arsenals. Worse, Europe seemed increasingly like a sideshow in the context of international relations in the 1960s. There were many other more urgent, more controversial, and, ultimately, more important issues. The Vietnam War, numerous postcolonial conflicts in Africa, and the never-ending scuffles in the Middle East commanded far more attention from American and Soviet policymakers than the diplomacy of a continent divided yet stable. To the chagrin of Europeans, policymakers in Washington and Moscow were also assigning more and more importance to the emerging triangular relationship between the United States, the Soviet Union, and the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Compounding their plight, Europeans – East and West – were economically dependent on the two superpowers. Although the place of the United States in the international economic structure was undergoing a major transformation in the 1960s and 1970s with the collapse of the Bretton Woods system,[3] the United States retained a sizable positive trading balance vis-à-vis Western Europe. Similarly, the record of foreign direct investment (FDI) shows a continued European dependency on the United States.[4] In the Soviet bloc, economic dependency was based on the continued dominance of the USSR over its Warsaw Pact client states who were compelled to follow the rules of the Soviet-led Comecon. Prevailing practices prevented any meaningful contacts between East European economies and Western Europe.[5] Europe, then, was most definitely in the shadow of the superpowers.

What is then missing from the above description is the simple fact, increasingly documented by historians in recent years, that the Cold War international system was not a simple hierarchical construction. As John Gaddis puts it: "the 'superpowers,' during the Cold War, were not all that 'super.'"[6] There was much more fluidity and bargaining within the blocs than is usually portrayed. Multipolarity existed under the cloak of bipolarity, and the weak influenced the policies of the strong. To a large extent it had been the East

3 For more detailed discussions of the international economy, see Wilfried Loth's and Richard Cooper's chapters in this volume.

4 These figures are from Alfred Eckes and Thomas Zeiler, *Globalization and the American Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 261–67.

5 This is another under-researched area of Cold War history. The best place to start is Anthony Kemp-Welch's chapter in this volume.

6 John Gaddis, "A Naïve Approach to Studying the Cold War," in Odd Arne Westad (ed.), *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 30.

Germans who "drove the Soviets up the wall," as one historian has summed up the outcome of the Berlin crisis.[7] Likewise, American restraint during the Cuban missile crisis – the Kennedy administration's decision not to use airstrikes to destroy nuclear installations – was in part a result of sensitivity to the concerns of NATO allies about the consequences that might follow (for example, Soviet retaliation against Western forces in Berlin). And, perhaps most important of all, the Sino-Soviet split of the early 1960s was as clear an indication as any that the idea of a monolithic Communist bloc was but an imaginary construction.[8]

In the end, the crises of the early 1960s offered a great many challenges and opportunities to which Europeans responded in a variety of ways. In both East and West, though, it was evident that the caricature-like division of Europe and the world did not always conform to the interests and aspirations of individual nations and their leaders. Most importantly for the present discussion, East–West détente in Europe was in large part a response to the alternative policies advanced by a number of countries in the aftermath of the "Crisis Years." Indeed, any analysis of European détente needs to employ Tony Smith's concept of "pericentrism," the idea "that junior actors may have interests, passions, and types of leaders wanting to take advantage of what they perceive to be an international contest to give shape to domestic, or regional, or even global organizations of power that they conceive of in their own nationalist or ideological terms." In the 1960s and 1970s, there were several such "junior actors" in Europe, pursuing either their own national interests or the economic and political integration of the continent (or, more often, a mixture of both).[9]

Centrifugal pressures in the West: de Gaulle and early *Ostpolitik*

President Charles de Gaulle, at times described as "a neutralist for nationalistic reasons," hardly requires an introduction.[10] De Gaulle ruled France for over a

7 Hope M. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall: Soviet–East German Relations, 1953–1961* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

8 On the Sino-Soviet split, see Sergey Radchenko's chapter in this volume.

9 Tony Smith, "A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War," *Diplomatic History*, 24, 4 (Fall 2000), 591. On European integration, see Piers Ludlow's chapter in this volume.

10 A term used by the former French foreign minister, Christian Pineau. Memorandum of conversation, April 9, 1963, box 3907, Central Foreign Policy File, 1963, RG 59, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (NA). See also Erin Mahan, *Kennedy, De Gaulle and Western Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

decade after 1958, during which time he attempted to raise his country into a new position of prominence in Europe. The flip side of this was, of course, that de Gaulle wished to limit the American and (if less obviously so) Soviet roles on the continent. He withdrew France from NATO's integrated military structure, pursued the development of an independent French nuclear capability, strengthened the Franco-German special relationship (for example, the 1963 Franco-German Treaty), and embarked on independent initiatives with regard to Eastern Europe (Romania, in particular) and the Soviet Union.[11] De Gaulle even stirred trouble in America's backyard: while visiting the city of Montreal in 1967, he declared that the Francophone bastion should move towards independence ("Vive le Québec Libre"), thus helping to stir the pot of nationalism. And there were many other tense moments over Vietnam, over foreign investment, over de Gaulle's decision to recognize the PRC without consulting the United States. President Lyndon B. Johnson undoubtedly agreed with his confidant, Senator Richard Russell, when he said that "we've really got no control over their (France's) foreign policy."[12]

De Gaulle was ultimately unsuccessful because his policies were often either contradictory or overtly ambitious. He could neither make Western Europe independent of the United States nor claim for France an unambiguous leadership position among European countries. Even with the *force de frappe*, even when he took France out of NATO's unified military command in 1966, even when he attempted to practice independent détente with the USSR, de Gaulle was unable to claim that he had removed the American 'yoke' from Europe. Nevertheless, of all the centrifugal tendencies in the history of NATO during the Cold War, it was the prominent role embraced by France under de Gaulle to lead a more independent Europe that caused the severest headaches in Washington. His *potential* impact on American–European relations might have been very far-reaching. As Assistant Secretary of State William Tyler put it, de Gaulle: "gave expression to a certain sentiment not only in France but in Free Europe as a whole in varying degree: a confused sense that it is possible, indeed natural and necessary, for Europe to have interests within the framework of an alliance with the United States which do not in all cases spring from a conception of the world identical with that held by the United States."[13]

11 For a fuller account of French policies, see Frédéric Bozo's chapter in this volume.

12 Cited in Thomas Schwartz, *In the Shadow of Vietnam: Lyndon Johnson and Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 31.

13 Tyler's commentary in reaction to Charles Bohlen's memo, "Reflections on Current French Foreign Policy," March 11, 1964, box 169, France, vol. I, Country Files, National Security Files (NSF), Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin, Texas (LBJL).

American diplomats did not "panic" as a result of France's withdrawal from NATO in March 1966, and they were equally calm when de Gaulle visited Moscow a few months later. They were confident that de Gaulle's talk of a "Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals" was likely to remain just that, talk. As a May 1966 intelligence memorandum confidently maintained: "[It is] unlikely that Moscow overestimates De Gaulle's value. [It] recognizes that America is the real power, and would prefer to deal directly with Washington."[14] Indeed, had de Gaulle been the only one in Western Europe challenging the logic of bipolarity, his impact, direct or indirect, on East–West relations in Europe would likely have been limited.

Alas, he was not alone. In the 1960s, West German policymakers were expressing increased doubts about American leadership. To be sure, the leaders in Bonn had none of the global pretensions that were so evident in de Gaulle's politics and, in particular, the Frenchman's grand rhetoric. West German politicians, whether Christian Democrats or Social Democrats, were ultimately concerned over a nationalist goal, reunification. De Gaulle may have removed France from NATO's integrated military structure and embarked on an independent course with regard to Moscow in order to enhance France's significance as a player in international relations, but Ludwig Erhard, Kurt Kiesinger, Willy Brandt, and other West German leaders gradually established independent ties to the East largely because the policies of Konrad Adenauer had failed to substantially advance the unification of Germany.[15]

The first steps towards *Ostpolitik*, the so-called "policy of movement," was in large part a reaction to the Wall, the apparent lack of Western commitment to German unification, and the failure of the Hallstein Doctrine to advance the cause of unification. From the West German point of view, it must have seemed as though the rest of the world, their American allies included, were in fact quite happy to see Germany divided.[16] Some observers predicted in 1963 – in the aftermath of de Gaulle's first veto of British membership in the European Economic Community (EEC) and his signing of the Franco-German friendship treaty – that a strengthening of the Bonn–Paris axis might

14 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) 11-7-66, "Trends in Soviet General Policies," April 28, 1966, box 3: 11-66, USSR, NIEs, NSF, LBJL; CIA Intelligence Memo No. 1354/66, May 20, 1966, box 172: France memos, vol. IX, Country Files, National Security Council (NSC) Files, LBJL.

15 For a discussion of Adenauer's foreign policies see, among others: Ronald Granieri, *The Ambivalent Alliance: The CDU/CSU and the West, 1949–1966* (London: Berghahn Books, 2004).

16 CIA Memo 14-64 (Office of National Estimates), "Bonn Looks Eastward," November 10, 1964, box 185, Germany memos, vol. IX, Country Files, NSF, LBJL.

result in the rupture of NATO and the unification–neutralization of Germany.[17] From the US perspective, the worst-case scenario was that:

> external events could cause neutralist feeling in West Germany to grow. In time, and especially if the sense of direct Soviet threat to Western Europe continues to diminish, the West Germans' conviction that NATO is essential for their security could weaken. Conceivably even the necessity for the continued presence of American forces might be put in question.[18]

During the following year there were, of course, a number of such "external events": de Gaulle announced France's withdrawal from NATO and made his visit to Moscow, America's involvement in Vietnam deepened, and the Soviets – facing an increasingly threatening situation in Asia (that is, the Sino-Soviet split) – appeared more amenable to developing better relations with the West. There was, then, adequate reason for the growing concern about "losing" West Germany, through unification, neutralization, or the maneuverings of de Gaulle.

While France and West Germany represented the most profound political challenges to American dominance, historians have also illustrated the increasingly limited control that Washington exercised over Western trade policy. For example, by the late 1950s, Britain had taken a leading role in the transatlantic bargaining process over export controls vis-à-vis the Soviet bloc. Thus, the utility of the so-called Coordinating Committee (COCOM) – the Western grouping established at the onset of the Cold War to control the export of "strategic" items to the USSR and its satellites – was being increasingly challenged. By the 1960s, the Americans faced a virtually unanimous – and increasingly more prosperous – West European front calling not only for improved political relations with the Soviet bloc, but also seeking to challenge American leadership on matters of East–West trade.[19] Ironically, there was similar tension within the Soviet bloc.

17 Thomas Schwartz, "Victories and Defeats in the Long Twilight Struggle: The United States and Western Europe in the 1960s," in Diane B. Kunz (ed.), *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade: American Foreign Policy in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 131.

18 NIE 23-65, "Prospects for West German Foreign Policy," box 5: "23 West Germany," NIEs, NSF, LBJL.

19 See Ian Jackson, *Economic Cold War: America, Britain and East-West Trade, 1948–1963* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001); Michael Mastanduno, *Economic Containment: CoCom and the Politics of East–West Trade* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

Unity and division in the East

To a lesser degree than in Western Europe, the Soviet bloc experienced its own centrifugal tendencies in the 1960s.[20] This was the case despite the fact that even contemplating a possible exit from the Soviet-led military alliance could have bloody consequences; the Hungarians had experienced this in 1956. But the repression ultimately underlined the fragility of the alliance; it illuminated the fact that the American "empire" in Western Europe was built upon a multilateral invitation by the founding members of NATO, whereas the Soviet empire was based upon a unilateral imposition of Moscow's hegemony.[21]

The 1960s saw, though, an effort on the part of East European leaders to find room for independence. As early as 1960, Enver Hoxha, the Stalinist dictator of Albania, openly criticized the USSR. Although Albania remained nominally a member of the Warsaw Pact until 1968, its "defection" was symbolic of the – admittedly minor – cracks in the Soviet hold on Eastern Europe. The average Albanian did not benefit very much. Chinese aid was limited and Hoxha used the increased isolation of his country to strengthen his personal hold on power. In 1966, the Albanian dictator even launched his own cultural revolution, emulating Mao's model. Little changed: Albania remained Europe's poorest country and did little to trouble the Soviets. Nor did Hoxha have any interest in détente; if anything he called for a more confrontational approach to the West.[22]

Potentially more disconcerting than Albania's "defection" to the Chinese camp was Romania's independent course. Romanian leaders George Gheorghieu-Dej and, after 1965, Nicolae Ceauşescu were ruthless authoritarians, who combined repression at home with an independent foreign policy. The latter, at least partly geared toward increasing their domestic popularity, resulted in Romania's consistent resistance to any kind of economic integration in the Soviet bloc. In 1967, Ceauşescu took riskier action by recognizing the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and thus breaking Soviet bloc unity on this issue (the USSR

20 See Kemp-Welch's chapter in this volume.

21 The 'empire by invitation' thesis is usually associated with Geir Lundestad, but it has many adherents. Lundestad, "'Empire' by Invitation? United States and Western Europe, 1945–1952," *Journal of Peace Research*, 23, 3 (1986), 263–77. On the Warsaw Pact see Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne (eds.), *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005).

22 Very little has been written about Albania during the Cold War. For a general account, see, for example, R. J. Crampton, *The Balkans since the Second World War* (London: Longman, 2002).

though, had recognized the FRG earlier). While refusing to participate in the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia and inviting President Richard M. Nixon for a state visit the following year, Romania nonetheless remained a member of the alliance. It was no wonder that Ceauşescu was often described as the Eastern version of de Gaulle; someone willing to issue a challenge to the dominant superpower in the name of national pride, but unwilling to risk a complete breakdown in relations.[23]

A desire to break away from the political straitjacket of Soviet domination was further strengthened by the need to increase the limited economic links that East European countries enjoyed with the West. By the 1960s, it was clear to most Warsaw Pact leaders that Comecon – the economic organization of socialist states that had been founded in 1949 as a Soviet response to the Marshall Plan – had failed to become an engine of prosperity in the Eastern bloc. Comparisons with the EEC were negative. The EEC quickly became an integrated trading bloc with impressive economic growth; countries like Britain lined up to join it by the early 1960s.[24] In contrast, the Comecon shifted from being a vehicle of Soviet economic exploitation of Eastern Europe in the late 1940s and early 1950s to being an organization through which the USSR essentially subsidized its satellites in the late 1950s and 1960s. While trade and energy subsidies played a role in keeping the Soviet empire together, they also illustrated the vast difference between West and East European economic integration. While the former lacked a central actor and was multilateral in nature, the latter was driven and controlled from Moscow.

The important point, though, is that by the 1960s Soviet policy was clearly failing. Instead of creating uniformity across the Soviet "empire," Moscow had produced a competition among Comecon countries over the size of each nation's subsidy. Moreover, once dependent on Soviet subsidies, East European leaders (who personally relied upon Moscow's support) were reluctant to let them go. As Randall Stone puts it: "the satellites became a growing drain on the Soviet economy [that] undermined the viability of the system."[25] This burden, however, made economic détente – increased East–West trade and Western investment in Eastern Europe – more acceptable, even desirable, to the USSR. Pushing in the same direction was the constant

23 On Romania, see Vladimir Tismeanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

24 See the chapters by Ludlow, Richard Cooper and Wilfried Loth in this volume.

25 Randall W. Stone, *Satellites and Commissars: Strategy and Conflict in the Politics of Soviet-Bloc Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 238.

demand for high-technology goods from the West; the need for sophisticated machine tools and electrical equipment was a significant driving force behind trade liberalization across the Soviet bloc.

In sum, there was dissent in the East, as there was in the West. Throughout the 1960s, yearnings for national independence were increasing throughout the Soviet bloc. The Iron Curtain stood firm, yet minor cracks were already appearing as renegade leaders – de Gaulle and Ceauçescu in the forefront – made forays across the East–West divide. In addition, the Soviet bloc was caught in a set of economic circumstances that demanded the reduction of Eastern Europe's dependency on the high level of Soviet subsidies. With the bloc's economic integration proceeding less than smoothly, an opening to the West – that would yield economic benefits in the form of increased trade and investment – was viewed more positively by the late 1960s, exactly at the time that Brandt was beginning to pursue his *Ostpolitik*.

Bridges, reforms, and crackdown

The apparent loosening of Soviet bloc unity did not go unnoticed in the West. Already in 1961, Zbigniew Brzezinski and William Griffith had called for a policy of "peaceful engagement" with Eastern Europe designed to result "in the creation of a neutral belt of states." In June 1963, John F. Kennedy asked Americans to "reexamine our own attitude toward the possibilities of peace, toward the Soviet Union, toward the course of the cold war."[26] A year later, Secretary of State Dean Rusk pointed out that "[t]he Communist world is no longer a single flock of sheep following blindly one leader," and that, in particular, "[t]he smaller countries of Eastern Europe have increasingly asserted their own policies." President Lyndon Johnson harped on the same theme and called for extending bridges of "trade, travel and humanitarian assistance" to Eastern Europe.[27] In 1966, however, the momentum toward peaceful engagement and bridge building in the United States collapsed. When Congress defeated the East–West Trade Bill, the Johnson

26 "Toward a Strategy of Peace," Commencement Address by President Kennedy at American University, Washington, DC, June 10, 1963, quoted in Richard P. Stebbins (ed.), *Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1963* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 117; Zbigniew Brzezinski and William E. Griffith, "Peaceful Engagement in Eastern Europe," *Foreign Affairs*, 39 (July 1961). See also Jussi M. Hanhimäki "The First Line of Defense or a Springboard for Disintegration: European Neutrals in American Foreign and Security Policy, 1945–1961," *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 7, 2 (July 1996), 378–403.

27 Quoted in Joseph F. Harrington, "Romanian–American Relations During the Kennedy Administration," *East European Quarterly*, 18, 2 (June 1984), 225.

administration's most ambitious effort to use US economic power as a tool to build bridges to the Soviet bloc ended.[28]

While the Americans balked, West Europeans rapidly expanded their links to the East. In 1964, Britain signed a fifteen-year credit agreement with the USSR. In 1965, France negotiated a series of trade and technological exchanges; the following year, as de Gaulle visited Moscow, the French dropped many import quotas from Eastern Europe. The Italians, having signed similar agreements, invited Soviet president Nikolai Podgornyi to Rome in early 1967. Indeed, among the large European countries, the Germans were the one exception.

The Harmel Report, adopted by NATO in late 1967, was the logical culmination of the growing Western interest in détente. While maintaining the emphasis on continued military preparedness, the Harmel Report's major "new" offering was to stress the significance of negotiations with the Warsaw Pact as a means of enhancing European security. This codification of a loosely coordinated dual-track policy – maintaining military strength and pursuing détente – can therefore be seen both as a road map to a different kind of East–West relationship in Europe and as a way of meeting the challenges to NATO's unity in the 1960s. In a sense, the Harmel Report illustrated the flexible nature of NATO as well as the US leadership role in the alliance. It also served as an opportunity to link French and West German initiatives to a unified approach that the alliance embraced. As Andreas Wenger puts it, the Harmel exercise represented, quite simply, the "multilateralization of détente." Furthermore, in June 1968, at a NATO foreign ministers' meeting in Reykjavik, the alliance reaffirmed its commitment to détente and declared itself in favor of Mutual Force Reductions talks with the Warsaw Pact.[29]

Significantly, it appeared that the Eastern bloc was readying itself for détente as well. In addition to unilateral Soviet contacts with a number of West European countries, there were other moves toward détente with the West. In the summer of 1966, the Warsaw Pact issued the so-called Bucharest Declaration, reaffirming its interest in an all-European security conference that

28 Joseph Harrington and Bruce Courtney, "Romanian–American Relations during the Johnson Administration," *East European Quarterly*, 22, 2 (June 1988), 225. US exports to Eastern Europe (excluding the USSR and Yugoslavia) grew from about $ 87.5 million in 1961 to $135 million in 1967. Bennett Kovrig, *Of Walls and Bridges: The United States and Eastern Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 251.

29 See Frédéric Bozo, "Détente versus Alliance: France, the United States and the Politics of the Harmel Report," *Contemporary European History*, 7, 3 (1998), pp. 343–60 and Andreas Wenger, "Crisis and Opportunity: NATO and the Multilateralization of Détente, 1966–68," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 6, 1 (Winter 2004), 22–74.

had first been broached in 1954. In 1967, a month after Romania's recognition of the FRG, another Warsaw Pact foreign ministers' meeting repeated this call. Although these appeals undoubtedly encouraged NATO to move toward the adoption of the Harmel Report, the intended exclusion of the United States and Canada from these Pan-European security talks dampened the enthusiasm of the West. But such sticking points appeared minor when compared to the tensions of the early 1960s. Détente, it seemed, was about to break out.

Not even the August 1968 Warsaw Pact crackdown on Czechoslovakia – discussed in more detail elsewhere in this volume – could change the momentum toward European détente that had been built over the preceding years. Of course, the ruthless intervention that destroyed the internal Czech efforts to build socialism with a human face – the so-called Prague Spring – was a brutal reminder of the limits of internal reform within the Soviet zone. The public justification – the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine – made it clear that any threat to the socialist system was not to be tolerated. As Anatolii Dobrynin, at the time the Soviet ambassador to Washington, recorded in his memoir, the Prague invasion was "a true reflection of the sentiments of those who ran the Soviet Union" at the time, i.e.: "[a] determination never to permit a socialist country to slip back into the orbit of the West."[30]

Initially it seemed that the crackdown on Czechoslovakia also marked a death blow to détente in its European and Soviet–American varieties. The possibility that a Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) – preliminarily outlined at a Soviet–US summit meeting a year earlier – could have been negotiated during the Johnson administration was blocked. West Europeans involved in "bridge building" were naturally taken aback by the invasion as well as Soviet accusations that their détente policy was tantamount to "interference" in the internal affairs of socialist countries. As Chancellor Kurt Kiesinger's envoy to the United States, Kurt Birrenbach (Christian Democratic Party [CDU] member of *Bundestag*) told Secretary of State Rusk in September 1968: "*Ostpolitik* is completely blocked."[31]

Ostpolitik in the spotlight

Birrenbach could hardly have been more wrong. *Ostpolitik* was battered by the events in Prague, but as events during the next few years illustrated, its

30 Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents* (New York: Random House, 1995), 183; for more on the Prague Spring and Eastern Europe, see Kemp-Welch's chapter in this volume.

31 Memorandum of conversation, Rusk, Birrenbach *et al.*, September 9, 1968, Germany memos, vol. XVI, Country Files, NSF, LBJL.

progress suffered hardly at all. Following the Bundestag elections in the fall of 1969, the Social Democrats formed a new government with Willy Brandt as the chancellor. Subsequently, there was plenty of *Annäherung* (rapprochement), although to most Germans' taste, perhaps not enough *Wandel* (change).[32] With Washington's knowledge – if not always approval – Brandt and his confidant Egon Bahr initiated contacts with the Soviet Union and its East European satellites. They then proceeded to negotiate groundbreaking agreements. The German–Soviet Treaty of August 1970, the September 1971 Four Power agreement on Berlin, and the December 1972 Basic Treaty between East and West Germanies were dramatic examples of the unfolding of Brandt's *Ostpolitik*.

While Brandt proceeded from breakthrough to breakthrough, his American counterparts had mixed feelings. Although Nixon and Kissinger were bent on pursuing bilateral détente with the Soviet Union, they were not keen on seeing themselves overshadowed by an independent German policy. More substantively, the Nixon administration wanted to make sure that there were no cracks in a unified Western position that the USSR might exploit. Already during his February 1969 trip through Europe, Nixon warned (the then foreign minister) Brandt that the Soviets' interest in *Ostpolitik* was part of "a major Soviet objective to weaken the [NATO] alliance and especially the FRG."[33]

Brandt had much the same concern. He had no intention of breaking away from NATO, but sought to find ways of aligning *Ostpolitik* with NATO policy, most specifically with the 1967 Harmel Report. Brandt well understood the need to coordinate his actions with the United States. In discussions in October 1969, Bahr outlined to Kissinger his vision of *Ostpolitik*, detailing the planned West German overtures toward the USSR, Poland, and East Germany. Writing to Nixon, Kissinger warned that the planned German initiatives "could become troublesome if they engender euphoria, affect Germany's contribution to NATO and give ammunition to our own détente-minded people here at home. The Germans may also become so engaged in their Eastern policy that their commitment to West European unity may decline. The Soviets, and with some apparent prodding by Moscow, [East German leader Walter] Ulbricht, seem willing enough to receive Bonn's overtures."[34]

32 An allusion to the crucial idea underlying *Ostpolitik, Wandel durch Annäherung* (change through rapprochement).

33 Memoranda of conversation, Nixon, Rogers, Kissinger, Brandt, Kiesinger, February 26, 1969, box 484 Conference Files, 1966–72, CF 340-CF342, RG 59, NA.

34 Kissinger to Nixon (drafted by Sonnenfeldt), October 14, 1969, box 917, VIP Visits, NSC and Kissinger to Nixon, October 20, 1969, box 682: Germany vol III, Country Files, NSC, Nixon Presidential Materials Project, NA (soon to be moved to Yorba Linda, California). Bahr's memorandum of conversation in *Akten zur Auswartigen Politik der Bundesrepublik*

13. West German chancellor Willy Brandt kneeling at the monument to those killed by German troops in the uprising in Warsaw during World War II. Brandt's December 1970 tribute did much to allay Polish anxieties about an ongoing German threat.

Indeed, the Soviets, East Germans, and other Warsaw Pact countries were eager to see Brandt succeed, thus contributing to the success of *Ostpolitik* in 1970–72. But their motives differed. To Brandt, *Ostpolitik* was a means to a larger end; a step on the way toward the ultimate unification of Germany. To East Germans, *Ostpolitik* represented an opportunity for greater legitimacy, for true "statehood."[35] For the Soviets and a number of East Europeans, the treaties of 1970–72 meant the consolidation of the division of Germany and the recognition of postwar borders, while increasing access to high-technology items that were still available only in the West. In short, the aims of the leaders were almost diametrically opposite: if Brandt wanted to transform the existing situation, most of his counterparts in the East were hoping to freeze it.

Deutschland 1969, vol. II, 1114–18. Kissinger's and Bahr's versions are also in their memoirs. See Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 410–12; Egon Bahr, *Zu Meiner Zeit* (Munich: Karl Blessing Verlag, 1996), 271–73.

35 The best account about East German thinking is Mary E. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil: East Germany, Détente, and Ostpolitik, 1969–1973* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

But how much change did *Ostpolitik* bring about? After all, Germany remained deeply divided, something that most of Germany's neighbors probably welcomed. In fact, in 1973 both the FRG and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) joined the United Nations, a conspicuous sign that they were, in fact, two separate and independent countries. From this perspective, one might easily argue that the main outcome of *Ostpolitik* was to give added legitimacy to the GDR at the expense of the reunification hopes of the FRG. Certainly, the policymakers of 1973 did not think that they had set in motion an irreversible process that would result in the reunification of Germany less than two decades later.

Since officials could not foresee the future, the debates regarding the long-term significance of détente are frustrating: they go around in circles. How does one interpret the changes that took place? Were they radical or conservative, transformative or stabilizing? Did détente accelerate or prolong the collapse of the Cold War order in Europe (whether the collapse was inevitable is quite another matter)? It is impossible to answer any of these questions with certainty. We know that the Cold War ended after détente, so it is, of course, tempting to maintain that the simple sequence of events proves a causal link. But we cannot 'prove' that such a link necessarily exists. In terms of *Ostpolitik* and German reunification, such links are (as they were at the time) intimately tied to domestic politicking, which, in turn, is not the best possible stimulus for objective historical assessment.

Nevertheless, one can surely assert that by opening doors and building bridges, *Ostpolitik* made the eventual *peaceful* unification of Germany easier (even if not inevitable). But its impact – as well as its origins – went far beyond the narrow boundaries of German–German relations. By improving relations with a number of East European governments as well as the Soviet Union, Brandt and his *Ostpolitik* set in motion the process of increased exchanges and contacts across the Iron Curtain that paved the way to the successful conclusion of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, a key event in the era of détente.

CSCE and the rise of human security

The signing of the Helsinki Accords on August 1, 1975, represented a seminal moment in Europe's Cold War. With thirty-five nations represented, including the United States and Canada, most of them by their respective heads of state, it was the biggest (and first) European multilateral gathering since World War II. While it did not result in the signing of formal treaties, the CSCE was perhaps the most high-profile expression of the fact that the Cold

War had moved to an entirely new stage. While observers disagreed (and historians continue to do so) about whether the Helsinki Accords were a move toward undermining the Cold War order or an effort to stabilize it, the sheer magnitude of the undertaking spelled the birth of a new kind of Europe, one no longer exclusively dominated by East–West rivalries.

The CSCE had a long history. The original proposal for a Pan-European security conference had been made by the Soviet foreign minister, Viacheslav Molotov, in 1954. Because the United States (and Canada) were not invited, the proposal was turned down by NATO countries (as they rejected Warsaw Pact appeals in the 1960s). In the aftermath of the crackdown on Czechoslovakia in 1968 and virtually coinciding with the Sino-Soviet border clashes, the Warsaw Pact issued, on March 17, 1969, the Budapest appeal, which, for the first time, did not include specific preconditions (that is, it did not exclude any countries from the list of participants). Two months later, the Finnish president Urho Kekkonen, at the USSR's urging, acted as a neutral go-between, offering Helsinki as the site for such a conference. Most significantly, the latter invitation was directed to all European countries as well as the United States and Canada.[36] Finally, in November 1972, the initial Multilateral Preparatory Talks began at the Dipoli conference centre, outside of Helsinki. After several years of arduous negotiations in Geneva and Helsinki, involving representatives of thirty-five countries, the CSCE finally concluded with a high-level three-day summit in Helsinki (Stage III) that opened on July 30, 1975.

Both the process and the outcome were remarkable in highlighting the birth of a new kind of East–West relationship in Europe. The four 'Baskets' (or parts) of the Helsinki Accords dealt with virtually every aspect of Pan-European security. While Basket I, for example, dealt with such "traditional" security issues as the inviolability of borders, Baskets II and III dealt with economic issues and, perhaps most controversially, human rights. Basket IV – rarely mentioned – was perhaps the most important of all: it called for follow-up conferences, thereby ensuring that the accords would become a "living" document. In other words, the signing ceremony at Helsinki's Finlandia Hall on August 1, 1975, was as much the beginning of a process as it was an end of the multilateral negotiation that had stretched far beyond the time limits anticipated in 1972.

Nor should one underestimate the significance of the process itself. It was quite a feat to bring together the diplomatic representatives of countries as

36 For useful overviews of these developments, see Wilfried Loth, *Overcoming the Cold War: A History of Détente* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2002), and John van Oudenaren, *European Détente* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992).

different as Britain and Romania, or Belgium and Yugoslavia. Equally importantly, by involving both Germanies in the process, the CSCE negotiations offered the first significant opportunity for addressing the division of the country. Of course, the Helsinki Accords did not solve the question of Germany's division; in fact, many in Western Germany were concerned lest the process, by adding further legitimacy to the East German regime, actually served to solidify the division. The CSCE did, though, fit nicely with Brandt's *Ostpolitik* by offering yet another means for strengthening the Federal Republic's ties to the East (both the GDR and other Soviet bloc nations).

Remarkable – and perhaps somewhat overrated – though the CSCE's final document was, it was also inherently contradictory, producing diametrically opposite interpretations. The Helsinki Accords were widely criticized in the United States for allegedly recognizing Soviet control over Eastern Europe. In the Soviet bloc, the provisions on human rights were basically ignored. Nevertheless, the CSCE was of major long-term significance: it signaled the emergence of human security as an important and recognized aspect of international relations. The agreements would later serve as a manifesto by numerous dissident and human rights groups inside the Soviet Union and its satellites. The fact that the CSCE did recognize the possibility that borders might be changed through "peaceful means" also satisfied the minimum demands of those Germans who still held up unification as a realistic goal.[37]

Not everyone, however, was excited (or concerned) about the CSCE. Iurii Andropov, the head of the Soviet KGB and later secretary-general of the Soviet Communist Party, dismissed the notion that Basket III would ever have an appreciable impact inside the USSR. "We are the masters in this house," he reportedly told the Politburo members who doubted the wisdom of signing a protocol that recognized freedom of speech. Others, like Kissinger, did not even bother reading the Helsinki Accords. The American secretary of state, whose lack of enthusiasm for the CSCE was notable throughout the process, at one time even quipped that the Helsinki Final Act might just as well be written "in Swahili."[38]

Such missives notwithstanding – and Kissinger himself would later provide a rather positive assessment of the CSCE – the CSCE did mark a certain rebirth of Europe. For the first time since the end of World War II,

37 For a thorough analysis, see Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

38 Jussi M. Hanhimäki, "'They Can Write it in Swahili': Kissinger, the Soviets, and the Helsinki Accords, 1973–1975," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 1, 1, (Spring 2003), 37–58.

the CSCE provided a forum in which all-European negotiations could take place. In Helsinki and Geneva, under the umbrella of the CSCE, East–West contacts were fostered in a way that could hardly have been foreseen a decade earlier. West Europeans, in particular, found the CSCE to be a vehicle for putting the recommendations of the 1970 Davignon Report into practice, in effect launching what today is called a European Common Foreign and Security Policy. NATO members and neutrals tended to dominate much of the negotiating process because the Americans showed but minimal interest and the Soviets (and selected East European governments) tried to keep the agenda – and the results – as limited as possible.[39]

At the same time, the Iron Curtain was punctured economically. Already, by the late 1960s, the unity of the Atlantic alliance regarding its trade embargo against the Soviet bloc in strategic goods had evaporated. Europeans had gradually drifted away from the rigid American approach to the embargo.[40] Consequently, aggregate East–West trade (exports plus imports) rose nearly sixfold in nominal terms from 1970 through 1979. The increase, however, was imbalanced in at least two ways. First, only a few key countries (such as West Germany and Romania) saw a substantial increment in their trade with countries outside their own bloc. Second, while Western Europe produced a host of goods in demand in the East, there was little that Soviet bloc countries could offer in return. Unlike the USSR, they had no massive energy sources (gas or oil). Thus, Eastern Europe's purchases from the EEC countries were financed heavily with loans provided by banks in Western Europe. In the 1980s, the credits would effectively bankrupt a number of Soviet bloc countries and deepen the crisis of Communism.[41]

Perhaps most importantly, West Europeans were able to include questions of individual freedom and political rights in the CSCE agenda, an important – if initially perhaps mainly cosmetic – victory. As T. A. K. Elliott, the British ambassador to Finland who was deeply involved in the negotiations, put it in

39 This is evident both from the documentation now available as well as from the memoirs of most participants. See the sources cited above, especially Thomas, *Helsinki Effect*; for the Davignon Report and European foreign policy cooperation, see Michael E. Smith, *Europe's Foreign and Security Policy: The Institutionalization of Cooperation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

40 See Mastanduno, *Economic Containment*.

41 See Harriet Friedmann, "Warsaw Pact Socialism: Détente and the Disintegration of the Soviet Bloc," in Allen Hunter (ed.), *Re-Thinking the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 213–31.

1974: "One thing the Conference has already achieved: to get it accepted for the first time by Communist states that relations between peoples – and therefore the attitudes of Governments towards their citizens – should be the subject of multilateral discussion." This principle, he added, was important because it might "eventually be able to get the Soviet Union to lower, even a little, the barriers to human contacts and the flow of information and ideas between East and West."[42]

Herein lay the key to the long-term significance of the CSCE and of European détente. Unlike superpower détente, it did not focus on nuclear weapons or traditional security issues. What the CSCE, one of the key products of European détente, brought clearly to the international arena was a focus on human security, on the rights of people rather than the prerogatives of states.

Complexities of European détente

Détente in Europe was a complex and constantly evolving process. It sprang from the national aspirations of several countries; it represented a rebellion of sorts against the formation of tight blocs that had emerged in previous decades. De Gaulle's efforts to lift France's status and Ceauşescu's attempts to take Romania down a more independent road were two examples of such nationalism. But so was the *Ostpolitik* of Willy Brandt, at least if one regards the chancellor's policies as an effort to advance the cause of German reunification. Still, men like Brandt touched chords and inspired people beyond their national boundaries. Among a large number of Europeans, whether they were members of NATO or the Warsaw Pact or neutrals, there was a strong desire to overcome the rigidities of the blocs and to puncture holes in the Iron Curtain. Because of his unique background, Brandt in many ways was the perfect symbol of the new European era: a social democrat and victim of Nazi persecutors, he had served as the mayor of Berlin in the early 1960s when the Soviets and East Germans had erected the wall. Because he had earned his anti-totalitarian and anti-Communist credentials, Brandt was the right person to talk peace to the Soviets.

42 T. A. K. Elliott to J. Callaghan, July 29, 1974, in *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, Series III, vol. II, *The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1972–1975*, ed. G. Bennett and K. A. Hamilton (London: Whitehall History Publishing, 1997), 317–26.

Recognizing the aspirations of its allies to reach out to their brethren in East Germany and Eastern Europe, US officials were impelled to pursue a policy of building bridges to the eastern part of the continent. When they put their weight behind the Harmel Report in 1967, American officials were saying that they accepted détente as an appropriate policy to be undertaken multilaterally to relax tensions in Europe while they focused on other parts of the world that they now deemed increasingly important. The détente in Europe that was launched in the late 1960s, however, was very different from its Soviet–American counterpart. It was nurtured and driven by European leaders like Brandt and was embodied in European institutions like the CSCE, setting it apart from its superpower variant.

The practical results of European détente, however, are difficult to measure. Unlike Soviet–American détente, which had its specific mileposts like SALT I and the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, the relaxation of East–West relations in Europe was a relatively open-ended process. Because it was not propelled by a single country, it did not have a single coherent goal. Although economic intercourse grew between East and West, it did not transform continent-wide patterns. Although Brandt signed numerous agreements with his counterparts in the East, they were, in the end, less important for what they stated or recognized than for the contacts and processes that were begun. Likewise, the CSCE was not a formal treaty and could be interpreted in numerous contradictory ways; yet the Helsinki Accords for all their ambiguities – perhaps because of their ambiguities – were of great consequence.

Perhaps because it did not have such identifiable and formal "end products," European détente did not suffer a rapid decline and collapse. Unlike Soviet–American détente which was widely proclaimed dead by 1979 (if not earlier), the European process lingered on into the 1980s. The CSCE, for example, was institutionalized in the framework of the follow-up conferences (Belgrade, 1977–78; Madrid, 1980–83; Ottawa, 1985). These had been outlined in Basket IV of the Helsinki Final Act. Indeed, unlike the ABM Treaty of 1972, the CSCE still exists in the form of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This, in turn, reflected one of the most important developments in the all-European process that had gradually emerged in the 1960s and early 1970s. Getting to the point of signing the Helsinki Final Act on August 1, 1975, had required a collective change in the mindsets of leaders on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Although the division of Europe remained intact for another decade and a half, détente and the Helsinki process had begun to nurture an all-European challenge to the division of the continent.

When Willy Brandt accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in December 1971, he said: "Europe has its future ahead of itself. In the West it will grow beyond the European Economic Community and develop into a union which will be able to assume part of the responsibility for world affairs, independently of the United States but firmly linked with it. At the same time there are opportunities for developing cooperation and safeguarding peace through the whole of Europe, perhaps of establishing a kind of European Partnership for Peace."[43] Later events would show that Brandt's vision was far more prophetic than that of most of his counterparts in the West or the East.

43 Willy Brandt, "Peace Policy in Our Time," Nobel lecture, December 11, 1971, in Irwin Abrams (ed.), *Nobel Lectures: Peace, 1971–1980* (Singapore: World Scientific, 1997), 24–25.