

Willy Brandt and the European peace order¹

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The basic assumptions of Willy Brandt's "New *Ostpolitik*" are well known. As Egon Bahr wrote in a memo of September 21, 1969, the West German government under the leadership of Willy Brandt aimed at creating a "frame treaty" with the GDR. This treaty would regulate relations between the two German states "up until reunification" and would secure the status of West-Berlin. Bahr expressed his confidence that the "material elements" of such a treaty would "work in favour of overcoming the division [of Germany] in our sense." He also expected that the normalized relations with the Eastern European states coming from such a treaty would benefit "the forces in Eastern Europe which are pragmatic and willing to cooperate" as well as making it easier for them to carry out a "more autonomous policy".² Thus, the acceptance of the status quo of the post-war frontiers in Europe including the hegemony of the Soviet Union over its Eastern part and the Eastern part of Germany should promote its overcoming. *Rapprochement* on the regimes of the Soviet bloc should favour their change in the direction of Western democracies. The reunification of Germany was expected as the long-term result of such a change, even if the time and the exact form of such a result could not be predicted.

What is less known is the European dimension of this concept. Actually, Brandt's *Ostpolitik* cannot be understood as a pure national policy. Ever since the mid-1960s, Brandt, like General de Gaulle, was convinced that Germany would only grow back together as part of the process of overcoming the East-West conflict in Europe. As he explained in an interview in the summer of 1967 during his term as foreign minister of the Grand Coalition,

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² Quoted in Egon Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, Munich 1966, pp. 243-7; cf. Timothy Garton Ash, *Im Namen Europas. Deutschland und der geteilte Kontinent*, Munich 1993, pp. 104-6.

“We need an orientation that puts the German Question within the European context, and for this purpose we need a concept that contains the basic traits of a peace order.”³ In this paper, I will describe this concept and discuss the efforts to realize it.⁴

A Pan-European Conception

As Willy Brandt said to French President Georges Pompidou in January 1971, he has been “convinced that our national problem will not be resolved in isolated fashion, but that it will be if there is a modification which affects both halves of Europe.”⁵ The “frame treaty” with the GDR as well as the treaty with the Soviet Union which was pioneering to this end and the accompanying treaties with Poland and Czechoslovakia were seen as only first steps in the process of rapprochement of the two parts of Europe and change in the Eastern part. The treaties were necessary in order to adapt German policies on the overall tendencies towards détente and to give these tendencies a decisive push. The establishment of a bilateral *modus vivendi* with the GDR and the other countries of Eastern Europe should be followed by a multilateral round of negotiations aiming at the renunciation of aggression guaranteed by treaty, balanced troop and arms reduction, confidence building measures, the “levelling off of borders” and “new forms of cooperation” between the East and the West. Freedom of information and movement were to be realized and in the longer term all human rights would be guaranteed, including the right to ethnicity and self-determination of each people. Within the framework of such a “European peace order” – and only within this framework – the Germans were to regain their unity as well.⁶

³ Interview with *Deutschlandfunk*, 2 July 1967 cited in Werner Link, „Außen- und Deutschlandpolitik in der Ära Brandt 1969-1974“, in: Karl Dietrich Bracher / Wolfgang Jäger / Werner Link, *Republik im Wandel 1969-1974. Die Ära Brandt*, Stuttgart / Mannheim: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt / Brockhaus 1986, pp. 161-282, here p.169.

⁴ This paper is based on the published German foreign policy documents, the *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* [AAPD], as well as on the archives of Georges Pompidou's presidency: *Archives Nationales* [AN], 5 AG 2: Archives de la Présidence de la République, 1969-1974. More details on Brandt's European policy can be found in Wilfried Loth, “European Political Cooperation and European Security in the policies of Willy Brandt and Georges Pompidou”, in: Jan van der Harst (ed.), *Beyond the Customs Union: The European Community's Quest for Deepening, Widening and Completion, 1969-1975* Bruxelles: Bruylant 2007, pp. 21-34; and Wilfried Loth, “Détente and European Integration in the policies of Willy Brandt and Georges Pompidou”, in: N. Piers Ludlow (ed.), *European Integration and the Cold War. Ostpolitik – Westpolitik, 1965-1973*, London and New York: Routledge 2007, pp. 53-66.

⁵ AN, 5 AG 2, 105, Pompidou-Brandt meeting, 25.1.1971; also see the German version in AAPD 1971, pp. 115-123, citation p. 122.

⁶ On the revisionist aspects of Brandt's Eastern politics see Gottfried Niedhart, „Revisionistische Elemente und die Initiierung friedlichen Wandels in der neuen Ostpolitik 1967-1974“, in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002), S. 233-266.

It remained unclear, however, what the security architecture of this new Europe would look like. In the planning phase of the “new Eastern policies”, Egon Bahr contemplated a security system of equal European states that was to replace the existing pacts. As he outlined in a planning study of the Foreign Ministry in June 1968, the new arrangement would be guaranteed by the two superpowers, but they would not be members themselves. This study was based on a draft by the *Centre d'Études de Politique Etrangère* in Paris which had foreseen the possibility of a Central-European zone free of foreign troops and nuclear weapons, composed of the two German states, the Benelux-countries, Poland and Czechoslovakia.⁷

Such an arrangement, however, was neither in the interest of the United States nor in that of the Soviet Union. For both superpowers it meant – as the French draft had already concluded – the loss of influence in Europe; for the Soviet Union it also implied the breaking up of the Communist regimes in Europe. By the same token, Bahr's vision threatened the previously special roles of both Great Britain and France, and was incompatible with the common notions of the political unification of Western Europe. As a result, Bahr acknowledged that the plan would be impossible to carry out in the foreseeable future: ‘An agreement on a new security system that replaces the previous military alliances cannot be anticipated,’ he wrote on the 21 September 1969 in a memorandum entitled “Thoughts on the foreign policies of a future federal government”.⁸

The result was that Brandt opted to use that which already existed in his search for a European peace order, in other words not to break up the existing alliances but to re-organize their relationship to each other. In an interview with *Der Spiegel* he argued that it was necessary “to reorganize their relationship [between the two blocs] and then to see how the process can be taken further, that is to further develop existing structures and to renew them.”⁹ He demonstrated this conviction by avoiding a premature reaction to the Warsaw Pact's 17 March 1969 Budapest Appeal for a ‘European Security Conference’ and instead insisting that the West should not respond unless and until the Alliance had agreed on a united position.¹⁰ Likewise, he made an effort to get the Western partners, and France in particular, to agree

⁷ AAPD 1968, pp. 796-814. The French study in its German translation in *Europa-Archiv* 1968, pp. 51-64. Also see Link, „Außen- und Deutschlandpolitik“, p. 171f. and Garton Ash, *Im Namen Europas*, p. 121f.

⁸ AAPD 1969, pp. 1047-1057, citation p. 1052.

⁹ *Der Spiegel*, 27.9.1971.

¹⁰ See the dossier worked out by Pompidou's diplomatic advisor Jean-Bernard Raimond in preparation of the Franco-German summit of 3/4 July 1969: AN, 5 AG 2, 1010, Note pour GP, 3.7.1969.

with his policies of détente and disarmament. “hen he was elected chancellor he sent Carlo Schmid, his special assistant for Franco-German affairs, to Paris to reassure Pompidou that France had nothing to fear from the initiatives of the new federal government: “Franco-German cooperation will become the fulcrum of our policy.”¹¹

This also meant that Bahr's notions of a gradual transition to a collective security system were illusory. Despite being aware of the opposition that his ideas would encounter, Bahr did “not want to exclude” agreements “that allow for the continuation of the existing system on a lower level, while at the same time serving as the preliminary stage of a new order.”¹² But for Brandt steps towards a new order could only go as far as the Federal Republic’s allies were willing to countenance. It was thus impossible to anticipate how far and where this approach would lead. The Chancellor’s notorious vagueness in describing the European peace order – a European security system that “will bring the present alliances [...] to form a certain relationship to each other”¹³ - was hence not the product of indecisiveness or conceptual vagueness. Rather, it was the necessary result of a political approach that simultaneously aimed at balancing out common interests and changing the perception of each power’s self-interests.

Apart from this, Brandt’s Western European policy was not only a means to overcome the mistrust of the Western partners against German initiatives with regard to the Soviet bloc. There were also other reasons which led Brandt to strive for an organised Europe: the preserving of peace among the European nations themselves, the promotion of economic and social welfare, the strengthening of European democracies, the integration of a German democracy in its European context and the self-assertion of the Europeans vis-à-vis the super-powers. Since the early 1940’s Brandt oriented himself on these arguments in favour of a united Europe. When he arrived at the Chancellery in October 1969, a new start in policy towards the European Community was one of his priorities, too.¹⁴ Thus, he considered a German commitment to the organisation of Western Europe both as an end in itself and also a means to promote the more comprehensive pan-European peace order. In his view, the creation of a politically independent and economically strong Western Europe was the basis for overcoming the blocs and, thus, for solving the “German question”, thereby enabling

¹¹ AN, 5 AG 2, 104, Pompidou – Schmid meeting, 7.11.1969.

¹² AAPD 1969, p. 1052; also see footnote 7.

¹³ Interview of 2.7.1967, see footnote 2.

¹⁴ Compare Claudia Hiepel, “In search of the most common denominator. Germany and the Hague Summit Conference 1969”, *Journal of European Integration History* 9 (2003) 2, pp. 63-81.

Europe to counter the polarization of the Soviet Union and the US. Egon Bahr, for his part, did not share this vision of united Europe.¹⁵ But this is not to say that she didn't influence Brandt's policies.¹⁶

Troop Reductions and Security Conference

Both Brandt and Bahr saw arms control as a decisive step towards a European peace order alongside agreements on the renunciation of aggression and the start of greater cooperation with the Eastern bloc countries. German politicians, moreover, knew that multilateral arms control was all the more important due to the risk that the American military presence could be reduced independently. And there was also the danger of an agreement between the superpowers on arms reduction in Europe carried out behind the back of the Europeans.¹⁷ Brandt told Pompidou in January 1971 that this last was the reason why he wanted to include negotiations on balanced troop reductions in Europe as a central item on the agenda of the Conference on Security in Europe.¹⁸

Bahr found a largely acceptable starting point for the development of a European peace order in American efforts to reduce the burden of military engagement in Europe. Within this context, efforts toward disarmament agreements appeared to serve as a means to prevent both the unilateral reduction of the American presence in Europe as well as a bilateral agreement between the two super powers at the expense of the Europeans. In his "notes" of 21 September 1969, he developed from this context a further argument for the demand for "firmly and prematurely spurring separate proposals on the reductions of the stationed troops." For the sake of political effect, he asked immediately to "propose a substantial reduction, that is, of over 50% of the stationed troops in East and West." This might "possibly even entail a military advantage for the West." The Soviet Union, however, would "find it hard not to agree to such a proposal, because it is in line with the disarmament

¹⁵ Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, p. 176.

¹⁶ Andreas Wilkens, „Westpolitik, Ostpolitik and the Project of the Economic and Monetary Union. Germany's European Policy in the Brandt Era (1969-1974)“, *Journal of European Integration History* 5 (1999), pp. 73-102; Claudia Hiepel, „Willy Brandt, Georges Pompidou und Europa. Das deutsch-französische Tandem in den Jahren 1969-1974“, in Franz Knipping / Matthias Schönwald (eds.), *Aufbruch zum Europa der zweiten Generation. Die europäische Einigung 1969-1984*, Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier 2004, pp.28-46.

¹⁷ See Link, „Außen- und Deutschlandpolitik“, pp.176f.

¹⁸ AN, 5 AG 2, 105, Pompidou-Brandt meeting, 26.1.1971. For more details of the German attempt to install negotiations on troop reductions see Wilfried Loth, „The road to Vienna: West German and European security from 1969 to 1973“, in Wilfried Loth / Georges-Henri Soutou (eds.), *The Making of Détente. Eastern and Western Europe in the Cold War, 1965-75*, London and New York: Routledge 2008, pp.153-167.

proposals it has supported for years.”¹⁹ In a planning study of 25 August 1969, Bahr had postulated that no later than six years after the conclusion of a European security agreement, some seventy-five percent of the American and Soviet stationed troops would be withdrawn from European countries.²⁰

Bahr knew that due to domestic pressure, troop reductions could not be confined to the super powers—nor that was not his intent. However, in the interest of avoiding any special situation for the two German states he considered it very important that reductions in the troop strength of the two German armies, the Bundeswehr and the Nationale Volksarmee, were only to take place in a “later phase” of military Détente “when the reduction of the stationed troops and agreements on the renunciation of aggression have led to a more favorable situation in Europe, which reveals the outline of a European security system and a peace order.”²¹ In its paper of 25 August 1969, the planning staff commented: “A reduction of the troops of the FRG and the GDR will not take place within the first five years.” The nuclear weapons stationed in Central Europe were, on the other hand, to be gradually reduced along with the troops.²²

Negotiations on balanced troop reductions in Europe were to be linked to the Warsaw Pact’s proposal to convene a “European security conference.” As the planning staff outlined in a memorandum of 24 September 1969, this gathering was only to take place after a satisfactory regulation of the relationship of the two German states had been found. Considering the large number of participants and the “depths of the contrasts still existing between the East and the West,” it would have to be limited to “general resolutions and statements of intent.” Then, however, the West should “demand the creation of a permanent disarmament committee.” This body “was primarily to examine the question of reciprocally balanced troop reductions and to work out solutions. Further, it could examine other measures, such as regional ones, for the expansion of military security, which East and West accept as being negotiable.”²³

In March 1970 the West German government decided to take a respective initiative. It asked the allies to prepare a concrete negotiation offer for the next meeting of the NATO

¹⁹ See footnote 7.

²⁰ Quoted in *AAPD* 1969, p. 960, footnote 4.

²¹ Note of 21 September 1969, see footnote 7.

²² See footnote 19.

²³ Proposal for a Western position on the ESC, 24 September 1969, *AADP* 1969, Doc. 301, pp. 1072-1078.

Council of Ministers in May of that year and to agree on the procedures for taking up such negotiations. This offer, which the Council then was to propose to the Warsaw Pact countries, was to include criteria for balanced troop reductions. First, there were to be bilateral exploratory contacts between individual members of NATO and of the Warsaw Pact. Should these contacts give hope for successful negotiations, NATO was to “name MBFR [Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions] as the main item on the agenda of a first conference on questions of European security.” This gathering was to discuss the item in general terms, and then working groups including all those governments whose troops or areas would be affected by the reductions were to work out solutions and present them to a second conference for resolution.²⁴

This initiative pursued two objectives: On the one hand, it was to ease the pressure that the majority of the US Senate around Mike Mansfield was putting on the American government for the unilateral reduction of US troops. “The speedy initiation of negotiations on balanced troop reductions,” a joint draft of the Foreign Ministry and the Defense Ministry suggested on 2 March 1970, “would at least for the duration of the talks have a ‘bonding effect,’ which would make unilateral American (as well as other Western) measures for withdrawal more difficult.” On the other hand, it might banish the risk of solidifying the status quo without guaranteeing any concessions in return, which the Soviet Union obviously intended. If the initiative were successful, “the massive military confrontation would be reduced and all of Europe would be able to breathe more freely.” If not, one could at least “create difficulties for the Soviet Union with the other countries of the Warsaw Pact.”²⁵

Unlike Bahr and his planning paper of the late summer of 1969, the West German government wanted the simultaneous reduction of both its own and of foreign troops to follow the exploratory talks within the alliance, and it held on to its demand for the parallel reduction of “organically assigned” nuclear weapons. Less precisely than in the Bahr papers, the government envisioned the disarmament process as taking place “in steps.” Under the auspices of notions of “balance” developed by Helmut Schmidt,²⁶ the issue of asymmetries between NATO and the Warsaw Pact was highlighted as a central theme: the Warsaw Pact

²⁴ Working paper for the NATO Council, German version, 16 April 1970, AAPD 1970, Doc. 260, pp. 611-614.

²⁵ Draft of the Foreign Ministry and the Federal Defence Ministry, 1 March 1970, AADP 1970, Doc. 83, pp. 341-344, citations p. 343.

²⁶ Compare Helmut Schmidt, *Strategie des Gleichgewichts. Deutsche Friedenspolitik und die Weltmächte*, Stuttgart 1969. Schmidt regarded Détente as “the continuation of the strategy of balance with the consultation of other means,” speech delivered at Georgetown University in Washington, 9 February 1971, cited in Link, “Außen- und Deutschlandpolitik”, p. 177.

superiority in current numbers of troops, “a wider span for variation and storing nuclear weapons for tactical use” on the part of NATO, and the “unique superiority” of the Warsaw Pact’s medium range missiles. The working paper stated, hardly in realistic terms, that balancing out these asymmetries “primarily was to be envisioned for the early stages of MBFR.”²⁷

In the NATO Council session of 17 April 1970, the German initiative met not only the anticipated resistance of the French representative. US Ambassador Robert Ellsworth disagreed wholeheartedly as well. In particular he refused to link MBFR negotiations to the European security conference.²⁸ As the American officials informed Ambassador Roth during his exploratory talks in Washington in August of 1970, the American administration had “not yet concluded” its decision-making process on MBFR.²⁹ Those who thought the MBFR project useful did gain influence, but the administration still concentrated on drafting model studies on the extension and form of troop reductions and verification.

The West German government then decided not to push for the initiation of multilateral talks.³⁰ Next to the hopelessness of such an initiative, an important role was also played by the consideration of not hobbling the security conference as a means of exerting pressure for the successful conclusion of the Berlin negotiations. “Should the alliance now offer multilateralization,” argued Permanent Secretary Paul Frank, “the Soviet Union might conclude that it will be able to reach the multilateral framework, which it politically welcomes, without having to prove its readiness for Détente in Berlin; via MBFR, it would thus be able to avoid reservation on Berlin in view of CSE.”³¹

It was only after the German Bundestag ratified the Moscow Treaty and the Warsaw Treaty on 17 May 1972 that Bonn again took the initiative on the MBFR question. Ambassador Ulrich Sahm (Moscow) even suggested getting in touch with the Soviet Union bilaterally should NATO not decide on another procedure.³² On the occasion of the conference of the NATO Council of Ministers on 30 and 31 May 1972 in Bonn, Scheel was

²⁷ Working paper for the NATO Council, see footnote 23.

²⁸ Grewe to the Foreign Ministry 17 April 1970, AADP, Doc. 166, pp. 624-627.

²⁹ Notes of Roth 18 August 1970, AAPD 1970, Doc. 399, pp. 1499-1501, citations p. 1500.

³⁰ Joint draft of the Foreign Ministry and the Federal Defence Ministry for the Federal Security Council 5 October 1970, AAPD 1970, Doc. 452, pp. 1682-1690.

³¹ Circular of 10 May 1971, AAPD 1971, Doc. 161, pp. 739-742, citation p. 740; see also Brandt’s argument in his conversation with the Belgian Prime Minister Eyskens, 29 April 1971, *ibid.* Doc. 144, pp. 671-681, here pp. 678-680.

³² Sahm to the Foreign Ministry 23 May 1972, AAPD 1972, Doc. 143, pp. 590-597.

able to push through a formula allowing for the commencement of multilateral explorations on MBFR even before preliminary talks on the European security conference began: The representatives of the states involved in the integrated defense program of NATO now proposed “that multilateral explorations on mutual and balanced force reductions be undertaken as soon as practicable, either before or in parallel with multilateral preparatory talks on a Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.”³³ The French representative did not participate in the declaration since France still did not agree to MBFR.

Paris also rejected a link between MBFR project and the Conference on Security and Co-operation, which Bonn preferred. Since the Nixon administration only wanted to define the connection between MBFR and CSCE in general terms, the final communiqué only vaguely discussed an “examination at a CSCE of appropriate measures, including certain military ones, aimed at strengthening confidence and increasing stability.”³⁴ It still remained unclear whether CSCE would really pass binding principles for the MBFR process as Bonn was seeking.

After the Bonn NATO meeting, the West German government continued to urge the beginning of talks on MBFR even before the preliminary talks on CSCE. In order to facilitate the inclusion of those states that were not immediately concerned, MBFR negotiations were to take place in Helsinki, the location of the CSCE preparations; this was to ensure flexibility to meet in different constellations depending on the respective agenda items. To define the interests of those states not directly affected, there was to be an “agreement on the MBFR criteria and principles which would form the foundation for the negotiations on reductions.”³⁵ The actual MBFR negotiations themselves were to take place in a “special body of those whose territory or troops are affected by MBFR.” If possible, CSCE was to appoint this body.³⁶

However, it was decided otherwise. Brandt was obliged to accept the NATO Council’s May 1972 decision in favour of separate negotiations on troop reductions. In his visit to

³³ NATO Final Communiqués, pp. 278ff.

³⁴ *Ibid.* On the Bonn Conference of the Council in general, see Circular of von Staden 2 June 1972, pp. 653-663.

³⁵ German contribution to drafting the guidelines for MBFR explorations 4 August 1972, *AAPD* 1972, Doc. 222, pp. 1011-1018, citation p. 1017.

³⁶ Notes for the Conference of Ambassadors 19-21 June 1972, cited in parts in *AAPD* 1972, p. 823. Also compare Roth to Frank 27 June 1972, *ibid.*, Doc. 189, pp. 823-826; Conversation Brandt-Gromyko 4 June 1972, *ibid.*, Doc. 161, pp. 667-677; Conversation Scheel-Schumann 3 July 1972, *ibid.* Doc. 199, pp. 916-919.

Moscow from 10 to 14 September 1972, however, US National Security Adviser Kissinger agreed that the preliminary MBFR talks would only begin after those on CSCE. The multilateral consultations to prepare CSCE were to set to start on 22 November 1972, CSCE itself in June of 1973. Preliminary consultations on questions of procedure and organization relating to the problem of MBFR were to begin only at the end of January 1973, and the conference on the issue was to take place in September or October of 1973. Further, it was agreed that the CSCE consultations were to take place in Helsinki, whereas the MBFR consultations were to be held at another location.³⁷

The preparation of the MBFR talks with the Western allies showed that the determination of upper limits was acceptable. However, the majority of the NATO Council was of the opinion that *equal* upper limits had to be established for both sides and that these had to amount to approximately 700,000 men. For the Western side, this amounted to a total reduction of about ten percent. The official negotiation position of 17 October 1973 then stated that in a first negotiation stage, only American and Soviet forces were to be reduced by fifteen percent each. It did not say, however, how parity was to be reached in the second stage. The Federal Republic was unable to win support for the demand to lay down explicitly the principle of participation of other NATO forces in the reduction program. Neither was the first stage to determine the arrangements for future upper limits, as Bahr had proposed. Instead, the allies agreed to attempt to convince the East to accept equality of land forces. Qualitative aspects of reductions, particularly the inclusion of the nuclear component, were not discussed.³⁸

It was more than doubtful that the Soviet side would agree. Thus far, the long negotiation process up to the autumn of 1973 had led to a breakthrough for negotiations on the reduction of the military confrontation in Europe. Nevertheless, spectacular results were not to be anticipated. American, Western European, and Soviet interests only allowed for realization of the Federal Republic's secondary objectives: the prevention of unilateral disarmament of the USA and American-Soviet agreements at the expense of the Europeans. Concentrating on the first stage of the "*Ostpolitik*" treaties, Brandt and Bahr had been unable

³⁷ Text of the Soviet Note handed to Kissinger on 14 September 1972 in *AAPD* 1972, pp. 1306ff.

³⁸ Reported in the presentation of the Foreign Ministry to the Federal Security Council 18 October 1973, *AAPD* 1973, Doc. 326, pp. 1591-1595; an intermediate result of the negotiations in the joint presentation of the Foreign Ministry and the Defence Ministry to the Federal Security Council 5.9.1973 *ibid.*, Doc. 273, pp. 1354-1360.

to show a degree of persuasiveness regarding the pan-European peace order that would have been necessary for more successful negotiations.

The preparation of the CSCE

More common ground among the European allies and especially between Brandt and Pompidou could be found with regard to the remaining topics of a European Security conference. Pompidou welcomed the CSCE in principle, provided that all European states participated on an equal level and were free to communicate as they pleased. In this way it would be possible to embed Germany's *Ostpolitik* in a multilateral framework. Furthermore, Pompidou also saw a real chance to unsettle the Eastern bloc and to multiply contacts between East and West. France, therefore, was the first Western power to take up the Budapest appeal.³⁹ When Brandt and Pompidou first talked about the security conference project, they agreed that the Soviet leadership satisfactorily settle the Berlin Question before any such conference opened. By the same token both sides agreed that the conference agenda should include not only questions concerning the renunciation of aggression and economic cooperation, but also cultural exchange, free passage of people and ideas as well as human rights.⁴⁰

After the breakthrough in the negotiations on the Berlin in the summer of 1971, Pompidou argued in favour of the speedy convention of the CSCE. In his view, this was the only way to prevent the linking of the security conference to the negotiations on troop reductions, to which the other NATO members meanwhile gave priority. Furthermore, with the Soviet leadership showing reservations about the NATO approach to balanced troop reductions, a greater French commitment to the CSCE project might allow France to regain some of its once privileged role in Western dialogue with the Soviet Union. When Brezhnev

³⁹ Communiqué of 13.10.1969, cited in Marie-Pierre Rey, « Georges Pompidou, l'Union soviétique et l'Europe », in: *Georges Pompidou et l'Europe. Colloque 25 et 26 novembre 1993*, Bruxelles : Bruylant 1995, pp. 141-170, here p. 152.

⁴⁰ AN, 5 AG 2, 105, Pompidou-Brandt communication, 25-6.1.1971; see also AAPD 1971, pp. 149-162, here p. 155. On the *junktin* with the Berlin-Question also see Michael Meimeth, *Frankreichs Entspannungspolitik der 70er Jahre: Zwischen Status quo und friedlichem Wandel*, Baden-Baden: Nomos 1990, pp. 159-161, as well as Jean-Bernard Raimond, "Georges Pompidou et l'Union soviétique", in: *Georges Pompidou et l'Europe*, pp. 171-183; for details on the role of the French ambassador Jean Sauvagnargues in the negotiations on the Berlin Agreement see Andreas Wilkens, *Der unstete Nachbar. Frankreich, die deutsche Ostpolitik und die Berliner Vier-Mächte-Verhandlungen 1969-1974*, Munich: Oldenbourg 1990, pp.123-176.

visited Paris at the end of October of 1971, Pompidou was thus able to present himself as the Soviet Union's partner in urging for the opening of the CSCE.⁴¹

Brandt was quite uncomfortable with this, because he preferred to conclude the negotiations on the basic treaty with the GDR prior to the opening of the CSCE.⁴² But he was obliged to accept the NATO Council's May 1972 decision in favour of separate negotiations on troop reductions, as well as Henry Kissinger's agreement in Moscow in the second week of September that preliminary talks should begin on 22 November. Brandt and Pompidou were by contrast in agreement on the agenda of the planned conference. When preparing for the Franco-German summit of early July 1972, Jean-Bernard Raimond noted that: "German views on the security conference, other than on the question of force reductions, are fairly close to our own." And at the summit meeting Brandt suggested that the two countries "encourage" the foreign ministers of the EC "to continue with political cooperation," and especially with "preparations for the CSCE".⁴³

Pompidou also argued in favour of making the CSCE a permanent body. This, he explained to Brandt in December 1971, would only increase the effectiveness of the conference: "The Eastern bloc would be loosened as a bloc." In January 1973 he added that such a body might make more difficult potential Soviet aggressions within its sphere of influence. He did not mention, however, that it might also serve to negotiate troop reductions, as Raimond noted in June 1972.⁴⁴ Brandt had some reservations, presumably because a permanent body in which the GDR participated could be understood as the acceptance of the status quo on the German question. In November 1972 the foreign ministers of the EC agreed to reject the Soviet proposal to establish a permanent political body. However, the federal government then showed some support for the Czech proposal to establish a permanent consultative body of the CSCE members. In November 1973 Bahr suggested that this body be seated in Berlin.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Compare Rey, "Georges Pompidou", p. 158 ; and Meimeth, *Frankreichs Entspannungspolitik*, p. 162.

⁴² AN, 5 AG 2, 1011, Raimond's analyses of 18.6.1971 and 23.6.1971.

⁴³ Raimond, Note pour GP, 23.6.1972 *ibid.*; Pompidou-Brandt meeting, 4.7.1972, AN, 5 AG 2, 106; see also *AAPD 1972*, pp. 1893-1911, here p. 1896.

⁴⁴ AN, 5 AG 2, 105, Pompidou-Brandt meeting, 4.12.1971; and AN, 5 AG 2, 106, Pompidou-Brandt meeting, 22.1.1973; Note Raimond 23 June 1972, *ibid.* 1011.

⁴⁵ AN, 5 AG 2, 1012, Note de synthèse du Quai d'Orsay, 22.11.1973.

A European Defence Integration?

Brandt tried to assuage French fears of a German drift towards neutralization by speeding up moves towards a Western European defence identity. At the Franco-German Summit in December 1971 he moved quickly to remove any anxieties that might have been created by his meeting with Brezhnev in Oreanda. Neutralization he insisted was not his aim. Furthermore, he too wanted to slow down the American retreat from Europe and simultaneously to get the Europeans to cooperate more closely in defence questions. It was necessary for NATO to remain, but also “that its European part be differently organised”. By the same token this was necessary for the further development of the European Community as well: “How will it be possible, for that matter, to develop Europe beyond the realm of economics in the years ahead, if we do not also have a common representation on defence matters. I believe that this will first emerge in the political domain and then gradually move into defence matters.”⁴⁶

At this time, Pompidou merely answered that “he quite favoured the continuation of political cooperation”. He then emphasized once again the necessity of being independent from the US: countries “such as Great Britain, Italy, maybe even the Federal Republic” were “less willing to emphasize their independence of action as was France.” He proposed that the next summit of the European Community scheduled for 1972 discuss “a more strongly officialised, not institutionalised, political cooperation.”⁴⁷ He did not elaborate on what this might mean for the area of defence.

Yet, when the Paris summit of 19-21 October 1972 followed the French preference and passed a program for the creation of a “European Union” by 1980, no longer reference was made to common defence politics. In a speech to the assembly of the Western European Union, Defence Minister Michel Debré instead argued “that defence, if it intends to be credible, needs to maintain its national character.” He insisted that cooperation between the European nations was indispensable, particularly regarding armaments production, but he rejected integration in the area of defence, demanding the “will to independent politics.” Supranationality was an “illusion, which may bring with it serious consequences.” At the

⁴⁶ AN, 5 AG, 105, Pompidou-Brandt meeting, 4.12.1971; see also *AAPD 1971*, pp. 1893-1911, here p. 1903.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1904f.

same time he complained that the European neighbours failed to appreciate the importance of the French “force de frappe.”⁴⁸

It was only when the possibility of a Soviet-American understanding on the limitation of strategic armament became apparent in the second round of the SALT negotiations, that Pompidou accelerated the development towards European defence. He felt that the politics of the two superpowers primarily aimed at protecting their own territory from a nuclear attack, with the European security interests, accordingly, at risk of being neglected. When on 5 April 1973 the new French foreign minister, Michel Jobert, used a speech in the National Assembly to call upon the West Europeans to think about European defence with an “independent character”, the German chancellor therefore made yet another effort.⁴⁹ At the summit of 21-22 June 1973 he assured his interlocutor that he did not want unilateral disarmament even if the German public opinion favoured it, and then argued for concrete decisions in the question of European defence: “The time will come when we must become more concrete in our discussions and go beyond theoretical studies.” He also explained that a common defence organisation required movement in the French nuclear doctrine: “I do not want there to be any misunderstanding. I am not seeking and have never sought to obtain nuclear weapons for Germany. But if Germany is to be in a common defence organisation complementing or replacing NATO, it will not be possible for it merely to play the role of infantry.”⁵⁰

Indirectly, this also showed that Brandt found a united European defence project suitable to solve those problems which the French decision for a national nuclear strategy had posed for the Germans. He used the intolerability of the present situation, in which the Federal Republic would not be consulted on the use of French nuclear weapons on its territory, as an additional lever to convince the French partners to realise the European solutions which both sides called for: “I need your response to a number of questions... How should we understand the French intervention plan, which are the towns targeted by French nuclear weapons, in which part of Germany are these towns? Are they even in the part of Germany which is so closely linked to France? I am not talking about the French army in Germany and

⁴⁸ Speech to the assembly of the WEU in Paris, 6 December 1972, *Europa-Archiv* 1972, pp. D 67-D 70, citations p. D 69.

⁴⁹ Michel Jobert, *Mémoires d'avenir*, Paris : Grasset, 1974,, p. 267.

⁵⁰ AN, 5 AG, 106, Pompidou-Brandt meeting, 21.6.1973; partially cited in Georges-Henri Soutou, “L’attitude de Georges Pompidou face à l’Allemagne” in *Georges Pompidou et l’Europe*, pp. 267-313, here p. 300.

its special position there, but the Ailleret/Lemnitzer agreement of 1967 which sketched out this situation no longer corresponds to the position of our two countries.”⁵¹

Pompidou had to agree that the French strategy had not been sufficiently thought through: “We are somewhat in a state of flux.” Regarding the present situation he assured Brandt: “We have no targets on the territory of the FRG – keep that to yourself but I give you my word of honour.”⁵² He then pleaded once more for cooperation in armament production and the enrichment of uranium. On Brandt's demands for movement towards European defence he only commented that it was “obvious that on a strategic level we could not content ourselves with a European defence strategy that was based only on conventional weapons.” Brandt answered Pompidou's hesitations by applying more pressure. At the end of September he let the French president know that he wanted “a detailed and confidential exchange of views’ between the two foreign ministers ‘on the future development of European security’”.⁵³ On 9 November, Scheel met with Jobert and reported in detail on the views of the federal government: it was necessary for the Europeans to develop a common defence strategy that would enable Europe “to secure its defence with its own means.” He believed “that the day will come when Europe must, come what may, liberate itself from this ‘indissoluble’ dependence [on the US].” Scheel further emphasized “that a European Community with a central political will and wishing also to defend itself would necessarily have to have a nuclear defence policy.” This solution did not pose any problems for the non-proliferation treaty for nuclear weapons, because the Community would inherit the corresponding rights of France and Great Britain.⁵⁴

Pompidou, however, could not summon up the courage to respond to Brandt's movement away from the traditional Atlantic orientation of West German security policy. Jobert confined himself to an “effort of dialogue and reflection” on the problems of defence within the framework of the Western European Union (WEU) which he presented to the

⁵¹ *Ibid.* The French had had air-based tactical nuclear weapons since 1972. The stationing of plutonium carrier missiles that had a range of 130 km was planned for 1974. See Georges-Henri Soutou, *L'alliance incertaine. Les rapports politico-stratégiques franco-allemands 1954-1996*, Paris : Fayard, 1996, pp. 330-333.

⁵² This passage is only contained in the original minutes of AN, 5 AG 2, 1012; the particular page is in a folder with the heading: “page contenant un paragraphe à ne pas communiquer”.

⁵³ AN, 5 AG 2, 1009, Brandt-Pompidou meeting, 29.9.1973.

⁵⁴ AN, 5 AG 2, 1012, Scheel-Jobert meeting, 9.11.1973; quoted in Soutou, “L'attitude”, p. 302. Contrary to Soutou p. 304, the German proposals were neither “fort ambiguës” nor were they likely to lead to the creation of a neutralistic security system based upon an “accord germano-soviétique”. They simply explained that which Germany deemed necessary in order to realize the “independent defence of Europe” which France had demanded.

parliamentary assembly of the WEU on 23 November.⁵⁵ Four days later he also had a journalist write in *Le Monde*: “As for a specifically European defence policy, it is a long term endeavour about which it can only be said that it is not a question for tomorrow”⁵⁶ And when Brandt hinted at the summit of 26/27 November that the federal government was prepared to speak about European defence, Pompidou reacted evasively.⁵⁷ All he noted in the margin of a telegram from his ambassador in Bonn reporting that the Germans wanted to discuss the “definition of security policies within the framework of the Nine” in the Franco-German study group for strategic questions, was: “Prudence!”⁵⁸

In his last meeting with Brezhnev on 13 March 1974 he emphasized that the political unification of Europe would not go beyond mere cooperation: “It must not impinge upon the independence of states, and of our own in particular. There can be no question of defence. We are simply seeking, with only mediocre success, to establish whether it is possible to reach agreement in arms production. Matters must not go any further and should in no case impinge upon the essential, namely the nuclear domain.”⁵⁹ Now the objective of an independent European defence was no longer within Pompidou’s reach, he apparently thought it unwise to bother the Soviet leadership with the issue.

It is, therefore, possible to speak of an astonishing change of roles. Just at the moment that Brandt spectacularly met the French demand for an independent European defence and overcame the traditional Atlantic orientation of West German security politics, Pompidou emphasized the indispensability of the American contribution to European security and in his conversation with Brezhnev he even dissociated himself from the objective of European defence. How can this behaviour, this change in French policies, be explained?

One can only speculate about the reasons for Pompidou’s reservations. Part of the problem, it would appear, was that he lacked the power to realize a vision – which he previously had only formulated in vague terms anyhow – when confronted with the routine of France’s military and diplomatic establishment. But he also was missing that degree of trust in Brandt and the continuity of his policies that would have been necessary for the further development of the French security system. Constantly worried about the possibility

⁵⁵ Text in *Le Monde* 23.11.1973: see also Soutou, “L’attitude”, p. 302f.

⁵⁶ Jean Schwœbel writing in *Le Monde* 27.11.1973.

⁵⁷ AN, 5 AG 2, 106, Pompidou-Brandt meeting, 26.11.1973.

⁵⁸ AN, 5 AG 2, 1009, Bonn telegram, 3.12.1973.

⁵⁹ AN, 5 AG 2, 1019, Pompidou-Brezhnev, 13.3.1974.

of a German drift to the East, he concentrated on that which in his eyes was the best antidote: securing the American presence in the Federal Republic.

Pompidou's mistrust was further strengthened by the publication of Bahr's planning paper of 1968 which a Bonn diplomat associated with the opposition leaked to the magazine *Quick* at the very moment that Brandt was intensifying his offensive about European cooperation.⁶⁰ That which Bahr had sketched out as the optimal albeit unrealistic constellation for reunification now appeared to be the real objective if not of Brandt himself then at least of strong forces within the Bonn coalition. Raimond, who as early as June 1972 had suspected "old tendencies within the social democratic party in favour of disengagement plans for Central Europe' behind Bonn's urging for troop reductions, now wrote in a preparatory statement for the Franco-German summit of 26/27 November 1973 that the Bahr paper of 1968 'explains to a large extent the sometimes strange positions adopted by the FRG on the question of force reduction.'⁶¹ Bahr's conception "gave to MBFR the character of a gradual progression towards a European security system close to that which the Soviets have been proposing for twenty years."

The publication of the old planning staff paper thus thwarted Brandt's attempt overcome French distrust of negotiations on security issues by playing upon French notions of an independent Europe. French diplomats (and presumably Pompidou as well) used the supposed contradictions in Bonn's policies as a pretext not to discuss the demand for Europeanization of the French nuclear weapons included in Brandt's security political offensive. France did not participate in the negotiations on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR), which began on 30 October 1973 in Vienna; and in the light of the French reservations, the federal government confined itself to proposals for minor reductions of foreign troops in a first phase of the process. Confronted with all this opposition, Brandt played for time: the MBFR negotiations were to last for a long time, he had explained to Pompidou in June 1973.⁶²

⁶⁰ "Wie Egon Bahr Deutschland neutralisieren will", *Quick*, 27.9.1973. Only a little later the American political scientist Walter F. Hahn reported a conversation of January 1969 in which Bahr had outlined the planning staff study to him: Walter F. Hahn, "West Germany's Ostpolitik: The Grand Design of Egon Bahr", in: *Orbis*, Winter 1973, S. 859-880.

⁶¹ AN, 5 AG 2, 1012, Note, 23.11.1973. For Raimond's earlier suspicions, see AN, 5 AG 2, 1011, Note 23.6.1972.

⁶² AN, 5 AG 2, 106, Pompidou-Brandt meeting, 21.6.1973; see also his assurance "that our approach remains very careful and will not be in opposition to your notions" in the conversation of 22 January 1973, *ibid.*

As far as the CSCE was concerned, the growing French concerns about possible ‘German drifts’ away from NATO and towards a new European security arrangement led to a reversal of the French and German approaches to the negotiations: now it was France that warned against too rigid a structure of any follow-up body, and Paris also opposed the Soviet suggestion of a spectacular summit of the heads of state and government in the third phase of the conference.⁶³ In the opening session of the CSCE in Helsinki on 4 July 1973, Jobert warned of the dangers of the project: “The public has to know that a conference, as prestigious and as long expected as it may be and despite its intentions, can mislead opinions by wrong assurances. [...] Security needs to be earned, it cannot be won in a tombola.”⁶⁴

Common Successes

In the meantime, the range of common positions, which the EC foreign ministers had worked out in their preparations for the CSCE, was sufficient to allow the Western Europeans to appear united when the negotiations began in Geneva in September 1973. On the invulnerability of the borders, for instance, the German interest in keeping the German Question open dovetailed well with French efforts to loosen Soviet control over the Eastern European satellites. Thus on 19 October 1973, the French delegation acting in the name of the nine EC governments presented a text on the unanimous change of borders that was based on an earlier German draft. Both sides also aimed at the highest level of ‘exchange of people, information and opinions’ (such was the wording in the so-called ‘Basket 3’ of the negotiations) without being set on drafts that were absolutely intolerable for the Soviet Union and, thus, likely to lead to no more than sterile polemics.⁶⁵ Thanks to the mutual support that the French and Germans gave one another, the final conference documents contained more emphasis on change than acceptance of the status quo.⁶⁶

Willy Brandt, thus, had been unable to realize his intentions of persuading the French to accompany him all the way along the path towards a European peace order. Accordingly,

⁶³ AN, 5 AG 2, 1012, Note de synthèse, 22.11.1973.

⁶⁴ Jobert, *Mémoires*, p. 245f.

⁶⁵ See the remarks on the reports of the French conference delegation: AN, 5 AG 2, 1012, Note, 23 November 1973; also Meimeth, *Frankreichs Entspannungspolitik*, pp. 169-173; and Angela Romano, “The Nine and the Conference of Helsinki: A Challenging Game with the Soviets”, in: Van der Harst, *Beyond the Customs Union*, pp. 83-104.

⁶⁶ See the short analyses of the course of the conference in Wilfried Loth, *Overcoming the Cold War. A History of Détente, 1950-1991*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave 2002, pp. 2-4, 118, 130-132; on the Geneva negotiations in detail Luigi Vittorio Ferraris (ed.), *Report on a Negotiation. Helsinki-Geneva-Helsinki 1972-1975*, Alphen / Geneva: Sijthoff and Nordhoff 1979, pp.99-398.

détente in the 1970's remained far short of what had once seemed possible. On the other hand, the France of Georges Pompidou did not apply the brakes as continuously as some observers have suggested. Especially regarding the opening of the borders, the two leaders achieved much more together than they would have been able to obtain had they acted on their own. At the same time the realisation of their notions about contacts across the borders gave some substance to European Political Cooperation. The European Community became an independent actor in détente. This helped to anchorage German *Ostpolitik* in the *longue durée* of Western policies, even if a real breakthrough in the German question didn't come in sight.