

# 2017

## H-Diplo

 [@HDiplo](https://twitter.com/HDiplo)

Article Review

No. 701

**An H-Diplo Article Review Forum**

1 June 2017 (updated Selvage review)

Article Review Editors: Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse  
Web and Production Editor: George Fujii

Commissioned for H-Diplo by Thomas Maddux

**H-Diplo Forum on “CSCE, the German Question, and the Eastern Bloc”** in the *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18:3 (Summer 2016): 3-180.

Reviewed by:

**Aryo Makko**, Stockholm University

**Federico Romero**, European University Institute

**Peter Ruggenthaler**, Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Research on War Consequences, Graz

**Douglas Selvage**, Office of the Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Records in Berlin

URL: <http://tiny.cc/AR701>

---

Introduction by **Gottfried Niedhart**, University of Mannheim, Emeritus

---

**D**uring a visit to Israel in June 1973, West German Chancellor Willy Brandt spoke at the Weizmann Institute in Jerusalem about the development of East-West relations. As always, he emphasized the gradual nature of his own approach. A “sustainable peace policy” was to him no “project of large leaps.” Instead, he described his own policy as one of “small, progressing steps.” Even the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which was about to start in Helsinki in the summer of 1973 and comprised all European states (with the exception of Albania) plus Canada and the United States, should not lead to “wishful thinking,” Brandt declared. “And yet, who would have dared to predict a decade ago that a conference of such constructive substance was taking shape!”<sup>1</sup>

The preceding years—the early 1970s—had witnessed a new form of rapprochement between East and West in general and between the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the member-states of the Warsaw Pact in particular. Although this new form of interaction did not eliminate the fundamental conflict between East and West, it did change the mode and framework in which the conflict was to be conducted from then on.

---

<sup>1</sup> Speech by Willy Brandt at the Weizmann Institute, 11 June 1973, in A3/502, Willy Brandt-Archiv im Archiv der sozialen Demokratie, Bonn (WBA).

The Final Act of the CSCE, signed in Helsinki on 1 August 1975 by 35 national leaders, was an expression of this change: “It was there that Europe’s postwar era finally came to an end.”<sup>2</sup> This document defined the principles that ought to guide all relations and interactions among the signatory states. Above all was the renunciation of the threat and use of force and the inviolability of frontiers. This self-obligation to keep the peace was complemented by a much enlarged definition of peace itself. Henceforth, not only rules for the resolution of international conflicts but also certain norms and domestic political structures counted as essential preconditions for the stabilization of peace in Europe. This included intensified economic exchange and, last but not least, respect for human rights and improved possibilities for traveling abroad and access to information across the line that still divided West and East in Europe.

The era of *détente*, which began in the 1960s, was anything but a linear process. However, the term “Cold War” disappeared from the vocabulary of the political actors at the time. In contemporary perception, the “Cold War” of the 1950s and 1960s as one form of the East-West conflict was replaced by *détente* as a new form in which the conflict was to be pursued. The long period of confrontation and delimitation was superseded by efforts aiming at a more cooperative—yet still antagonistic—coexistence. The increasing “perforation of the Iron Curtain” heralded a new phase in East-West relations, signaling the end of the “Cold War conflict in its 1940s and 1950s form.”<sup>3</sup>

*Détente* in Europe was possible only if the “German question”—often referred to outside Germany as “the German problem”—could be defused. How this was successfully managed from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s is the subject of this JCWS special issue. The dividing line in Germany was the spot in Europe where the confrontation of the two blocs was most highly visible, as was evident when Soviet leaders triggered the Berlin crises of 1948–1949 and 1958–1962. When the latter crisis subsided, the outcome created possibilities for de-escalation on the basis of the territorial status quo. This was the essence of President John F. Kennedy’s appeal of 1963: “We must deal with the world as it is.” Even though he called for a “relaxation of tensions” and a “strategy of peace,” Kennedy never denied the fundamental differences between West and East. Yet while recognizing the continuing political and societal antagonisms, he called for mutual respect of the other’s positions. By arguing for the peaceful resolution of conflicts (“If we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity”), Kennedy both evoked and redefined Woodrow Wilson’s famous notion of making “the world . . . safe for democracy.”<sup>4</sup>

If applied to the situation in Germany, Kennedy’s logic meant that the territorial changes after World War II had to be accepted. The German Democratic Republic (GDR) owed its very existence to these postwar

---

<sup>2</sup> Jussi M. Hanhimäki, “*Détente in Europe, 1962–1975*,” in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, 3 vols. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Vol. 2, 199.

<sup>3</sup> Poul Villaume and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *Perforating the Iron Curtain: European Détente, Transatlantic Relations, and the Cold War, 1965–1985* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2010); and Odd Arne Westad, “The New International History of the Cold War: Three (Possible) Paradigms,” *Diplomatic History* 24:4 (Fall 2000), 563.

<sup>4</sup> Commencement Address at American University in Washington, 10 June 1963, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1963* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), 462, 464; and Wilson’s Address at a Session of Congress, 2 April 1917, in Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd, eds., *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson: War and Peace—Presidential Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers (1917–1924)*, 2 vols. (New York: Kraus, 1970), Vol. 1, 14.

rearrangements and therefore welcomed any acknowledgment of the existing international order, but Kennedy's notion foreshadowed a fundamental change of direction in FRG foreign policy. West Germany had to shift from being a Cold War frontline state, continually questioning the postwar order, toward a power with a strong interest in mediating between East and West. This presupposed that the government in Bonn accepted the status quo of the two German states on a territory that was much smaller than that of the former German Reich. When forced to adapt to the surge toward global détente in the early 1970s, West Germany turned into a driving force for détente in Europe. However, this did not eliminate the German question once and for all. Overcoming Germany's division remained a long-term goal of Bonn's policy but was from then on to be pursued within a more comprehensive policy of overcoming the division of Europe and therefore, at least for the then foreseeable future, was to disappear from the day-to-day agenda of West German and East-West politics.

How much Europe's reality in the mid-1970s was still dominated by the East-West conflict was also shown by the differing contemporary interpretations of the Helsinki Final Act. The Warsaw Pact member-states highlighted the static elements contained therein: the inviolability of frontiers and the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states. The West—supported by many of the neutral and nonaligned states—focused on the document's dynamic potential, insisting on the possibility of the peaceful change of frontiers or at least their greater permeability. The fight over interpretations divided Eastern and Western Europe despite originating from a text that was adopted by both sides after a protracted process of mutual rapprochement and compromise. The details of what would come of the Final Act were left to the future. Already in 1970, Poland's Communist leader Władysław Gomułka could speak “about the start of a new way, about the end of the Cold War.” Gomułka evoked the image of “a fresh, blank page in front of us. Our opponents intend to fill this page to their advantage, we to ours.”<sup>5</sup>

The articles in this issue trace the “start of this new way” and the different interests and expectations with which it proceeded until 1975. Earlier drafts of the articles originated with the international research project “Détente and the CSCE in Europe: The States of the Warsaw Pact and the Federal Republic of Germany in Mutual Perception and Rapprochement, 1966–1975,” which was funded by the VolkswagenStiftung and coordinated at the University of Mannheim.<sup>6</sup> Parallel to other research initiatives, the project analyzed the CSCE process from various angles, seeking to define the contribution of European states toward the transformation of the East-West conflict.<sup>7</sup> The history of East-West relations was at no time limited solely to

---

<sup>5</sup> Gomułka in conversation with the former West German Communist leader Max Reimann (1898–1977), 7 September 1970, transcribed in Mieczysław F. Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1969–1971* (Warsaw: Iskry, 2001), 241.

<sup>6</sup> For an earlier publication, see Oliver Bange and Gottfried Niedhart, eds., *Helsinki 1975 and the Transformation of Europe* (New York: Berghahn, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> For parallel efforts, see Villaume and Westad, eds., *Perforating the Iron Curtain*; Wilfried Loth and Georges-Henri Soutou, eds., *The Making of Détente: Eastern and Western Europe in the Cold War, 1965–75* (London: Routledge, 2008); Andreas Wenger, Vojtech Mastny, and Christian Nuenlist, eds., *Origins of the European Security System: The Helsinki Process Revisited, 1969–75* (London: Routledge, 2008); Daniel Möckli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War: Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the Dream of Political Unity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009); Thomas Fischer, *Neutral Power in the CSCE: The N+N States and the Making of the Helsinki Accords 1975* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2009); and

a history of relations between the two superpowers, particularly for the détente era. Détente politics between the superpowers remained connected in numerous ways to détente policies in Europe. The latest research has shown that détente resulted in the growing influence of European policymakers in international relations. The lessening of tensions between East and West provided small and medium-size states of the old continent with more room for maneuver, which they swiftly exploited. Yet this new room for action differed substantially among countries, both across and within the blocs. As the articles here demonstrate, West Germany gained substantial leverage within the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and so did the USSR's allies in the Warsaw Pact.

The new leeway of the European actors became particularly apparent in West Germany's *Ostpolitik*. By the time *Ostpolitik* began, the FRG had entered a new phase in its still brief history. During the country's initial phase under Konrad Adenauer, strong ties to Western Europe and a staunch anti-Communist stance had been a function of the Cold War.<sup>8</sup> This period was succeeded in the late 1960s by a "second formative phase," with marked innovations in Bonn's domestic and foreign policies, especially policy on the German question.<sup>9</sup> In domestic politics, the Christian Democrats (CDU) lost their once seemingly unchallengeable monopoly on forming the government in Bonn. At the end of 1966, West Germany's Social Democrats (SPD) joined a coalition government in Bonn that was still headed by the CDU/CSU.

This move from a strictly opposition role adopted back in 1949 to governmental responsibility paved the way for the SPD to win the parliamentary elections of 1969. Willy Brandt became the first Social-Democratic chancellor in the history of the FRG. The Western-style parliamentary system, with its alternating governmental parties, had finally become a reality.<sup>10</sup> The same years witnessed an important reversal in Bonn's

---

Arnold Suppan and Wolfgang Mueller, eds., *"Peaceful Coexistence" or "Iron Curtain": Austria, Neutrality, and Eastern Europe in the Cold War and Détente, 1955-1989* (Vienna: Lit Verlag, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> For a small selection of the rich literature, see Hans-Peter Schwarz, "The Division of Germany, 1945–1949," in Melvyn Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. 1: *Origins* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 133–153; Detlef Junker, ed., *The United States and Germany in the Era of the Cold War, 1945–1990*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Ludolf Herbst, Werner Bühner, and Hanno Sowade, eds., *Vom Marshallplan zur EWG: Die Eingliederung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in die westliche Welt* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1990); and Jost Dülffer, ed., "Western Integration, German Unification and the Cold War: The Adenauer Era in Perspective," special issue, *German Politics and Society* 25:2 (2007). For two useful overviews, see Wolfram F. Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe: Forty Years of German Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); and Helga Haftendorn, *Coming of Age: German Foreign Policy since 1945* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Eckart Conze, *Die Suche nach Sicherheit: Eine Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von 1949 bis in die Gegenwart* (Munich: Siedler, 2009), 332.

<sup>10</sup> On westernization in society and political culture, see Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, *Wie westlich sind die Deutschen? Amerikanisierung und Westernisierung im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999); Axel Schildt, *Ankunft im Westen: Ein Essay zur Erfolgsgeschichte der Bundesrepublik* (Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer, 1999); Konrad Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans 1945–1995* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006); and Heinrich August Winkler, *Germany: The Long Road West*, 2 vols. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007).

policy toward the other German state, the GDR. Formerly sacrosanct political doctrines were dropped or markedly softened. In earlier years, Germany's reunification was held to be a precondition for détente in Europe, whereas by the late 1960s the only feasible option for future reunification was seen in a long-term transformation of the nature of the East-West conflict. This was mirrored by a fundamental change in self-perception and self-confidence among West Germans. Citizens of the FRG ceased to perceive their state as provisional and instead developed a specific West German identity. This self-recognition as a West German state (of a larger German nation) was the necessary precondition for both acknowledging the GDR's existence and defining and pursuing specific West German interests in the international arena.

This development points to the third area—foreign policy—in which fundamental changes had occurred by the late 1960s and early 1970s. Economically and militarily, the FRG was firmly anchored to the European Communities and NATO—a situation that had allowed the West German government to become a “major actor in international politics” by the 1960s.<sup>11</sup> In the early 1970s, the FRG extended its radius of international action and pursued an independent policy of rapprochement toward the member-states of the Warsaw Pact. The short-term goal was the normalization of ties with the countries in Eastern Europe by establishing official diplomatic relations, which until the late 1960s had been maintained only with the Soviet Union. This initiative was driven by the idea that a systematic multiplication of contacts would eventually lead to new forms of communication between East and West at all political, economic, and cultural levels.

In early 1967, Romania alone among East-bloc states had been willing to establish full diplomatic relations with Bonn without any preconditions. Hungary and Czechoslovakia would have followed suit, but under pressure from Poland and the GDR they delayed acting. The Warsaw Pact then put a price tag on relations with West Germany, indicating that Bonn should pay first. This included the formal recognition of the GDR and the Oder-Neisse Line, an acknowledgment that the Munich agreement of 1938 had been invalid from the beginning, and the renunciation of access to nuclear weapons—all of which, the Warsaw Pact countries announced in February 1967, had to be fulfilled before any additional members of the Eastern bloc would join Romania in establishing official relations with Bonn. With the exception of Romania, the Warsaw Pact thus appeared from the outside as a solid and united bloc.

In reality, however, the interests of the East European leaders and their aspirations or fears with regard to an East-West rapprochement continued to differ substantially based on the relative emphasis they gave to security policies, economic policies, and national policies. The Soviet Union, Poland, and the GDR gave primary emphasis to greater security. They demanded from the FRG the recognition of the territorial status quo in order to preserve their own respective spheres of power and influence. Bulgaria and especially Hungary exemplified Warsaw Pact states whose external relations—particularly with the West—were driven by economic considerations. The priorities of Hungary's Communist leaders initially mirrored those of West Germany, which at the beginning of the détente era maintained primarily economic relations with Central and Eastern Europe. Romania's *Westpolitik* was driven mainly by a desire for national distinctiveness, establishing ties with the FRG as a public act of national identity and sovereignty.

This typology of the priorities within the Warsaw Pact at the outset of European détente is necessarily simplistic. It does not reflect the actual opportunities for pursuing these approaches within the hegemonic

---

<sup>11</sup> See Karl Kaiser, *German Foreign Policy in Transition: Bonn between East and West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 1.

framing of the Soviet bloc. However, the typology does allow for a differentiated analysis of the Warsaw Pact. Even though the Soviet bloc seemed on the surface to be a monolithic entity, important cracks had surfaced in earlier years, notably in East Germany and Hungary in 1953 and 1956. In this context, French President Charles de Gaulle envisaged a pan-European détente that would supersede the global bloc-to-bloc framework—a new arrangement of European states “from the Atlantic to the Urals” could be created.<sup>12</sup> These hopes were dashed by the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, which put an end to the Prague Spring.

The occupation of Czechoslovakia was especially disappointing to those for whom the Prague Spring had nourished hopes of far-reaching domestic change within a Communist country. The reformers in Prague did not intend to leave the Warsaw Pact, but they stretched and then transgressed the limits allowed by the Soviet Union for a Communist regime. Prior to the Soviet invasion, Czechoslovakia’s far-reaching liberalization in domestic affairs had seemed to vindicate the transformation strategy laid out by Brandt in the early 1960s. If one allowed for more exchange between East and West, he had argued, this might lead over time to “the transformation of the other side.”<sup>13</sup> For a while in 1968, it seemed distinctly possible that Communist regimes could undergo fundamental change. To this end, the West should offer every desired form of contact and cooperation, while seeking to achieve treaties on the renunciation of force and to support wholesale domestic change within the countries of the Warsaw Pact through the establishment of an international framework of rapprochement. “Change through rapprochement”—Egon Bahr’s celebrated catch-phrase from 1963—seemed for a while to be coming to fruition in Czechoslovakia.<sup>14</sup>

From the perspective of both the Soviet Union (as the Warsaw Pact’s hegemonic power) and the East European states, Western “bridge-building” had initially been welcome.<sup>15</sup> The economic deficits and technological backwardness of the Soviet-bloc countries could be compensated for only through cooperation with the West. However, as viewed from Moscow, economic and cultural contacts posed a potentially grave threat if they developed into a gateway for transforming East-bloc societies. Even though the Czechoslovak authorities had promised to fulfill their obligations within the Warsaw Pact, the Prague Spring was sharply eroding the ideological texture of the Pact as an alliance of “fraternal” socialist states. This was why the Soviet Union—after lengthy and complex internal discussions—decided to crush the Prague Spring with military force.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Again and again de Gaulle used this formula during his presidency. See, for instance, his press conference, of 4 February 1965, in Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages*, (Paris: Plon, 1970), Vol. IV, 341.

<sup>13</sup> Speeches by Willy Brandt at Harvard University in 1962 and in Tutzing, 15 July 1963, in *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik* (DzD), Series IV, Vol. 9, 567.

<sup>14</sup> See speech by Egon Bahr at Tutzing, 15 July 1963, in DzD, Series IV, Vol. 9., 575.

<sup>15</sup> This phrase comes from a speech given by President Lyndon Johnson at the dedication of the George C. Marshall Research Library, 23 May 1964, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon Baines Johnson, 1964* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 427.

<sup>16</sup> On the decision-making process in Moscow, see Mark Kramer, “The Kremlin, the Prague Spring, and the Brezhnev Doctrine,” in Vladimir Tismaneanu, ed., *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion, and Utopia* (Budapest: Central

The overwhelming use of military force came as a shock to much of the world, but it did not ultimately derail progress toward détente in both East and West. If anything, the events of 1968 pushed the move toward détente to a new stage by exposing the contradictions between two very different concepts of détente. A French diplomat, Jacques Andréani, when looking back on this period, distinguished between “détente statique” and “détente dynamique”—that is, between détente in the East-West conflict to safeguard the status quo and détente geared to *overcome* the status quo.<sup>17</sup> The mutual interest in détente was counteracted by the conceptual divergence of what détente ought to be. Should it maintain the status quo or serve as an “instrument for overcoming Europe’s division”?<sup>18</sup>

The articles in this special issue indicate that the rapprochement between Eastern and Western Europe through the mid-1970s took place precisely under the auspices of these contradictory strategies for détente. Which compromises from the maximum strategic goals were necessary to achieve meaningful rapprochement in the international politics of the time? This conflict of ideas and concepts was of particular importance to the two German states, which together constituted the all-important “border region” between the two blocs.<sup>19</sup> Their respective policies represented the two juxtaposed concepts in almost pure form—even though neither state was able to uphold its position during the ensuing détente era. If the GDR wished to obtain international recognition and to continue to profit economically from a privileged relationship with the FRG, then it could no longer hinder the move toward East-West détente. However, like the USSR, East Germany’s leaders had to focus on safeguarding the political and territorial status quo. In parallel, Bonn’s new *Ostpolitik*, with its medley of bilateral treaties, contributed to a significant relaxation of the situation in Europe by seemingly accepting the status quo. Even then, however, the FRG remained a revisionist state intent on changing the status quo in the course of a more comprehensive peaceful change in East-West affairs—at the expense of the GDR and to the detriment of the hegemonic structures in the Soviet sphere of influence. In an internal memorandum in late 1969, Bahr was adamant about this: “The main goal of Soviet European policy is the legalization of the status quo. The main goal of our policy is to overcome the status quo.”<sup>20</sup>

---

European University Press, 2010), pp. 276–362; and Michail Prozumenščikov, “Die Entscheidung im Politbüro der KPdSU,” in Stefan Karner, Natalja Tomilina, and Alexander Tschubarjan, eds., *Prager Frühling: Das internationale Krisenjahr 1968: Beiträge* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2008), 205–241.

<sup>17</sup> Jacques Andréani, *Le piège: Helsinki et la chute du communisme* (Paris: Plon, 2005), 41.

<sup>18</sup> The positions were put forward during a conference of European institutes for international relations in Geneva in May 1968. See the report by Eberhard Schulz, a participant in the conference on behalf of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik (DGAP), “Studiengruppe für die deutschen Beziehungen zur Sowjetunion und zu den übrigen Ländern des Ostens,” 20 May 1968, in DGAP-Archives, Berlin.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Lindenberger, “Divided, but Not Disconnected: Germany as a Border Region of the Cold War,” in Tobias Hochscherf, Christoph Laucht, and Andrew Plowman, eds., *Divided, but Not Disconnected: German Experiences of the Cold War* (New York: Berghahn, 2010), 11–33.

<sup>20</sup> Memorandum from Egon Bahr, 18 September 1969, in *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (AAPD) 1969, 1040.

The articles in this issue focus on how a regulated—though not always tension-free—modus vivendi could be established between West Germany and the states of the Warsaw Pact. The authors analyze two processes of change that—in combination—led to a new pattern of East-West relations: on the one hand the change in politics, with its continuous intensification of bilateral and multilateral contacts; and on the other hand the change in perceptions, contributing to ever more complex images of the other. More nuanced ways of perceiving the other side began to complement the black-and-white images of Cold War propaganda. Threat perceptions, originating from the early Cold War years, were gradually transcended, generating the sense that one was dealing with states and societies that, despite being in sharp contrast and rivalry with one another, were able to set and follow rules for East-West competition without relying on force. This process of the “normalization” of relations between the FRG and the Warsaw Pact member-states—or what was more generally termed “European détente”—was based on the mutual recognition of economic and security interests and the ability to engage in a dialogue over “common fields of interest, rapprochement, and differences.”<sup>21</sup>

The articles here focus mainly on state action, but on occasion they also shed light on the broad spectrum of non-governmental actors involved in cross-border, cross-bloc communication between East and West, including banks and other companies, party officials, trade unions, journalists, clergy, religious activists, scientists, academics, writers, and artists. The latest historical research pays great attention to these groups and calls for an enlarged scope of research, highlighting the societal and cultural aspects of the East-West conflict and understanding it as a transnational phenomenon.<sup>22</sup> Legitimate as this trend may be, the chief actors in fostering European détente were the governments in Bonn, in Moscow, and in the other capitals of the Warsaw Pact that could change direction and move toward détente in Europe. A comprehensive international history ought to show how politics was intertwined with economics and technology, with culture and science, with public discourse and propaganda, and so forth.<sup>23</sup> The goals of this special issue are more modest. We offer an international history of the politics of European détente, based on a wealth of archival sources, many only recently declassified. The aim is to provide a better understanding of the multitude of perspectives involved in the Soviet bloc in the early 1970s and to contribute to a more refined definition of the stages of East-West rapprochement from 1966 through 1975. To help foster comparability among the country studies, several basic questions were set forth at the start of the project: What were the expectations associated with East-West détente? What goals were pursued? What steps were taken in support of these goals? Were these goals achieved? What room for maneuver did national governments enjoy within the framework of their

---

<sup>21</sup> Notes by Willy Brandt after his meeting with Leonid Brezhnev in Oreanda, 18 September 1971, in Brandt Papers A8/92, WBA. See also Willy Brandt, *Begegnungen und Einsichten: Die Jahre 1960–1975* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1976), p. 471. By the term “normalization,” Brandt meant the improvement of East-West relations. The gradual process of normalization would lead to a modus vivendi. Furthermore, it would provide the individual Warsaw Pact member-states with ever greater room for maneuvering. See the notes by Willy Brandt in preparation for a meeting of the Cabinet on 7 June 1970, in Brandt Papers A8/91, WBA. The cabinet was to decide whether the FRG should enter the final stage of the negotiations with the Soviet Union or continue to wait. See also Willy Brandt, *Friedenspolitik in Europa* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1968), 119.

<sup>22</sup> For a succinct summary, see Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, “Cold War,” in Akira Iriye and Pierre-Yves Saunier, eds., *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 174–177.

<sup>23</sup> This is aimed at by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, 3 vols. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). However, the main focus in all three volumes is on state actors.



respective alliances and within the context of the multilateralization of détente? What impact did European détente have on the texture and structures of the alliances and their respective polities?

The five articles deal with national perspectives on two recurring leitmotifs: the specific importance of the German question; and national aspirations connected with the multilateralization of East-West détente through CSCE. Because of the close connection between power and mission in Communist societies, a new approach to East-West affairs also necessitated a redefinition or at least an adaptation of the relationship between ideology and power politics. This was risky in a system that was legitimized (or legitimized itself) through a tight set of Marxist-Leninist beliefs. The de-emphasis of revolutionary meaning and the emphasis on sectoral, even national, interests that came with the public show of East-West détente helped to erode the system's legitimacy. This eventually spread—more than the “Ostpoliticians” in Bonn had ever anticipated—to all levels of the Warsaw Pact societies. This soon became an almost silent, but nevertheless momentous, process. The climax of the gradual delegitimization came in the autumn of 1989 when East German protesters publicly cited Rosa Luxemburg's statement that “freedom is always the freedom of the other.” This comment by one of Communism's foremost icons was soon outlawed, and those who cited it were liable to prosecution by the authorities of the purportedly “socialist” state. The following day the protesters turned up with banners simply saying “Rosa!”—which were also immediately confiscated. Soon thereafter, the East German

### Participants:

**Aryo Makko** is Associate Professor of History at Stockholm University and has been a visiting fellow at the Graduate Institute in Geneva, the University of Oxford and Harvard University. He was selected as a Pro Futura Scientia fellow by the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study (SCAS) in 2016. He has recently published *Ambassadors of Realpolitik: Sweden, the CSCE and the Cold War* (New York: Berghahn, 2016), his work has also appeared in the *Journal of Cold War Studies* and *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, among others.

**Federico Romero** is Professor of History of Post-War European Cooperation and Integration at the Department of History and Civilization, European University Institute, where he is coordinating the European Research Council project “Looking West: the European Socialist regimes facing pan-European cooperation and the European Community” (<https://paneur1970s.eui.eu/>). Among his most recent publications, with Elisabetta Bini and Giuliano Garavini (eds.), *Oil Shock: The 1973 Crisis and its Economic Legacy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016); “Cold War Historiography at the Crossroads”, in *Cold War History*, 14:4 (November 2014): 685-703, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2014.950249>; with Angela Romano, “European Socialist regimes facing globalisation and European co-operation: dilemmas and responses,” special issue of the *European Review of History* 21:2 (2014).

**Doz. Mag. Dr. Peter Ruggenthaler**, senior research fellow at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Research on War Consequences, Graz, Austria. His publications include “*The Concept of Neutrality in Stalin's Foreign Policy, 1945–53.*” Harvard Cold War Studies Book Series (2015); “*Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.*” Harvard Cold War Studies Book Series (Co-editor, 2010). His current research project is “The End of an Era” (The Soviet Union and the revolutions in 1989, German reunification 1990 and the break-up of the Soviet Union 1991).

**Dr. Douglas Selvage** is Project Director in the Education and Research Division of the Office of the Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Records in Berlin. He currently oversees the historical research projects, “The

## H-Diplo Article Review

GDR, the Ministry for State Security, and the CSCE Process, 1973-1989,” and the “Ministry for State Security and MGB/KGB in the Soviet Bloc, 1950-1989: Structure, Contact and Limits of their Relations.” He received his Ph.D. from Yale University in modern Polish and German history in 1998, and as a historian at the U.S. Department of State (2001-2006), his publications included *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976: European Security, 1969-76*.

The present special issue illustrates nicely a disparity in the field of Cold-War studies. The 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent demise of the Communist bloc as well as the continuing opening of archives in many countries have resulted in a new wave of scholarship that aims to explain the transformation and end of the global conflict between East and West that was the Cold War. The special issue edited by German historians Gottfried Niedhart and Oliver Bange is essentially a history of détente with a specific focus on the impact of the West German policy of *Ostpolitik* and of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) on East-West relations in general and the Warsaw Pact in particular during the period 1966 to 1975. In his introduction, Niedhart points out the road to European Détente via the successful defusing of the German Question as the subject of the special issue.<sup>1</sup> He adds that “the aim is to provide a better understanding of the multitude of perspectives involved in the Soviet bloc in the early 1970s and to contribute to a more refined definition of the stages of East-West rapprochement from 1966 through 1975” (12).

The five essays provided by Niedhart, Bange and their Eastern European colleagues Jordan Baev, Wanda Jarzabek, and Csaba Békés complete the task defined in the introduction with varying success. They all provide new insights on détente, in particular on relations within the Warsaw Pact and on West German-Eastern European relations. They offer interesting accounts about ideas, concepts and strategies but leave considerable space for discussion about their actual effects. In part, the special issue is a follow-up to earlier, more preliminary results published by the authors in an edited volume in 2008.<sup>2</sup>

Niedhart himself gives a meticulous account of how *Ostpolitik* developed from idea to state policy under the leadership of Chancellor Willy Brandt. Together with his advisor Egon Bahr, Brandt succeeded in designing *Ostpolitik* as a “strategy of transformation” in full accordance with John F. Kennedy’s “strategy of peace”.<sup>3</sup> Niedhart portrays Bonn as a “major actor in international politics,” operating “from a position of psychological, economic and political strength” and viewed as “having overtaken France and Britain as the preeminent power [in Western Europe]” while “fully aware” of its own status as a “regional power” or “middle-size power” (20, 22). One could possibly have wished for a more thorough explanation of how the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) overcame the persisting uneasiness felt in Washington.<sup>4</sup> But ultimately, Niedhart presents nuanced conclusions on the state of affairs in 1975 without overstressing the argument (58-59). Bange offers an equally dense and insightful analysis of the East German response to *Ostpolitik* and

---

<sup>1</sup> Gottfried Niedhart, “Introduction: CSCE, the German Question, and the Eastern Bloc,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18:3 (2016) [hereafter *JCWS*]: 3-13.

<sup>2</sup> Oliver Bange and Gottfried Niedhart (eds.), *Helsinki 1975 and the Transformation of Europe* (New York: Berghahn, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Gottfried Niedhart, “Transformation through Communication and the Quest for Peaceful Change,” *JCWS*: 14-59.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Jean-François Juneau, “The Limits of Linkage: The Nixon Administration and Willy Brandt’s *Ostpolitik*, 1969-72,” *International History Review* 33:2 (2011): 277-297.

the CSCE.<sup>5</sup> In contrast to Niedhart, however, he explicitly links these results to the developments of the 1980s and the events of 1989. At the same time, the body of his article itself treats the Détente years only (60-61 and 92-93). Drawing on a wealth of earlier inaccessible sources, the essays on Bulgaria, Hungary, and Poland provide deep insight into the intra-bloc dynamics of the Warsaw Pact. Jarzabek links *Ostpolitik* and the CSCE together but maintains that “it would be simplistic to depict Polish leaders’ interest in CSCE only in the context of the German problem” and that “Polish expectations concerning CSCE went far beyond the German context”.<sup>6</sup> Jordan Baev and Csaba Békés present a much broader take on general Bulgarian-West German relations and Hungarian CSCE policy respectively, at the cost of focusing on the questions initially presented by Niedhart.<sup>7</sup> Baev treats the entire Cold War era and suggests that *Ostpolitik* was not a social democratic peculiarity as Christian democratic leaders such as Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Bavarian Minister-President Franz-Josef Strauss too maintained close ties with Sofia – while none of the other articles mentions either Kohl or Strauss. The CSCE, on the other hand, remains a peripheral part of Baev’s analysis and is not mentioned in the conclusions. Békés’s article is over 40 pages long and offers a very thorough account how Hungary dealt with the FRG and the CSCE in its relations with other members of the Warsaw Pact. The integration of the topic of the special issue into a broader narrative on intra-bloc relations and the fact that the article ends rather abruptly without proper conclusions presents a challenge to the reader who is left searching for answers to the questions presented in Niedhart’s introduction. A common feature of the articles is that the superpowers remain somewhat passive or reactive, at times even absent. One example of this is that none of the authors refers to the fact that the idea of a security conference had actually come out of the Kremlin in 1954. All in all, the discrepancy between Niedhart’s well-defined focus and conclusions, Bange’s more far-reaching claims and the somewhat detached focus in the articles of Baev, Jarzabek and Békés creates a certain lack of coherence. The special issue provides new knowledge on how *Ostpolitik* and the CSCE transformed the conflict between East and West between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s. Despite some flaws mentioned above, it thus meets the objective as defined by Niedhart.

Yet, it is the underlying assumption of what *Ostpolitik*, the CSCE and indeed all of détente meant in the long run – which Niedhart himself only vaguely mentions in the concluding lines of his introduction – that provokes the criticism of journal editor Mark Kramer, who considers claims about *Ostpolitik* and the CSCE having transformed the Cold War as “teleological nonsense.”<sup>8</sup> The question as to whether there really is a causality stretching from Helsinki 1975 to the end of the Cold War has been there ever since a growing number of historians started addressing ideas about a ‘Helsinki effect’ and a transformation of the Cold War in their studies of the CSCE and the role of second and third rank powers. This started in the early 2000s but

---

<sup>5</sup> Oliver Bange, “Onto the Slippery Slope: East Germany and East-West Détente under Ulbricht and Honecker, 1965–1975,” *JCWS*: 60-94.

<sup>6</sup> Wanda Jarzabek, “The Impact of the German Question on Polish Attitudes toward CSCE, 1964-1975,” *JCWS*: 139-157.

<sup>7</sup> Jordan Baev, “The Establishment of Bulgarian-West German Diplomatic Relations within the Coordinating Framework of the Warsaw Pact,” *JCWS*: 158-180; Csaba Békés, “Hungary, the Soviet Bloc, the German Question, and the CSCE Process, 1965-1975,” *JCWS*: 95-138.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Kramer, ‘Editor’s note,’ *JCWS*: 1-2.

never erupted in a vocal debate. On the one hand, we have seen a continuous flow of publications on *Ostpolitik*, the CSCE and the lasting impact of European détente.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, grand narratives on the Cold War and its final years often maintained their focus on the United States, the Soviet Union and “hard power.”<sup>10</sup>

But the issue is far from settled. Niedhart and Bange draw support from Jussi Hanhimäki who has argued that “the unfolding of West German *Ostpolitik* was in some ways the bridge between superpower and European détente; the 1975 Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) its ultimate codification.”<sup>11</sup> Hanhimäki recognized that the provisions on human rights were ignored in the Soviet bloc but that they nevertheless survived the breakdown of superpower détente and developed a long-term significance.<sup>12</sup> Poul Villaume and Odd Arne Westad point to the durability of European détente.<sup>13</sup> In his recent *The End of the*

---

<sup>9</sup> See for example Nicolas Badalassi, *En finir avec la guerre froide: La France, l'Europe et le processus d'Helsinki, 1965–1975* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014); Vladimir Bilandžić, Dittmar Dahlmann, Milan Kosanovic (eds.), *From Helsinki to Belgrade: The First CSCE Follow-up Meeting and the Crisis of Détente* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2012); Thomas Fischer, *Neutral Power in the CSCE. The N+N States and the Making of the Helsinki Accords 1975* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2009); Benjamin Gilde, *Österreich im KSZE-Prozess 1969–1983. Neutraler Vermittler in humanitärer Mission* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2013); Anja Hanisch, *Die DDR im KSZE-Prozess 1972–1985. Zwischen Ostabhängigkeit, Westabgrenzung und Ausreisebewegung* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2012); Veronika Heyde, *Frankreich im KSZE-Prozess. Diplomatie im Namen der europäischen Sicherheit 1969–1983* (Berlin: DeGruyter Oldenbourg, 2017); Wilfried Loth and Georges-Henri Soutou, *The Making of Détente: Eastern and Western Europe in the Cold War 1965–75* (London: Routledge, c2008); Aryo Makko, *Ambassadors of Realpolitik: Sweden, the CSCE and the Cold War* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016); Matthias Peter, *Die Bundesrepublik im KSZE-Prozess 1975–1983. Die Umkehrung der Diplomatie* (Berlin, Munich: DeGruyter Oldenbourg, 2015); Matthias Peter and Hermann Wentker (eds.), *Die KSZE im Ost-West-Konflikt. Internationale Politik und gesellschaftliche Transformation* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2012); Angela Romano, *From Détente in Europe to European Détente: How the West Shaped the Helsinki CSCE* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009); Philip Rosin, *Die Schweiz im KSZE-Prozess 1972–1983* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2014); Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Yulia von Saal, *KSZE-Prozess und Perestroika in der Sowjetunion. Demokratisierung, Werteumbruch und Auflösung 1985 - 1991* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2014). Michael Cotey Morgan's much-anticipated *Helsinki 1975: Détente, Human Rights and the Transformation of the Cold War* is forthcoming with Princeton University Press.

<sup>10</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War* (London: Allen Lane, 2006); Serhii Plokhy, *The Last Empire: The Final Days of the Soviet Union* (New York: Basic Books, 2014); Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Jussi Hanhimäki, “Conservative Goals, Revolutionary Outcomes: the Paradox of Détente,” *Cold War History* 8:4 (2008): 505.

<sup>12</sup> Jussi Hanhimäki, “Détente in Europe, 1962–1975,” in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume II: Crises and Détente* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 21.

<sup>13</sup> Poul Villaume and Odd Arne Westad, “Introduction: The Secrets of European Détente,” in Poul Villaume and Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *Perforating the Iron Curtain: European Détente, Transatlantic Relations, and the Cold War, 1965–1985* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2010): 7–10.

*Cold War*, Robert Service also maintains that “the Politburo stayed vulnerable to international diplomatic pressure because of its human rights obligations under the terms of the Helsinki Final Act [...]”<sup>14</sup> In *The Collapse*, Mary Sarotte too maintains that the CSCE “helped to create change” by allowing Western journalists to work in the GDR and even more importantly creating the right of East German citizens to leave country which pressured the Communist leadership once Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev’s reform policies were in place. Sarotte argues that the Soviet Union “significantly underestimated” the power and long-term effects of human rights.<sup>15</sup>

With the opening of archives providing additional access to classified sources after 25, 30 or 50 years of secrecy looming large, the dispute about the prerogative of interpretation with regard to 1989 has most likely just begun and should prove as persistent as that related to 1914. Any serious contribution to a more nuanced understanding of such epochal events, like the special issue edited by Gottfried Niedhart and Oliver Bange, should certainly be met with appreciation.

---

<sup>14</sup> Robert Service, *The End of the Cold War: 1985-1991* (London: Macmillan, 2015): 6.

<sup>15</sup> Mary Elise Sarotte, *The Collapse: The Accidental Opening of the Berlin Wall* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014): 17-18, 65, 80.

Review by **Federico Romero**, European University Institute

---

With this set of essays their authors return to a topic—and an argument—they had already sketched out in a path-breaking book on détente and the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).<sup>1</sup> They do it with partially new or extended sources from public archives, and above all with a key focus on the German question as it was being reframed, and in many ways transformed, by the enactment of German Chancellor Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*. The topic is the relevance of intra-European détente (a process intimately connected to the two superpowers' own détente, and yet distinct and different) for the ways in which Europe lived through the final phase of the Cold War, and for the transformations that weakened the Socialist regimes and eventually brought their collapse in 1989. The key argument is that the type of détente engineered by the encounter between *Ostpolitik* and the Socialist countries' desires to expand their interactions with the West, and pursue national aspirations, "helped to erode the [Socialist] system's legitimacy."<sup>2</sup>

The JCWS editor, Mark Kramer, does not agree with their argument, and he is therefore to be especially commended for having published this set of essays in order to sustain a lively scholarly debate. Restating a point he already discussed at length,<sup>3</sup> Kramer writes that rather than fostering change, détente helped the Soviet bloc to consolidate its domestic stability. *Ostpolitik*, in particular, "amounted to an acceptance of the status quo in Europe" while its transformative impact would be a mere "retrospective distortion."<sup>4</sup> In Kramer's view, only the policy changes brought about by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev explain 1989.

I am among those Cold War historians who disagree with Kramer, and emphasize not only the transformative impact of intra-European détente but also its crucial causal relationship with the demise of the Soviet bloc.<sup>5</sup> This is an argument which is advanced, by the way, also from different approaches and fields of

---

<sup>1</sup> Oliver Bange and Gottfried Niedhart, eds., *Helsinki 1975 and the Transformation of Europe* (New York: Berghahn, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Gottfried Niedhart, "Introduction. CSCE, the German Question, and the Eastern Bloc," in *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18:3 (Summer 2016), 13.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Mark Kramer, "The Demise of the Soviet Bloc," *The Journal of Modern History* 83:4 (2011): 788–854.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Kramer, "Editor's note," in *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18:3 (Summer 2016), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Jussi M. Hanhimäki, "Detente in Europe, 1962-1975," in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 2, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 98-218; Poul Villaume and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *Perforating the Iron Curtain: European Détente, Transatlantic Relations, and the Cold War, 1965-1985* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2010); Federico Romero, *Storia Della Guerra Fredda: L'ultimo Conflitto Per l'Europa* (Torino: G. Einaudi, 2009); Wilfried Loth and Georges-Henri Soutou, eds., *The Making of Détente: Eastern and Western Europe in the Cold War, 1965-75* (London: Routledge, 2008); Leopoldo Nuti, ed., *The Crisis of Detente in Europe: From Helsinki to Gorbachev, 1975-1985* (London: New York: Routledge, 2009); John L. Harper, *The Cold War* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

historiographical inquiry.<sup>6</sup> Thus, I welcome the further qualification and enrichment that these essays bring to a complex topic.

The essays focus on state action, particularly the top-level diplomatic strategies pursued by national governments. And yet, they help us reconsider the Cold War not only as an inter-state struggle for geopolitical control, but also as a comparison and an interplay—not always, or not exclusively, confrontational—between societal models, cultures of domestic stability, and imagined paths to modernity. They do so by exploring the complex interactions that multilateral détente set in motion, with no small doses of unintended or at least unforeseen consequences, and the cumulative, dynamic compromises that gradually emerged.

Taken together, the essays advance a few robust and fruitful points. The first one concerns the counter-intuitive mix of stabilization and change that was at the core of Brandt's (and of course his key advisor Egon Bahr's) vision *Ostpolitik*. Gottfried Niedhart<sup>7</sup> retraces and aptly contextualizes their key idea that a newly confident Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) should abandon its righteous but sterile denunciation of the European *status quo*, and rather promote its recognition and stabilization as “the initial step to overcoming it” (15). Their perception of a Soviet Union more insecure than expansionist (as evidenced in particular by the suppression of the Prague Spring), together with Poland's obvious anxieties about its German border, spelled the necessity to make borders sacrosanct, and remove the specter of German revanchism, for any meaningful dialogue to take roots. Bahr envisioned the long-term possibility of “an erosion of Soviet influence” and even the “disintegration of the Soviet Bloc” (32-33), by means of increased East-West linkages, only if Moscow's domination was not openly challenged. As Niedhart notes, “International stability was a precondition for transnational change” (33). The key factor was the promotion of economic exchange in a stable interstate environment, since “Brandt was sure that the Soviet Union could not have it both ways, moving toward a modern industrial society and keeping the centralized power structures intact” (40). The expected outcome of détente was “the opening of Communist societies toward the West and the promotion of the independence of the Warsaw Pact states” (59).

A second, key issue that the essays foreground is the delicate, fluctuating, and yet critical balance between bloc discipline and diverging national interests in the pursuit of détente by the Socialist regimes. If Niedhart's essay highlights the transformative vision that was at the core of *Ostpolitik*, the other authors zoom in on the multiple ways in which it actually played out and changed the dynamics of international politics in Europe.

---

<sup>6</sup> For instance, Stephen Kotkin and Jan Tomasz Gross, *Uncivil Society: 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist establishment* (New York: Modern Library, 2009); Silvio Pons, *The Global Revolution. A History of International Communism 1917-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Konrad Jarausch, “Moderate Modernity and the Spirit of 1989,” in Vladimir Tismaneanu and Bogdan C. Jacob, eds., *The End of the Beginning: the Revolutions of 1989 and the Resurgence of History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), 109-126; Charles S. Maier, “What Have We Learned since 1989?,” in *Contemporary European History* 18:3 (2009), 253-269; Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005); Wolfgang Mueller, Michael Gehler and Arnold Suppan, eds. *The Revolutions of 1989: A Handbook* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> Gottfried Niedhart, “Ostpolitik. Transformation through Communication and the Quest for Peaceful Change,” in *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18:3 (Summer 2016): 14-59.



Socialist leaders were by and large unified in their desire to expand trade and finance relations with the West, and particularly with West Germany's most mighty and dynamic economy. After the Prague Spring had evidenced the dangers inherent in reformist paths, most of them saw faster growth, technological improvement, and the expansion of domestic consumption as crucial imperatives for the stability of their regimes. Beyond this shared purpose, though, every Socialist government viewed détente's mix of dangers and opportunities from its own perspective, which reflected different national priorities. However, goals, tactics and timing of their individual interaction with *Ostpolitik* had to be carefully calibrated within the constraints imposed by the perceived need for the bloc's cohesion (a factor of which the Soviets of course made sure everyone remained mindful).

The specific case of Romania, which used the atmosphere of détente to openly challenge any notion of bloc coordination, starting with its unilateral recognition of the FRG in 1967, is not studied here. The other cases, though, show that Romania stood apart for its defiant unilateralism, but was far from unique in looking for national advantages through the workings of détente. In not too dissimilar ways, Bulgaria and Hungary had been keen on recognition of the FRG, and the expansion of commercial relations, at least since the mid-1960s. Bowing to bloc discipline, they postponed the first goal but energetically pushed forward on the second one. Hungary, in particular, tried at every occasion to test and possibly loosen the bloc's constraints, pursued a deeper economic interdependence with the FRG and the West in general, played a front role among the Warsaw pact countries in advocating expansive prerogatives for the CSCE, and in the process raised a relatively independent national diplomatic profile.<sup>8</sup> Bulgaria was less influential and more prudent, and yet it also "tried to elaborate and follow a line appropriate to its particular national interests,"<sup>9</sup> eventually building up a close, effective working relationship with the FRG.

Poland was no less keen on expanding trade (eventually building up a huge debt) with the West, particularly with the FRG. Its approach to détente, though, was dominated by the desire to officialise its Western border and obtain a final diplomatic recognition of the geopolitical status quo. Thus, it viewed the dialogue with Brandt and the approach to the CSCE primarily as "a substitute for a peace conference with Germany."<sup>10</sup> Its interaction with the West, no less than its tactics within the Socialist bloc, were thus driven by the twin national goals of a substantial commercial opening *and* an international sanction of its own status. In this respect, Poland was perhaps the most exemplary case of détente's ambivalent intertwining of stabilization and change.

Oliver Bange focuses on the leaders of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), whose perception of détente, and especially of *Ostpolitik*, was, for several reasons, the most apprehensively hostile of all,<sup>11</sup> In the

---

<sup>8</sup> Csaba Békés, "Hungary, the Soviet Bloc, the German Question, and the CSCE Process, 1965-1975," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18:3 (Summer 2016): 95-138.

<sup>9</sup> Jordan Baev, "The Establishment of Bulgarian–West German Diplomatic Relations within the Coordinating Framework of the Warsaw Pact," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18:3 (Summer 2016), 178.

<sup>10</sup> Wanda Jarzabek, "The Impact of the German Question on Polish Attitudes toward CSCE, 1964-1975," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18:3 (Summer 2016), 148.

<sup>11</sup> Oliver Bange, "Onto the Slippery Slope. East Germany and East-West Détente under Ulbricht and Honecker, 1965-1975," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18:3 (Summer 2016): 60-94.

first place, under Walter Ulbricht they were committed to “an offensive ideological course” (78) still linked to the vision of an eventual reunification of Germany under Communist rule. *Ostpolitik* in their view would thus engender the dreaded “counterrevolutionary social-democratization of Eastern Europe” (73). Second, even after Moscow imposed a change of course – embodied in the more pragmatic and defensive approach promoted by Ulbricht’s successor Erich Honecker—they remained very alert to the dangers inherent in the CSCE process, namely its subversive potential for the Socialist regimes. Even after they signed up at Helsinki, they analyzed the aims of *Ostpolitik* (by then a strategy embraced by the whole of Western Europe) as “systematically and permanently exerting influence on the economic, political and ideological processes in the countries of the socialist community of states in order to induce the erosion of their social orders” (85). Bange convincingly argues that “the GDR was indeed trapped in a process of multilateral détente” (86), and accepted the CSCE only because it thought that it could still control its consequences by means of strengthened internal security.

The other Socialist regimes had far more incentives to promote détente, but they also shared (albeit not so lucidly, as far as we know) a similar concern. Controlling the process—its reach, effects, and consequences—was no less crucial than setting its direction. As the CSCE emphatically guaranteed existing borders and sovereignty, they presumably figured that they could maintain control over the denser exchanges it entailed (exchanges of goods, of people, and of information) while reaping the advantages of enhanced economic interdependence.

These essays demonstrate the value of a more nuanced and differentiated historical analysis of the Socialist countries, and they prove that the processes of détente pivoted around *Ostpolitik* did not at all amount to an acceptance of Communist rule, as critics of détente argued then and now. They rather lured the Socialist regimes to open up to the West, challenging them to adapt to new conditions of increased interdependence in which they would rapidly discover themselves to be far more dependent on the West—on its credit, but also on its cultural parameters - than the other way round. Thus, Bange rightly wonders (60) whether they did not actually negotiate their own demise, and this remains a key issue for historians of the late Cold War in Europe.

Niedhart pushes the argument one step further. Within the increasingly dense web of détente—which was seen by many contemporaries is the end of the zero-sum-game Cold War antagonism—new diplomatic practices stimulated a change in perceptions, with “ever more complex images of the other.”<sup>12</sup> The shift away from the language of essential enmity gradually deflated, and to a certain extent even deconstructed, the image of the enemy. As Niedhart concludes, “The de-emphasis of revolutionary meaning and the emphasis on sectoral, even national, interests that came with the public show of East-West détente helped to erode the system’s legitimacy. This eventually spread—more than the ‘Ostpoliticians’ in Bonn had ever anticipated—to all levels of the Warsaw Pact societies. This soon became an almost silent, but nevertheless momentous, process” (13)

Thus, these essays establish some firm points and in so doing indicate also a few key items of a research agenda. One concerns the ramifications of the re-emergence of Germany as a key, determinative European political actor. Some are already in evidence here, others should be added with an equally differentiated analysis of the ways in which *Ostpolitik* was Europeanized and became the standard point of reference for the

---

<sup>12</sup> Niedhart, “Introduction,” 11.

## H-Diplo *Article Review*

other Western countries as well. A second one concerns the domestic reverberations of détente in the Socialist societies. As those regimes muffled their ideological struggle against the West, they shifted their self-legitimization to a terrain largely defined by the West's own benchmarks, above all individual consumer prosperity. In some socialist countries this built a debt trap. In all of them, it exposed Communist rulers to a disillusionment nurtured not only by the loss of utopian belief, but by the delusional nature of the new material goals they had set.

Mark Kramer is right to point out that Gorbachev's removal of the 'Brezhnev doctrine' threat was a key turning point. And yet, the eruption and peaceful solution of the 1989 crisis is hardly imaginable without the hollowing out of the Socialist regimes that had been nurtured by détente.

Review by **Peter Ruggenthaler**, Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Research on War Consequences, Graz

---

Was West German Chancellor Willy Brandt's policy, which sought to promote 'change through rapprochement,' instrumental in bringing about the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, in ending the Cold War, and in overcoming the division of Germany? For the German scholar Gottfried Niedhart, the answer is a resounding yes. Drawing on a wealth of sources, Niedhart shows how Brandt (and his comrade-in-arms Egon Bahr) entertained visionary views as early as the late 1960s. These were translated, Niedhart claims, into clearly defined political goals which were to come to fruition three decades later. So, when all is said and done, who should the palm for the historic reunification of Germany go to? In the eyes of many German Social Democrats—and of historians in sympathy with Social Democracy—it was Brandt's 'Ostpolitik,' which allegedly prepared the stage for reunification, that enabled the Christian Democratic Union of Germany/*Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands* (CDU) Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl to reap the rewards.

In his source-based essay, Niedhart<sup>1</sup> advances the claim "that Bonn wanted to bypass the [German Democratic Republic] GDR; the long-run concern was that a full opening would undermine the East German Communist system" (24). Even though there was no strict timetable, Ostpolitik "remained a strategy of transformation. It aimed at the gradual change of the Eastern bloc, thereby overcoming the division of Europe through a new security structure and, in this context, overcoming the division of Germany, too. In Bahr's blunt wording, which he used only behind closed doors, the strategic objective was [...] the 'disintegration of the Soviet Bloc' and the eventual liberation of Eastern Europe." (32)

One might ask, however, whether it was not the rivalry of the fundamentally different ideological systems and the remarkably prosperous West German market economy that undermined the GDR. How much of an opening did this leave for Brandt's policies?

Rephrasing Bahr, Niedhart says the idea was that a "carefully planned expansion of economic relations with the East would aggravate the internal inconsistencies in the Warsaw Pact countries and thereby contribute to further modifications of the Communist systems." This sounds like "Finlandization in reverse." (41)

In the case of Hungary in the late 1980s one would indeed be justified to speak of an incipient Finlandization in reverse: Hungary was mired in debt to the West and the Soviet Union was unable to bail out the country. But to what extent was this development foreseeable at the time? Would it have been possible, say, in the late 1960s to count on things taking this counterintuitive turn? Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, for one, most definitely did not do so. When Austria's Kontrollbank warned him not to go on increasing the volume of loans to Poland as these could in all likelihood not be serviced, Kreisky wiped these concerns from the table.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Gottfried Niedhart, "Ostpolitik: Transformation through Communication and the Quest for Peaceful Change," in *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18:3 (Summer 2016) [hereafter *JCWS*], 14-59.

In his view, the risk was negligible. The Soviet Union with its wealth of raw materials would never leave Poland in the lurch.<sup>2</sup>

The Hungarian Communist Party regime's mindset had been shaped by the trauma of 1956. An uprising in this 'workers' paradise' must never again be allowed to happen. Yet the question was how to improve the standard of living without putting the allegiance to the Warsaw Pact in jeopardy. This required far-reaching reforms, which, in the Warsaw Pact and most notably in the GDR, were often seen as incompatible with Marxism. Nevertheless, János Kádár was occasionally given a free hand. Joseph Stalin's methodical terror having been cast aside, it was now necessary to pay more attention to the national interest of individual 'fraternal states' to ward off the disintegration of the empire. The limit of an individual country's sovereignty was made evident in 1968. Attempting to leave the camp was an absolute no go. How much—or how little—leeway Kádár had in the Eastern bloc is outlined by Csaba Békés in his first-rate analysis.<sup>3</sup> For the Hungarian leadership, the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) process meant above all "an excellent opportunity for Hungary to pursue closer relations with the West" (138) – alongside and beyond its existing relations with Austria.

Hungarian-Austrian relations had been on the up and up since the early 1960s; as of 1979 there was even visa freedom. This is an aspect that is worth bearing in mind for future studies. It was one of the results of Austria's 'Ostpolitik,' which went under the less presuming name of 'Nachbarschaftspolitik,' neighborhood policy, and was a model of peaceful co-existence of the sort propagated by the Kremlin: convergence motivated, it is true, largely by economic considerations that disregarded the confrontation between the ideological systems. Chancellor Kreisky could go so far, after a child had been badly injured by a landmine dislodged by a flood, to demand from the Hungarian Ambassador in the form of an ultimatum that all mines be removed immediately from the border. He could have no truck with a regime that counted human lives for nothing. And the Hungarians acceded to Kreisky's request.<sup>4</sup> There is no doubt that the policy of convergence had changed the status quo in Europe. Dialogue and bridge building were advantageous to both sides.

The decisive rupture came in 1968. The Soviet Union's Communism, enforced by tanks as it was, made it quite clear that there was no third way open to satellite states, there were to be no ideological *Sonderwege*, no defections from the Warsaw Pact (apart from Albania, which had been only a token member since 1961 and formally left in 1968). For Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, the 'Prague Spring' and the resulting intervention, which he tried to prevent in the—ultimately vain—hope the Prague leadership under Alexander Dubček could be persuaded to rescind their reforms themselves, were above all an obstacle to his détente policy.<sup>5</sup> The main

---

<sup>2</sup> Maximilian Graf – Peter Ruggenthaler, „Polnisch-österreichische Beziehungen im Kalten Krieg,“ in Agnieszka Kisztelińska-Węgrzyńska, ed., *Austria w polskim dyskursie publicznym po 1945 roku. Österreich im polnischen Diskurs nach 1945* (Lodz: Lodz University Press, 2016), 25–60.

<sup>3</sup> Csaba Békés, "Hungary, the Soviet Bloc, the German Question, and the CSCE Process, 1965-1975," in *JCWS* 18:3 (Summer 2016): 95-138.

<sup>4</sup> Tamás Baranyi et al., "A Masterpiece of European Détente? Austrian-Hungarian Relations from 1964 until the Peaceful End of the Cold War", in *Zeitgeschichte* 41:5 (2014): 311-338.

<sup>5</sup> Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 207-209; Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner and Peter

motivation for the Polish Communist Party chief Władysław Gomułka to halt reforms in Prague was not Marxist internationalism, but his understandable fear that rocking the boat of the Warsaw Pact might result in his efforts to get the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) to recognize the Oder-Neisse line as binding coming to nothing. This is an aspect that might complement Wanda Jarzabek's insightful analysis in her paper on Poland.<sup>6</sup> In Gomułka's eyes—and not only in his—the 'Prague Spring' spelt danger to the Eastern bloc in its entirety. What the Czechoslovak reformers were doing in his view was threatening the equilibrium in Europe; "any defections from the homogeneous block of socialist countries" would have "weakened the Polish position in the negotiations with Germany." Gomułka was pursuing a policy designed to normalize Warsaw's relationship with Bonn. Such normalization was in danger of "being relegated to the distant future, given that the recognition of Poland's western border was an indispensable precondition."<sup>7</sup> Gomułka's closest ally was that "model Marxist," Walter Ulbricht, who sensed danger even in Kádár's role as mediator in the 'Prague Spring' and who openly threatened that the "fraternal parties might next have to turn their attention to resolving Hungary's internal problems" (114). There were tremendous tensions within the Warsaw Pact. As becomes clear from the papers by Jarzabek, Békés, and Jordan Baev,<sup>8</sup> the road to a consensus on how to deal with the FRG without harming the special interests of any of the Pact members was a long one indeed. The only country that did not give a hoot for all of this was Romania (164). And Baev is not to be contradicted when he asserts that Eastern European leaders and diplomats (not only Bulgarians) "were sometimes forced to step aside, thus neglecting for a while their own actual national goals. Yet it would be historically inaccurate to represent the East European alliance as a monolithic bloc entirely dependent on Moscow" (179).

Whether Brandt and Bahr really thought that their 'Ostpolitik' might lead to the downfall of Communism and that this was what would actually happen one day remains a philosophical question. What is certain is that they had visions. And they may very well have understood these visions as a sort mission, which in all probability stopped short of a strategy for long-term planning. Their visions may have helped them to persuade skeptics in the ranks of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) that dialogue was a promising instrument with which to reach across the Iron Curtain. Even if one is prepared to grant these visions the character of a strategy for long-term planning, it was not Brandt and Bahr and their visions that laid the foundations for the crucial changes that took place in the Eastern bloc. These foundations were laid by others. A more positive picture of the FRG may have helped to partly dislodge enemy stereotypes in the East. It was above all the capacity of the FRG as the shop window of a consumerist world that was increasingly being noticed in the East. This doubtlessly contributed, especially against the backdrop of the competing ideologies, to the birth of

---

Ruggenthaler, eds., *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, Harvard Cold War Studies Book Series (Lanham: Lexington, 2010); Jan Pauer, *Prag 1968. Der Einmarsch des Warschauer Paktes* (Bremen: Temmen, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Wanda Jarzabek, "The Impact of the German Question on Polish Attitudes toward CSCE, 1964-1975", in *JCWS* 18:3 (Summer 2016): 139-157.

<sup>7</sup> Pawel Piotrowski, "Polen und die Intervention, in Stefan Karner et al., eds., *Prager Frühling. Das internationale Krisenjahr 1968* (Cologne et al.: Böhlau, 2008), 447-460, here 459-460.

<sup>8</sup> Jordan Baev, "The Establishment of Bulgarian-West German Diplomatic Relations within Coordinating Framework of the Warsaw Pact", in *JCWS* 18:3 (Summer 2016): 158-180.

the image of the 'Golden West.' The treaties with the Warsaw Pact states were helpful in that they signaled to these states they had nothing to fear from an active, militant West German revanchism.

Brandt's friend Bruno Kreisky, who claimed he had told the German chancellor "early on that he needed to develop [West Germany's] relations with the Socialist states" and who saw himself in the role of the "initiator of the policy of détente toward the East,"<sup>9</sup> harbored no illusions in that direction, as he made quite clear in an interview with the German magazine *Der Spiegel* in 1977:

SPIEGEL: Is it possible in your view [...] that isolationism is going to be given another boost because of the perception on the other side that "change through rapprochement" only causes problems?

KREISKY: If the Communist dictators were to implement Basket 3 to the full, that would mean that an illusion has become reality, namely that it might be possible to get the Russians to part with Communism for the sake of a document. That would be grotesque. [...]

SPIEGEL: That is an illusion that you, for one, never harbored.

KREISKY: I never had an illusion. Basket 3 is something like a moral code comparable to the famous Ten Commandments.<sup>10</sup>

Seen in realistic terms, 'Ostpolitik' is amenable to a different interpretation. When Brandt became the first SPD chancellor of the FRG, he had to formulate a pragmatic approach to reunification. The dilemma his government had to find a way out of was that West Germany still insisted to its allies on a peace treaty for Germany, which was to be formulated in four-power negotiations in the manner stipulated in Potsdam and which was to serve as a basis for German reunification—the same German reunification that after the formation of the two German states in 1949 and after the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 had long been proven politically unrealistic, a mere illusion. The only way out of this dilemma was a realistic reappraisal of the options open to the FRG. This reappraisal resulted in the new 'Ostpolitik' with its motto of 'change through rapprochement,' which replaced the time-worn mantra-like repetition of the demand for reunification, put forward on the international stage by West Germany in the thankless role of a whining troublemaker.

What Brandt's government had to achieve in its revamped relationship with the Soviet Union was devising formulations in treaties that allowed both sides to save face, do business, minimize tensions, improve the quality of life for people in West Berlin and facilitate the ransoming of prisoners in the GDR. The FRG recognized the GDR as an autonomous (but not as a foreign) state, which kept the German question open in formal legal terms and the option of reunification at least theoretically intact. The formal recognition of the

---

<sup>9</sup> Maximilian Graf, ed., *Österreich und die DDR 1949-1990. Politik und Wirtschaft im Schatten der deutschen Teilung* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2016), 228, 424.

<sup>10</sup> Spiegel, 11/1977. See also Benjamin Gilde, *Österreich im KSZE-Prozess 1969-1983, Neutraler Vermittler, Quellen und Darstellungen zur Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 98. (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2013).

GDR as a client state on German territory put the issue at rest at least temporarily and signaled acceptance of the status quo, above all as far as Soviet domination of Central Eastern Europe was concerned.

In 1989, the illusions all of a sudden became reality when Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of glasnost and perestroika, despite the best efforts of SED Secretary General Erich Honecker to prevent this, hit the GDR, and the Berlin Wall was breached on the eastern side in the 'Peaceful Revolution.' At the Monday demonstrations in Leipzig and elsewhere a new slogan was heard: 'We are *the* people' had become 'We are *one* people.' This meant that the German question had returned to the stage of world politics.

Having been vindicated as a visionary by history, Egon Bahr now shied away from the prospect of German unity. In Moscow he said a few days after the fall of the Wall that "a reunification of Germany is not on the agenda," asserting "that today no one wants German reunification. Even Kohl does not want it."<sup>11</sup> What he was concerned about in 1989/90 was the future of the Soviet Union. In June 1990 he recommended to an emissary of the Kremlin that "the Soviet Union not trade its status of a European great power for whatever promise may be extended to her and not consent to a curtailment of her rights compared to the United States or even England and France." Bahr added that "the last thing I would have expected is for me in my old age to think more of the Soviet Union than her own representatives."<sup>12</sup>

The world in which Bahr had conceived his German policy as an honest broker between East and West had already crumbled to dust.

---

<sup>11</sup> Stefan Karner et al., eds., *Der Kreml und die „Wende“ 1989. Interne Analysen der sowjetischen Führung zum Fall der kommunistischen Regime. Dokumente.* (Innsbruck: StudeinVerlag, 2014), 516.

<sup>12</sup> Stefan Karner et al., eds., *Der Kreml und die deutsche Wiedervereinigung 1990. Interne sowjetische Analysen* (Berlin: Metropol, 2015), 298-299.



Review by **Douglas Selvage**, Office of the Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Records, Berlin

---

Rarely does one have the opportunity to review a journal issue in which the opening editor's note dismisses the larger thesis of the two major contributors as "teleological nonsense."<sup>1</sup> This, however, is what Mark Kramer does with regard to the contributions of Gottfried Niedhart<sup>2</sup> and Oliver Bange<sup>3</sup> in Issue 18:3 of the *Journal of Cold War Studies*. Kramer decries as "teleological nonsense" the Niedhart/Bange thesis, which he describes as follows:

"They see [Willy] Brandt and [Egon] Bahr and their successors as far-sighted visionaries who wanted to craft a strategy that would ease tensions in Europe, reduce the likelihood of war, and promote the gradual mellowing and eventual 'transformation' of the Communist states, paving the way for the end of the Cold War. As Niedhart and Bange see it, [the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe] CSCE became a vital element in Ostpolitik, and West German leaders anticipated that CSCE would facilitate the end of the Cold War" (2).

Kramer goes on to admit that the "new Ostpolitik" of Brandt and Bahr was indeed a strategy "intended to ease tensions in Europe, mitigate the risk of war, and promote greater contact [at least–DS] between the two German states." What he finds unconvincing are two major assertions in the Niedhart/Bange thesis: (1) that Brandt and Bahr were "far-sighted visionaries" who (truly) "anticipated that Ostpolitik and CSCE would facilitate the end of the Cold War," and (2) that Ostpolitik was "aimed chiefly at fostering the wholesale transformation of East European Communism." Kramer finds the latter "notion" to be a "retrospective distortion (2)."

In my opinion, Kramer overstates the case against the Niedhart/Bange thesis—and Ostpolitik in general. One of the chief aims of Ostpolitik, as Niedhart underscores in his article, was the opening of Communist societies through the promotion of contacts. One positive aspect of this, as Brandt foresaw, was the weakening of the "enemy" image of West Germany in Eastern Europe (40). The Soviet Union had exploited this image to unify the East European states against a common enemy, and the Communist parties, especially in the USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the GDR, had also exploited it to win domestic support for—or at least acquiescence to—their individual regimes. In terms of transforming the Communist states, Brandt and Bahr clearly also sought through the incentive of improved economic relations to encourage greater independence of the individual Communist states from Moscow and, through the same means, to obtain Moscow's acquiescence over the long term to such loosened ties in Eastern Europe (39, 41-42). Ostpolitik did not amount to a one-sided, let alone final "acceptance of the status quo in Europe and an acceptance of Communist rule in the Soviet bloc, including the [German Democratic Republic] GDR," as Kramer suggests (2)—and West German conservatives claimed with regard to Ostpolitik at the time. The price that Brandt and Bahr exacted from Moscow was its recognition of the status quo as well—namely, the existing ties between the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and West Berlin and ongoing Four-Power responsibility for

---

<sup>1</sup> Mark Kramer, Editor's Note, *Journal of Cold War Studies (JCWS)* 18:3 (Summer 2016): 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Gottfried Niedhart, "Ostpolitik: Transformation through Communication and the Quest for Peaceful Change," *JCWS*, 14-59.

<sup>3</sup> Oliver Bange, "Onto the Slippery Slope: East Germany and East-West Détente under Ulbricht and Honecker, 1965–1975," *JCWS*, 60-94.

Germany as a whole. By freezing the status quo of the time, including Four-Power responsibility for Germany, Brandt's Ostpolitik left open the possibility of German unification.

Just as importantly, Ostpolitik arose not as "a strategy for buying time and assuaging domestic political pressure in the FRG (2)," as Kramer argues, but as a reaction to the growing movement toward détente with the East on the part of Bonn's Western allies. If the FRG had failed to join the movement toward détente with the East, it stood in danger of isolation, or even worse, its allies' acquiescence in the long term to Germany's permanent division. Niedhart hints at this defensive aspect in the origins of Ostpolitik (16, 18-19), but he leaves it understated due to his focus on its offensive elements. In any case, Willy Brandt—first as Foreign Minister (1966-1969) and then as Chancellor (1969-1974)—brought the Federal Republic from a lagging position to the forefront of Western détente policies toward the East. A major contribution of Niedhart's at times breathtaking *tour d'horizon* of West German Ostpolitik and CSCE policy from 1966 to 1975 consists in his gathering of otherwise scattered private statements by Brandt on these topics from a wide variety of archival and published sources.

Bange, for his part, convincingly argues that the shift from an offensive German policy under East German leader Walter Ulbricht to a more defensive one under his successor Erich Honecker in the wake of Ostpolitik and the CSCE "seriously impinged on the GDR's livelihood" as a separate German state (94). His explanation of why Honecker could countenance accepting Moscow's concessions in the Helsinki Final Act permitting the peaceful change of borders and (at least potentially) greater human contacts is also convincing—namely, the GDR's "contempt for 'soft' power in comparison with 'hard' facts (for example, the numbers of tanks or nuclear warheads); a belief in the state security organs' ability to cope"; and the readiness and willingness of Soviet and East German forces to defend the German-German border (87). As Bange notes, this all proved illusory in the end—whether due to Ostpolitik and the CSCE or not. The East German Ministry of State Security or "Stasi" could not—or simply did not—save the GDR's Communist regime in the end.<sup>4</sup> This makes it all the more puzzling that Bange deigns East German Minister of State Security Erich Mielke to be "almighty (79)," and there is no evidence, for that matter, that Honecker smiled (87) when he reassured Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev that the Stasi could keep the perceived dangers arising from increased German-German contacts under control.

Although the lead articles by Niedhart and Bange thus make important points about the history of Ostpolitik and the CSCE, Kramer's two major criticisms of the Niedhart/Bange thesis still have merit. Did the "wholesale transformation of East European communism" (2) stand at the center of Ostpolitik, as the two imply? Ostpolitik certainly began as a more modest (yet ambitious) effort to keep the possibility of German unification alive, not only at the diplomatic level, but also by maintaining the idea of a common German nation through the promotion of German-German contacts. Bahr's speech at Tutzing in 1963, in which he introduced the concept of "change through rapprochement," focused on change in the GDR and in German-German relations and not on the broader "transformation of Europe" through "all sorts of communication and contacts with the East" as Niedhart asserts (36). The first expression of Bahr's proposed tactic in concrete policy was the Pass Agreement (Passierscheinabkommen) of December 1963 between West Berlin, where Brandt served as Governing Mayor, and the GDR. West Berliners could visit their relatives in East Berlin for the first time since the construction of the

---

<sup>4</sup> To this question see: Walter Süß, *Staatssicherheit am Ende: Warum es den Mächtigen nicht gelang, 1989 eine Revolution zu verhindern* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1999), passim.

Berlin Wall.<sup>5</sup> Brandt and Bahr subsequently expanded and applied the policy of ‘change through rapprochement’ to West German policy toward Eastern Europe as a whole, but this was an evolutionary process—a fact that comes up short in Niedhart’s article. As Timothy Garton Ash famously pointed out, West German politicians often spoke of “Europe” and “European” interests, when in fact they were pursuing German interests—e.g., changes in the GDR or humanitarian improvements in German-German relations.<sup>6</sup> In the Ostpolitik of Brandt and Bahr, transforming Europe and transforming Germany were indeed related, but they were not—and for subsequent analysts they should not be—the same.

Kramer also correctly perceives that there is also something teleological, or at least ahistorical, in the argumentation of Niedhart and Bange. The former has a tendency to attribute latter-day formulations to Brandt in the era of Ostpolitik. For example, Niedhart writes: “Brandt claimed to stand for an ‘offensive convergencism (42),’” a term from a 2008 article. At another point he writes that Brandt “stood for a wider notion of security that covered also economic and human security (35).” The term ‘human security’ came into vogue after the end of the Cold War, and Niedhart does not cite any sources or offer a convincing explanation as to why he attributes this conception to Brandt in the 1970s. Niedhart also writes: “True, European security could be achieved only by the transformation of Europe through an all-European network on different levels, something that [...] created the ‘Helsinki Effect’ after 1975. The barriers to economic exchange and freer movements of people and ideas had to be removed (35-36).” That is, the far-sighted Brandt and Bahr had to remove such barriers in the 1970s so that the “Helsinki Effect” postulated by Daniel Thomas in 2001 for the period 1975-1989 could take place.<sup>7</sup> It should also be noted that Brandt, Bahr and other West German ‘Ostpoliticians’ were not enthused by the human rights activism in the West, especially at the state level, in connection with the CSCE.<sup>8</sup> However, in Thomas’s estimation, it was this “framing” of human rights, especially by the Carter Administration and Western nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), that made possible the “Helsinki Effect” and the ultimate demise of communism.<sup>9</sup>

Bange, for his part, begins his article with a major assertion hidden in a dependent clause: “the long-term effects of political, military, economic, and societal processes initiated in the 1970s [i. e. through Ostpolitik and the CSCE] led to the autumn events of 1989 (60).” This is an assertion that needs to be proven. That a potential political and legal framework for German unification was put into place in the form of the Eastern Treaties and the CSCE does not necessarily mean that such unification would indeed take place. Ostpolitik and détente were by no means “rendered irreversible by multilateralism in Europe” (94) in the form of the CSCE Final Act. U.S.-Soviet détente

---

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, M.E. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil: East Germany, Detente, and Ostpolitik, 1969-1973* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 10-12.

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe’s Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1993), *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> Oliver Bange, “‘The Greatest Happiness of the Greatest Number...’. The FRG and the GDR and the Belgrade CSCE Conference in Belgrade,” in Vladimir Bilandzic, Dittmar Dahmann, and Milan Kosanovic (eds.), *From Helsinki to Belgrade: The First CSCE Follow-up Meeting and the Crisis of Détente* (Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2012), 231-233.

<sup>9</sup> Bange, 121-156. Also see: Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 81-114.

collapsed in December 1979, and other developments during the 1980s could have led to the collapse of European détente as well—for example, a Soviet invasion of Poland in response to Solidarity or a more belligerent Soviet response to the stationing of U.S. ‘Euromissiles.’ That is, historical contingency remained in play after 1975. Although Bange, as noted above, convincingly argues that the shift to a more defensive German policy under Honecker in the wake of Ostpolitik and the CSCE “seriously impinged on the GDR’s livelihood” as a separate German state, this does not justify the causal leap from the point of Ostpolitik’s and European détente’s alleged “irreversibility” in 1975 to the Peaceful Revolution of 1989 in the GDR (94). Niedhart’s argument makes a similar causal jump through time when he asserts in his introduction that the “new approach to East-West affairs” brought about by Ostpolitik and its multilateralization in the CSCE contributed to a “de-emphasis of revolutionary meaning” at “all levels of Warsaw Pact societies” that “helped to erode the system’s legitimacy” and that this process eventually climaxed in the Peaceful Revolution in the GDR.<sup>10</sup> Once again, this assertion needs to be proven. Niedhart, Bange or both could perhaps prove their thesis in a longer book. Such a book would also need to analyze and take into account developments in Bonn’s foreign policy, the CSCE process and East-West relations in general from 1975 to 1989.

The inclusion of the period from 1975 to 1989, however, would necessitate moving beyond Brandt and Bahr to consider the contributions of other actors such as Brandt’s successor as Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, and his Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, to Bonn’s evolving Ostpolitik and CSCE policy.<sup>11</sup> This would necessarily relativize or at least contextualize the larger contributions of Brandt and Bahr.

Such an examination would also disprove Kramer’s claims that the “CSCE was reduced to insignificance” by the early 1980s and that “neither Ostpolitik nor the CSCE had the slightest ameliorative effect on the harsh nature of SED rule in East Germany (2).” In fact, a large number of relevant, recent publications on the CSCE process with an emphasis on Germany already exist that disprove these two points.<sup>12</sup> Particularly noteworthy have been the large number of outstanding monographs and articles published in conjunction with the multi-year project of the Berlin branch of the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte* (Institute for Contemporary History, IfZ) on the CSCE Process.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Gottfried Niedhart, “Introduction: CSCE, the German Question, and the Eastern Bloc,” *JCWS*, 13.

<sup>11</sup> Arguably, this has already been done. See, for example: Matthias Peter, *Die Bundesrepublik im KSZE-Prozess 1975-1983: Die Umkehrung der Diplomatie* (Berlin/München/Boston: De Gruyter-Oldenbourg, 2015), and Agnes Bresselau von Bressensdorf, *Frieden durch Kommunikation: Das System Genscher und die Entspannungspolitik im Zweiten Kalten Krieg 1979-1982/83* (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> In the case of East Germany, see, for example, Anja Hanisch, *Die DDR im KSZE-Prozess 1972-1985: Zwischen Ostabhängigkeit, Westabgrenzung und Ausreisebewegung* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2012), 293-307, 326-364; Walter Süß, “Die Wiener KSZE-Folgekonferenz und Handlungsspielraum des DDR-Sicherheitsapparates 1989,” in Peter and Wentker (eds.), *Die KSZE im Ost-West-Konflikt*, 219-232; Douglas Selvage, “Human-Rights-Demagoguery Hostile to Détente.” The German Democratic Republic and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1975-89, in Rasmus Mariager, Karl Molin, Kjersti Brathaten (Hg.), *Human Rights in Europe during the Cold War* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 139-149.

<sup>13</sup> For example, the relevant chapters in the following books that originated in the CSCE project at IfZ would counter Kramer’s claim that the CSCE process had been reduced to insignificance by the 1980s: Hanisch, *Die DDR im KSZE-Prozess*; Peter, *Die Bundesrepublik im KSZE-Prozess*; Peter and Wentker (eds.), *Die KSZE im Ost-West-Konflikt*; Yuliya von Saal, *KSZE-*

The CSCE did have an ‘ameliorative impact’ for East Germans, especially during the 1980s. As early as 1976, a growing number of East Germans cited the human rights provisions of the CSCE Final Act to demand, with increasing success, the right to immigrate to West Germany. The efforts of the Stasi to repress this growing movement were only temporarily successful, especially given the East German regime’s growing economic dependence upon the FRG.<sup>14</sup> As a number of scholars have shown, the CSCE Follow-Up Meeting at Madrid (1980-1983) represented a turning point in terms of promoting human contacts and human rights.<sup>15</sup> Thanks to Genscher’s diplomacy, the Reagan Administration failed in its attempts to end the CSCE meeting—and the CSCE process in general—in the wake of martial law in Poland in December 1981.<sup>16</sup> The concluding document from the meeting, which Moscow compelled the GDR to support, contained provisions in ‘Basket III’ that limited the East German regime’s ability to arrest or otherwise repress such applicants for immigration.<sup>17</sup> As a result, such applications skyrocketed, and partly in response to this development, along with a series of occupations of foreign embassies and two billion-mark credits from the FRG, the East German regime allowed around 40,000 of its citizens to leave the GDR forever in 1984. Thanks to the French proposal for a conference on confidence-building and disarmament measures in Europe, a linkage was also established at Madrid between these topics, in which Moscow had a vital interest, and issues of human rights and human contacts in the CSCE process.<sup>18</sup> Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev overcame this linkage by calling for a Conference on Human Rights in Moscow at the CSCE Follow-Up Meeting in Vienna (1986-1987) and, more importantly, liberalizing domestic human-rights policy. He exploited the linkage to arms control and disarmament in the CSCE process—and in U.S. policy—to justify to Soviet hardliners the necessity for movement on human rights.<sup>19</sup> The Soviet Union also made a number of concessions in Basket III at Vienna that

---

*Prozess und Perestroika in der Sowjetunion. Demokratisierung, Werteumbruch und Auflösung 1985–1991* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> Hanisch, *Die DDR im KSZE-Prozess*, 144-177.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Snyder, *Human Rights Activism*, 135-157; von Bressendorf, *Frieden durch Kommunikation*, 256-266; Douglas Selvage, “The Superpowers and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1977-1983. Human Rights, Nuclear Weapons and Western Europe,” in Matthias Peter and Hermann Wentker (eds.), *Die KSZE im Ost-West-Konflikt. Internationale Politik und gesellschaftliche Transformation 1975-1990* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2012), 36-57.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Snyder, *Human Rights Activism*, 135-157; von Bressendorf, *Frieden durch Kommunikation*, 256-266; Selvage, “The Superpowers and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe” 36-57.

<sup>17</sup> Hanisch, *DDR im KSZE-Prozess*, 326-364; Heike Amos, *Die SED-Deutschlandpolitik 1961 bis 1989. Ziele, Aktivitäten und Konflikte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 450-477.

<sup>18</sup> Veronika Heyde, “Nicht nur Entspannung und Menschenrechte. Die Entdeckung von Abrüstung und Rüstungskontrolle durch die französische KSZE-Politik,” in: Peter and Wentker, *KSZE im Ost-West-Konflikt*, 83-98. Even if Brandt and Bahr were arguably the main authors of what became European détente, French diplomacy also played a key role that should not be ignored. See, for example, Nicholas Badalassi, “From Talleyrand to Sakharov: French diplomacy in search of a Helsinki effect,” in: Nicholas Badalassi and Sarah B. Snyder (eds.), *The CSCE, 1975-1990: International Reordering and Societal Change* (forthcoming, 2017); Veronika Heyde, *Frankreich im KSZE-Prozess. Diplomatie im Namen der europäischen Sicherheit 1969-1983* (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017).

<sup>19</sup> See Yuliya von Saal, *KSZE-Prozess und Perestroika in der Sowjetunion. Demokratisierung, Werteumbruch und Auflösung 1985-1991* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2014), esp. 54-78.

undermined the Communist dictatorship in the GDR. My colleague, Walter Süß, has cited four as being particularly important: the legal review of administrative decisions, freedom to travel and mobility, the legalization of Helsinki groups, and review of implementation of decisions related to the CSCE. This meant that most of the provisions in East German criminal law against applicants for emigration had to be dropped or revised. Once again, this did not mean an end to legal discrimination, but the GDR's difficulties in suppressing the emigration movement only grew.<sup>20</sup>

Even more dramatically, Hungary's Communist government announced on September 10, 1989, its decision to open its border to Austria. It thus legalized the mass flight of East Germans that had already begun across its border. The Hungarians justified their decision by citing not only United Nations (UN) conventions, but also the decisions of the Vienna Conference of the CSCE.<sup>21</sup> In order to stem the growing wave of emigration, the head of the Security Division of the SED Central Committee, Egon Krenz, presented Honecker on October 7, 1989, with three variants to solve the problem of illegal emigration. Krenz selected the third variant himself after he replaced Honecker as General Secretary—namely, to guarantee every citizen of the GDR a passport and the right to travel or leave the GDR.<sup>22</sup> On November 9, 1989, a representative of the East German Politburo, Günter Schabowski, held a press conference, in which he announced the new travel regulations, which—he said—were effective “immediately.”<sup>23</sup> The result came shortly thereafter: the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of Communist rule in East Germany. The CSCE process did contribute then, over the long term, to the collapse of Communism in East Germany, even though it was not the single, decisive factor.

The remaining essays from three eminent historians of the Cold War from East Central and Southeastern Europe—Wanda Jarzabek,<sup>24</sup> Csaba Békés,<sup>25</sup> and Jordan Baev<sup>26</sup>—trace the efforts of the Communist regimes of Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria, respectively, to achieve their respective political and economic goals in connection with

---

<sup>20</sup> Walter Süß, “Die Wiener KSZE-Folgekonferenz und Handlungsspielraum des DDR-Sicherheitsapparates 1989,” in Peter and Wentker (eds.), *Die KSZE im Ost-West-Konflikt*, 220-25, 228-30.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas, *Helsinki Effect*, 249. I previously published this paragraph and portions of the foregoing in: Douglas Selvage, “Human-Rights-Demagoguery Hostile to Détente,” 146.

<sup>22</sup> Bernd Eisenfeld, “Die Ausreisebewegung—eine Erscheinungsform widerständigen Verhaltens” in Ulrike Poppe, Rainer Ekcet, and Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk (eds.), *Zwischen Selbstbehauptung und Anpassung: Formen des Widerstandes und der Opposition in der DDR* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1995), 221-222.

<sup>23</sup> Mary Elise Sarotte, *The Collapse: The Accidental Opening of the Berlin Wall* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 129ff.

<sup>24</sup> Wanda Jarzabek, “The Impact of the German Question on Polish Attitudes toward CSCE, 1964–1975,” *JCWS*, 139-157.

<sup>25</sup> Csaba Békés, “Hungary, the Soviet Bloc, the German Question, and the CSCE Process, 1965–1975,” *JCWS*, 95-138.

<sup>26</sup> Jordan Baev, “The Establishment of Bulgarian–West German Diplomatic Relations within the Coordinating Framework of the Warsaw Pact,” *JCWS*, 158-180.

relations to West Germany and the CSCE, both bilaterally and multilaterally within the Warsaw Pact, but always under Soviet hegemony, between 1964 and 1975.

As all three note, a rift arose between the northern tier states of the Warsaw Pact—Poland, the GDR and Czechoslovakia—and the southern tier states—Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania—in the wake of Foreign Minister Brandt’s campaign beginning in 1966 to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union’s allies on the basis of the ‘Moscow 1955 model.’ Bonn sought to establish diplomatic relations with Moscow’s East European allies on the same basis as it had with the Soviet Union in 1955—that is, without (1) recognizing the GDR in international law; (2) recognizing the existing borders, including the Oder-Neisse line between Poland and Germany, or (3) declaring the Munich Agreement of 1938 to have been invalid from the very beginning. A conflict thus arose between the northern tier states, which demanded that their territorial/security claims first be met, and their southern tier allies, which sought to move ahead with diplomatic relations with Bonn. The Warsaw Pact’s foreign-policy maverick, Romania, brought matters to a head when it established diplomatic relations with Bonn on the basis of the Moscow 1955 model in January 1967.<sup>27</sup>

Jarząbek confirms in her article anew the previous assertion of this reviewer: namely, that it was Poland’s leader, Władysław Gomułka, not Ulbricht, who stood behind the convening of a Warsaw Pact foreign minister’s meeting in Warsaw in February 1967, and as a result of the meeting, the three security demands of the northern tier states were established as preconditions for the establishment of diplomatic relations between the remaining Warsaw Pact states and Bonn.<sup>28</sup> The outcome of the meeting was not the ratification of a unilateral East German dictate that Bonn first (and only) recognize the GDR *de jure* as a precondition for diplomatic relations with the remaining Warsaw Pact states—i.e., an ‘Ulbricht Doctrine.’ Despite all the proof that Jarząbek, this reviewer, and others have presented to the contrary, most historians of postwar Germany still persist in writing about an ‘Ulbricht Doctrine’ as the result of the February 1967 Foreign Ministers’ meeting or at least in Warsaw Pact policy toward Bonn in general from 1966 to 1969.<sup>29</sup> The “Ulbricht Doctrine” was in fact a myth,<sup>30</sup> but for some it was a useful myth—for example, as part of Brezhnev’s “double game” in negotiations with Bonn, when the Soviet Union claimed Ulbricht was still insisting on

---

<sup>27</sup> On the conflict and the “Moscow 1955 model,” see also: Douglas Selvage, “Poland, the GDR and the ‘Ulbricht Doctrine,’” in: M.B.B. Biskupski (ed.), *Ideology, Politics and Diplomacy in East Central Europe* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 232-5.

<sup>28</sup> Selvage, “Poland, the GDR and the ‘Ulbricht Doctrine’”; Douglas Selvage, “Polska-NRD. ‘Doktryna Ulbrichta’ w świetle dokumentów [Poland and the GDR. The “Ulbricht Doctrine” in Light of Documents],” *Rocznik polsko-niemiecki* 1994, 77-106.

<sup>29</sup> The use of the term is so persistent that I will resist citing any individual author, lest they feel—quite unfairly—singled out.

<sup>30</sup> See: Douglas Selvage, “Доктрината Улбрихт, доктрината Гомулка и доктрината Брежнев: Митове и реалности във Варшавския договор, 1967–1970 г. [Ulbricht Doctrine, Gomulka Doctrine, Brezhnev Doctrine: Myth and Reality in the Warsaw Pact, 1967-1970],” in: *История, митология, политика* [History, Mythology and Politics] (Sofia: Kl. Ohridski University Press, 2010), 348-65.

full recognition of the GDR in international law as a precondition for any normalization of relations between the East and the Federal Republic.<sup>31</sup>

One major difference that I have with Jarzabek's interpretation is with her use of the term 'Gomułka Doctrine' as an alternative to the term 'Ulbricht Doctrine' in association with the outcome of the Foreign Ministers' meeting. Within the ruling circles of the Polish Communist state, the term 'Warsaw package' was used,<sup>32</sup> while Hungary's leaders—as we learn from Békés's article—dubbed it less favorably the "*Warsaw diktat*"(103)." Bulgaria's Communist leaders, it seems at least from Baev's analysis, treated the outcome as simply a fact of life, despite their apparent irritation with the GDR's high-handedness regarding their relations with West Germany (164-5). (This arrogance of East German diplomacy within the Warsaw Pact was likely one of the origins of the 'Ulbricht Doctrine' myth.) Jarzabek's broader observation that Gomułka put recognition of the Oder-Neisse line at the center of his German policy upon his return to power in 1956 is certainly true, whether one uses the term 'Gomułka Doctrine' or not. Perhaps popularization of the term is necessary to cure historians from uncritically using the less accurate 'Ulbricht Doctrine' in their publications.

Although the German problem arguably stood at the center of Poland's policy with regard to a European security conference under Gomułka, Jarzabek rightly underscores that Polish officials (especially after 1970) also saw the CSCE as an opportunity "to introduce changes in East-West relations and extend the room for maneuver of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) in international relations, including economic relations" (140). She discusses these aspects of Polish CSCE policy not only in her article under review here, but also more extensively in a number of recent, path-breaking publications on Polish CSCE policy.<sup>33</sup>

In a somewhat longer article, Békés provides a wealth of new details based on a plethora of new sources regarding Hungarian policy toward the German question and the CSCE, 1964-1975. Hungary's policy of "constructive loyalty" (96) toward the Soviet Union, he argues, served it well in the détente era, at least after the perceived debacle of the 'Warsaw *diktat*.' Because the USSR wanted to move ahead towards détente with the FRG, Budapest could serve as Moscow's loyal counter-weight to Warsaw and East Berlin within the counsels of the Warsaw Pact, and at the same time pursue its own, largely economic interests in relations with the FRG and the West. With regard to the CSCE, Békés concludes: "Hungary ostensibly benefited most from the security conference in the Soviet bloc, as well as from the evolving rapprochement. The success of the Helsinki process provided an excellent opportunity for Hungary to pursue closer relations with the West, which became crucial for the country's economic well-being (138)." Békés's arguments not only ring true; he backs them up with a wealth of sources.

---

<sup>31</sup> Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil*, 30-36.

<sup>32</sup> Douglas Selvage, "The Warsaw Pact and the European Security Conference, 1964-69: Sovereignty, Hegemony and the German Question," in Andreas Wenger, Vojtech Mastny and Christian Nuenlist (eds.): *Origins of the European Security System: The Helsinki Process Revisited, 1965-1975* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 87.

<sup>33</sup> Wanda Jarzabek, *Polska wobec Konferencji Bezpieczeństwa i Współpracy w Europie: Plany i rzeczywistość 1964–1975* [Poland and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe: Plans and Reality, 1964-1975] (Warsaw: Instytutu Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk [ISP-PAN], 2008); idem., "Hope and Reality: Poland and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1964–1989," *CWIHP Working Paper* No. 56 (Washington: Cold War International History Project, May 2008).



Nevertheless, I would offer one small criticism. Although the joint effort of Moscow and Budapest to promote Soviet-approved détente policies within the Warsaw Pact approximated in Békés's estimation a "partnership" (120) or even a "special relationship" (111) at times, it is possible to overstate the case. Moscow's "special relationship" with Budapest could dissolve very quickly at points when it sought to pursue a harder line toward the FRG. For example, Baev notes that Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov had to postpone his scheduled trip to Bonn to meet with West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in 1984 because of "new obstacles" in the latter's relations "with the governments in East Berlin and Warsaw" (176-177). One could speak at this point of a 'special relationship' between Warsaw and Moscow regarding West German policy. Moscow wanted to pressure its allies to boycott and otherwise adopt a hard line toward Bonn due to its approval of the stationing of U.S. 'Euromissiles,' and Poland's Communist government sought its allies' support in rejecting various public statements by the Kohl Government suggesting that Polish-German border was not final. This campaign by the Jaruzelski government was also aimed at appealing to Polish nationalism to win domestic support in the wake of martial law. Zhivkov's assertion that the GDR was also putting pressure on Bulgaria is also quite interesting because up to September 1984, Honecker had been planning to visit Bonn himself after proclaiming a 'coalition of reason' in German-German relations, further loosening travel restrictions to and from the FRG, and receiving two billion-mark credits from West German banks, guaranteed by the West German government. After a heated meeting with Soviet leaders, who denounced the GDR's dealings with the FRG, Honecker had cancelled the planned visit and adopted a harder line towards Bonn.<sup>34</sup> That Moscow's 'special relationships' with its individual Warsaw Pact allies could shift so quickly, depending on its foreign policy line, suggests something very different: a Soviet strategy of divide and rule in Eastern Europe.

As already suggested above, Baev's succinct, tightly-argued and well-documented article about Bulgarian-West German relations within the framework of the Warsaw Pact serves to some extent as an important contrast and even a corrective to some of the other contributions in the issue. Bulgaria's greater subservience to Moscow in its West German policy, even as it sought to pursue its own economic interests, serves as a reminder of the realities of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe. The fact that Sofia even sought to pursue its economic interests seems to have brought it into more conflict with the GDR than with Moscow. The Bulgarian government's extradition of Till Meyer and four other members of the West German terrorist Red Army Faction (RAF) to West Germany in 1978 without first consulting East Berlin became a particular sore point in Bulgarian-East German relations (175-176).<sup>35</sup> Baev concludes his article by reminding us that for Bulgaria, its relations with Greece were arguably much more important than relations with the FRG (179-180); that is, Ostpolitik as a policy of European transformation had not only temporal, but also geographic limits.

### © 2017 The Authors

[Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 United States License](#)

---

<sup>34</sup> Hermann Wentker, *Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen. Die DDR im internationalen System 1949-1989* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2007), 477-486; Amos, *SED-Deutschlandpolitik*, 450-470; Heinrich Pothoff (ed.), *Die "Koalition der Vernunft": Deutschlandpolitik in den 80er Jahren* (München, Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 1995), *passim*; Niederschrift über das Geheimgespräch zwischen Honecker und Tschernenko in Moskau, 17.8.1984, in Detlef Nakath and Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan (eds.), *Die Häber-Protokolle Schlaglichter der SED-Westpolitik 1973-1985* (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 1999), 398-421. To the front between Warsaw and Moscow against the Kohl Government, see: Gesandter Huber, Moskau, an das Auswärtige Amt, 23 July 1984, in *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1984*, Bd. 1 (München: Oldenbourg, 2015), 938-40.

<sup>35</sup> Regarding the Till Meyer incident, see also: Christopher Nehring, "Die Verhaftung Till Meyers in Bulgarien. Eine Randnotiz aus dem Archiv der bulgarischen Staatssicherheit," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 63 (2015), 411-24.