Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION
Era of Negotiations

ILLUSTRATION 1: Chancellor Willy Brandt, Foreign Minister Walter Scheel and Minister of the Interior Hans-Dietrich Genscher (from right to left) during a Bundestag session in December 1972.


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I was resented in the East for it, and not everybody in the West agreed with me either, when I said that the participation of the Federal Republic of Germany in a European security conference would be pointless if the relationship between the two parts of Germany had not been settled first. The Federal Republic had some leverage here; I did not overestimate it, but we had it. My argument: if a wedding is planned and the other half of the bridal couple does not turn up, the other partner will not be very happy about it.

– Willy Brandt in his memoirs

This conference will simultaneously address the possibilities of cooperation and the questions of security. Between East and West, North and South, I see the possibility to create common interests and responsibilities in Europe through economic and other connections which can develop more security for everyone.

– Willy Brandt’s Nobel Peace Prize speech, December 1971

In his seminal work on the German role in Europe during the Cold War division, Timothy Garton Ash points out that an attempt to fairly characterise the CSCE position of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) would be a ‘mammoth’, bordering on a ‘virtually impossible’ task. Admittedly, Garton Ash’s comment refers to the entire duration of what became known as the Helsinki Process, whereas the focus here is restricted to the prehistory of the conference, with only the final chapter addressing the CSCE proper and its multilateral preparations. But the task is nonetheless ambitious.

This book analyses the role of the Federal Republic in the decade leading to the Helsinki Final Act of the CSCE in 1975. It particularly concentrates on the multilateral Western framework of policy construction in the years of 1969–72. During that period, the CSCE policy of the FRG was characterised by a fascinating combination of the two complementary elements inherent in the quotes from Chancellor Willy Brandt above. On the one hand, Bonn was interested in instrumentalising the CSCE, attempting to use the FRG’s agreement to participate in the conference as a bargaining chip in the game where the fulfilment of its bilateral Ostpolitik was the main target. In the beginning, it was this short-term tactical approach that prevailed. On the other hand, the Federal Republic was also increasingly interested in the conference itself, hoping to be able to achieve substantive national foreign policy goals multilaterally in the CSCE. Over time, this long-term strategic approach surpassed the emphasis on short-term linkages. When the actual CSCE was opened, the FRG was well prepared to defend its national interests in this new multilateral framework.

In narrow terms, seen merely from the perspective of the FRG and the CSCE, this book embarks on a relatively uncharted territory. Existing scholarship on this particular case is sparse. Peter Becker’s book from the early 1990s covers much the same substantive ground, but it employs a systemic
decision-making analysis rather than an historical approach. At times Becker provides a useful reference to the chronological development, but the book suffers from the complete lack of archival evidence to support it, leading to several factual mistakes and a relatively superficial analysis. Stefanie Halle’s master’s thesis, in spite of its title, focuses almost exclusively on the Ostpolitik treaties as a backdrop for the FRG’s CSCE policy. Kristina Spohr Readman, in contrast, has written a compelling article on the politics of language in the CSCE policy of the FRG in 1972–75. Working partly with the same original documents as this book, Spohr Readman’s conclusions – highlighting the FRG’s pursuit of national interests and its key role in the West – fit well with and thus confirm the arguments put forward here.

West German CSCE policy has also been the topic of individual articles in edited volumes, including one by this author. Elements of the West German approach to the CSCE have also been touched upon in a number of excellent dissertations recently completed, but their focus has been broader, relating to actors, themes or time period. This book is therefore necessarily based on original research on recently released archival documents. However, it does not concentrate solely on the role of one particular state in a particular set of negotiations. Instead, it builds on and contributes to a scholarly discussion on three broader themes – European détente, the CSCE and West German foreign policy. I will next examine these three overlapping themes in more detail.

European Détente

The late 1960s and early 1970s ushered in a new period in the Cold War. Although far from replacing the Cold War confrontation completely, détente brought about a genuine reduction of tension, literally Entspannung in German, into the East–West relationship. Nowhere was this more visible than in Europe, on the continent most directly affected by the post-war division. It is therefore all the more surprising that the dominant current in the scholarship on the history of détente has up to this day focused predominantly on bipolar superpower relations. A more diverse picture is emerging, fortunately.

For a long time, the research that did exist on European détente was that in name only, never really breaking free from the dominant paradigm. Only recently have more nuanced interpretations surfaced, with outstanding general accounts of the global Cold War as well as of European post-war history. Jeremi Suri has raised the exciting new argument of détente as a global force for stability, even counterrevolution, rather than change. With the widespread thirty-year rule in archives, the front line of basic re-
search with original documents has also moved well into the 1970s. This is reflected in a recent flow of conferences and subsequent edited publications, significantly broadening our understanding of détente in general, and European détente in particular. Piers Ludlow has drawn attention to the importance of bridging the divide between scholarship on European integration and that on the Cold War. All of this has brought détente scholarship closer to the general trend of ‘retroactive de-bipolarisation’ of Cold War history.

This approach should not be overworked, of course. Looking at the big picture, the United States and the Soviet Union did play a more significant role in the Cold War and détente than did, say, Belgium and Bulgaria. But that is not to say that the allies of the dominant superpowers, be they members of NATO or the Warsaw Pact, were always merely passive objects. The relationships within the alliances were far from constant – the configuration of power changed back and forth over time. In fact, in many respects the rapid dynamics within the alliances during the détente years are more fascinating than the actual East–West development that often moved at a sluggish pace.

In the West, multilateral cooperation underwent a fundamental change in the decade beginning in the mid-1960s, with interaction between three institutional frameworks increasingly overlapping – especially in the CSCE context. Firstly, following the 1967 Harmel Report, NATO assumed a more outspoken political role than before, aiming to combine defence with détente. This element of NATO, transforming the military alliance into a political actor and into a political forum for multilateral negotiations among its members, has not yet received the scholarly attention it merits.

Secondly, NATO soon received a serious challenger, as another intra-Western forum for debating East–West policy emerged. As a result of the so-called Davignon Report in 1969, the six original members of the European Communities began to coordinate their foreign policy more closely, particularly in the areas of the Middle East and the CSCE. After the first Foreign Ministers’ meeting of the European Political Cooperation (EPC) in November 1970, the procedure was institutionalised in frequent meetings on ministerial and bureaucratic levels, first among the six original members, but soon also including the four applicant countries. With the exception of a few early analyses, the literature has for a long time neglected these early years of the EPC’s development and glossed over them only as a prelude to what is now the common foreign and security policy of the European Union. Recently, however, Daniel Möckli’s brilliant volume on the years 1969–74 has underscored the importance of this formative period. Angela Romano has also contributed to a better understanding of the role of the EPC in the CSCE context.
Thirdly, there was the extremely influential small circle called the Bonn Group. Consisting of representatives of the US, Britain, France and the FRG, this four-power consultation group had been set up in the mid-1950s as an informal forum to discuss issues pertaining to Berlin and Germany as a whole. During the high tide of Ostpolitik, however, the work of the Bonn Group swiftly intensified, with meetings taking place on various levels on a weekly basis, and sometimes every day. When its influence peaked in 1969–72, its de facto mandate was considerably broader than originally foreseen. On the Bonn Group, Helga Haftendorn remains the most authoritative scholar.

This book sets out to investigate the complex interplay within these Western frameworks from the perspective of the Federal Republic. As will be seen, the profoundly multifaceted nature of European détente becomes apparent. In the period covered here, all of these formations were developing, each expanding their efforts from their own niches – NATO from the military, the EC from the politico-economic, and the Bonn Group from the focus on Germany and Berlin – towards the centre of European détente. In this centre lay the CSCE.

**The CSCE**

The concept of a pan-European conference on security issues was an old idea of the Soviet Union, suggested for the first time in 1954, shortly before the Federal Republic joined NATO. But the process towards the actual CSCE truly got under way in the late 1960s, with successive Warsaw Pact proposals and particularly the so-called Budapest Appeal in 1969. When an initiative of the Finnish Government to host such a conference brought a neutral terrain into the equation, NATO and the Warsaw Pact engaged in a curious three-year dialogue of communiqués about the conference. The direct negotiating contact between East, West and the neutrals was finally initiated in the multilateral preparations for the conference in the autumn of 1972, and went on until the following summer, when the Foreign Ministers of the participating countries launched the CSCE proper in Helsinki. After two years of intensive negotiations in Geneva in 1973–75, the landmark Helsinki Final Act was signed in the Finnish capital in the summer of 1975.

Given the significance of the CSCE in the general development of détente, the early years of the conference have so far been surprisingly little in the limelight. Within the research that exists, the years prior to the Final Act have usually merely been treated as a prologue to the ‘real’ history of the CSCE, beginning in 1975. Moreover, with the privilege of knowing the outcome of the Cold War and the role that the Helsinki Final Act, particu-
larly its principles of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the provisions on cooperation in humanitarian fields in the so-called Basket III, played in it, it is certainly a challenge to see the early CSCE years in historical context. Most of the post-1989 literature on the CSCE fails to avoid this ‘hindsight trap’, emphasising either the role of human rights or the general idea of dynamic change excessively, often leading to a touch of triumphalism.\textsuperscript{29}

Another set of CSCE literature are the memoirs of former diplomats who had participated in the conference.\textsuperscript{30} These reminiscences provide fascinating inside information about the negotiations, especially in the Geneva phase of the CSCE. For the period leading up to the conference, however, they are of little use. Again, it has only been in the past few years that the archival situation has enabled historians to engage in thorough research on the early stages preceding the Final Act.\textsuperscript{31} The authoritative general history of the CSCE still remains to be written.

This book aims to place the early period of the CSCE in its historical context, instead of looking at it through the prism of 1989. Conventional wisdom has it that most of the contents of the Helsinki Final Act were already in place after the multilateral preparatory talks in Dipoli, collected in the so-called Blue Book in the summer of 1973. Naturally, several crucial details only emerged during the meticulous negotiations in Geneva in 1973–75. Nonetheless, this book ventures to argue that a majority of the pieces had fallen into place already before the Dipoli phase of the conference. The formative years of the CSCE were in 1969–72, when the West attempted to get its own act together for the East–West talks. In that intra-Western process, the FRG was a decisive actor.

**West German Foreign Policy**

The third broad theme within which this book is written is that of the foreign policy of the Federal Republic during the Cold War. This was a curious construct, characterised by a ‘double containment’ – restricted by the burden of past horrors as well as by the East–West confrontation.\textsuperscript{32} Accepting the external limits set to its sovereignty, the FRG nevertheless sought to expand its freedom of manoeuvre as far as those limits permitted by an increasing multilateralisation of its foreign policy. Throughout the Cold War decades, the so-called German question constantly remained in the core of the foreign policy decision-making in Bonn. Regardless of the coalition in power at a given time, no option chosen could endanger the overarching principle of keeping the German question open and with it the possibility of reunification. This principle was best formulated in the
Introduction: Era of Negotiations

so-called ‘letter on German unity’ in connection with the Moscow Treaty in August 1970. In this letter, the Federal Government declared that the Moscow Treaty was in no contradiction with the political aim of the FRG to create ‘a state of peace in Europe in which the German people can regain its unity in free self-determination’. It is from this sentence that the title of this book is drawn, too.

Nevertheless, the ways in which this principle was implemented varied considerably over time. From the late 1960s, the inflexible Hallstein Doctrine, in effect refusing to recognise the existence of two German states, began to give way to new approaches to Deutschlandpolitik – West German policy towards the GDR, as well as to Ostpolitik – West German policy towards the East in general. Small-step changes occurred during the Grand Coalition of Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger in 1966–69. But it was Kiesinger’s successor, Willy Brandt, who led the Federal Republic to the dramatic changes in its relations with the East. The credo of this policy had been expressed by Brandt’s aide Egon Bahr already in his 1963 landmark speech in Tutzing – Wandel durch Annäherung, change through rapprochement.

And change there was. In the time frame of a mere three years, the Brandt Government completed all the major Ostpolitik achievements. The FRG signed and ratified renunciation-of-force agreements with the Soviet Union and Poland, signed the so-called traffic accords with the GDR, and concluded the negotiations on the Basic Treaty with the GDR. The US, the Soviet Union, Britain and France also signed and ratified the Quadripartite Agreement on the status of Berlin. On 19 November 1972, just three days before the beginning of the multilateral CSCE preparations, Brandt’s coalition won a decisive victory in the federal election, which was widely perceived as a plebiscite on Ostpolitik. When Brandt suddenly resigned in May 1974 due to the Guillaume spy affair, his successor, Helmut Schmidt, could pick up the leadership of West German foreign policy from a completely transformed starting point.

There is naturally an abundance of first-rate literature on the foreign policy of the FRG in that era which Gottfried Niedhart has characterised as the second formative phase of the Federal Republic. General accounts of the history of Germany or the Western part of it have embedded foreign policy in a broader framework, taking also into account the domestic and societal developments. Volumes focusing on the foreign policy of the Federal Republic highlight the degree of continuity between the various governments. Moreover, there is plenty of research focusing more specifically on the late 1960s and early 1970s, with a clear emphasis on the Brandt years at the expense of Kiesinger. And finally, all the research is substantiated by numerous memoirs of key politicians and officials.
From the perspective of this book, however, there is one significant shortcoming in the existing literature. There has been a tendency to see the bilateral Ostpolitik and the multilateral CSCE process as separate developments, with the latter only having properly started once the former had been completed. The argument in this book is that the bilateral and multilateral elements were part of the same complex process and interacted constantly from the very beginning. Ostpolitik and the CSCE were thus parallel, not consecutive phenomena. The time frame chosen here, concentrating largely on the ‘prehistory’ of the CSCE proper, serves the purpose of underscoring this early connection.

The Federal Republic was in many ways at the epicentre of the CSCE. On the one hand, the German question was both geographically and substantively at the heart of any considerations of enhancing European security and cooperation. On the other, the exceptional position of the FRG as a full member in all of the three relevant frameworks – NATO, the EPC and the Bonn Group – gave it an ideal institutional setting to exert influence over common Western conference preparations.\(^40\) The CSCE provided the Federal Republic with unprecedented opportunities to utilise multilateral mechanisms to pursue its national interests.

When those interests were defined in Bonn, the inner-German relationship was always the core factor. From that perspective, finding ways to come to terms with the existing division of Europe was often at least as important as attempting to overcome it. As a result, West German interests were seen to lie in gradual and non-controversial steps towards more cooperation, accompanied by a considerable number of defensive measures to protect the provisional, *modus vivendi* nature of the status quo. As this book argues, the pursuit of those interests was to a large extent successful. But it was not a recipe for sudden change.

**On Structure and Sources**

In the past decade, the scholarly discussion about new approaches and new interpretations has led some historians to talk festively about a ‘new Cold War history’, following the traditionalist, revisionist and post-revisionist phases of the ‘old’ one.\(^41\) Perhaps the most striking element of this discussion has been the way in which the importance of ‘ideology’ in explaining the Cold War has been *en vogue*.\(^42\) But in taking ideas, beliefs and perceptions seriously one should not forget the importance of old-fashioned Realpolitik. It is often futile to try to find a clear-cut division between motives based on interests on the one hand, ideas and beliefs on the other. Instead, it is important to understand this interrelationship, to see how
interests and ideas influenced each other, leading to constant redefinition of both sides of the equation, before merging into policy. Neither interests nor ideas were carved in stone. Reactions to changes in the international environment reshaped interests as well as ideas and beliefs. Melvyn Lefler’s thoughts on these dynamics have been inspirational for this book, although one of his latest books, with its focus on US and Soviet leaders, indirectly tends to consolidate a bipolar view of the Cold War.

The structure of this book also emphasises the interaction between interests and ideas. In the case at hand, bargaining with clear national interests in the form of linkages and leverages constantly merged with the approach based on the more elusive ideological concept of a European peace order. In fact, for the FRG this concept of a peace order was not purely ideological, either. As the potential ‘state of peace in Europe’ this peace order was intimately linked to Deutschlandpolitik interests. The general structure of the book is chronological, dividing the subject matter into five chapters in sequential order. Whereas chapter 2 also follows chronology internally, the following three chapters are clearly divided in two. Each of the chapters 3, 4 and 5 focuses first on the FRG’s ‘linkage’ policy approach to CSCE preparations, then on its agenda interests. As becomes apparent, the respective weightings changed over time, with the long-term strategy concentrating on the conference agenda surpassing the short-term tactics of instrumentalisation and linkage. Finally, chapter 6 portrays the way in which the FRG tackled those issues at the CSCE proper which it considered to be in its immediate national interests.

The chronological watersheds between the chapters arise genuinely from the developments in the foreign policy of the FRG and in the preparations for the CSCE. Chapter 2 covers the years 1966–69, the reign of the Grand Coalition in Bonn. At the same time as the Kiesinger Government slowly prepared ground for a sea change in Ostpolitik, the Western perception of the prospective CSCE changed from outright rejection to a more forthcoming scepticism. Chapter 3, addressing the years 1969–70, falls into the first year of the Brandt Government, ending with the signature of the landmark Moscow Treaty. On the CSCE front, following the Budapest Appeal and the Finnish initiative in 1969, the Western conference preparations started earnestly, albeit slowly, within NATO.

Chapter 4 deals with the years 1970–71, and witnesses the shift from strictly bilateral Ostpolitik to the emphasis on the Quadripartite negotiations on Berlin, which were completed in September 1971. Meanwhile, from the autumn of 1970 there was new movement in the Western CSCE deliberations, as the nascent EPC began to challenge NATO as the central Western framework. Chapter 5 leads us through the years 1971–72, with Bonn focusing on its negotiations with East Berlin on the Ostpolitik front.
parallel, there was a completely fresh burst of West German activity on the CSCE track. West German interests were increasingly pursued by multilateral means, defensively as well as offensively. Ultimately, chapter 6 moves from the landslide election victory of the Brandt–Scheel Government and the opening of the conference in Helsinki to track the unfolding of the West German CSCE policy under the new Schmidt–Genscher leadership.

In addition to a reconsideration of ideological factors, another key feature of the ‘new’ Cold War history has been the growing emphasis on the need for multiarchival research. Much of the discussion about the novelty of that approach can safely be disregarded as unnecessary hype. Nevertheless, the discussion, originating from the end of the Cold War and the partial opening of archives in the former Eastern bloc, has had the important result of making scholars more generally alert than before to the opportunities of a multiarchival approach within the West as well. Even if the archives of the former Soviet Union for the time being remain by and large inaccessible for research on the 1960s and later periods, combining, say, French, German, American and British sources with each other enables a more thorough picture of the Cold War years to be seen.

Also in this respect, this book joins in the ‘new’ debate. Concentrating on a multilateral conference project, a multiarchival approach has come in naturally. The perspective here is not only multiarchival but truly international, making use of archives in eight countries. Since the focus is on the CSCE policies of the FRG, the most essential archives for my research are located in Germany. Of central importance is the archive of the Auswärtiges Amt (AA) in Berlin. The papers of the German Foreign Ministry are in principle accessible according to the thirty-year rule, but in effect this applies directly only to unclassified and low-rated confidential material. This deficiency is partly overcome by the excellent publication series Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (AAPD), which gives access to numerous secret and highly confidential documents, carefully edited and referenced. Moreover, the archive of the AA holds a far broader set of documents originally declassified for the editors of the AAPD series, afterwards microfilmed, organised chronologically and made accessible to all researchers in the collection B150.

Put together, these documents provide a reasonably wide body of evidence. Nonetheless, as far as the AAPD and B150 series are concerned, the arbitrary nature of the selection remains – someone else has made the choices. Requests for additional declassification have proved to be frustrating experiences. In Germany, further useful archives are the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz which, along with the papers of the Chancellery, also holds some interesting personal collections. At least as significant are the archives of the political parties, especially those of the SPD in the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the CDU in the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.
In addition to Germany, national archives in two other countries of the Western alliance have provided important additional information. The US and UK sources have helped me enormously in putting the West German position into perspective. Regarding the published documents from these countries, the record is mixed. In the case of the US, the outstanding series *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) covers the Nixon and Ford years widely. The FRUS volumes dealing with European security on the one hand, and Germany and Berlin on the other, have been particularly valuable. The British equivalent to FRUS, *Documents on British Policy Overseas* (DBPO), pales in comparison, but offers nonetheless some useful additions to the documents accessible in the archives.

As far as the Western organisations are concerned, the results from the EC archives in Florence were largely disappointing – since there was no permanent EPC secretariat, documents on the EPC process are far more prolific in the individual national archives. The opposite is the case with NATO documents. Without exception, official non-public NATO documents are removed from the files in the national archives before they are made available to researchers. Technically, a unanimous consensus of all NATO members is required before a declassification decision can be made. Thus, although the NATO archives in theory follow the thirty-year rule, in practice it has come to resemble forty years. Nonetheless, after persistent efforts over several years, in the winter of 2006 I was finally given access to a set of CSCE-related documents from the years 1969–72 in the NATO archives in Brussels. Those documents have been precious in substantiating my argument in this book.

Two obvious omissions in the archival evidence of this book stand out – the Soviet Union and France. Regarding the Soviet Union, as already indicated above, the situation is unequivocal. Foreign policy documents from the 1960s and 1970s are simply not available. Given the focus on the Western coordination in this book, this is less of a loss. To a certain extent, the problem can be circumvented by the use of East German and Finnish archives, which provide useful, albeit partial glances at Soviet thinking. Beyond that, on a more general level, the Finnish archives offer a helpful view on the CSCE from the perspective of the conference host.

As far as France is concerned, taking into account the third Western country among the Four Powers responsible for Berlin and Germany as a whole, alongside the US and the UK, would undoubtedly be advantageous. Originally, it was the notoriously difficult access to the French archives that led to the decision to exclude them. Later on, as the situation improved, I have corrected this omission at least superficially. Due to time constraints, however, the research in the French archives has not been even close to as comprehensive as elsewhere.
Finally, I have also benefited from a broad variety of interviews with Zeitzeugen—former diplomats and politicians who in their time were directly or indirectly involved with the CSCE. Although not all of the interviewees have been included with explicit references in the footnotes, they have all provided me with invaluable insights and background information. Simultaneously, their contributions have helped make the topic more lively to the author. Hopefully some of that liveliness is conveyed to the reader on the pages that follow.

Notes

3. The acronyms used for the conference during its preparatory stages varied repeatedly over time, from ESC (European Security Conference) to CES (Conference on European Security) to CSE (Conference on Security in Europe). For the sake of clarity, I have chosen to refer to the conference consistently by its final name, the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe). The only exceptions to that rule are in direct citations, where the acronyms of the original documents are used.
Introduction: Era of Negotiations


20. For recently declassified documents from the NATO archives on the genesis of the Harmel Report, see the Parallel History Project (PHP) website <http://www.php.isn.ethz.

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Introduction: Era of Negotiations


40. Of other Bonn Group members, the United States was obviously not included in the EPC. The UK joined the EPC mechanisms later on, but for a while only with the status of an EC applicant. France, then again, having pulled out of its military command in 1967, had a somewhat special position in NATO.

41. See in particular Westad (ed.), *Reviewing the Cold War*.


44. ‘Elastic scepticism’ is the characterisation used of the West German CSCE attitude during the Kiesinger Government in *Sicherheit und Zusammenarbeit in Europa (KSZE): Analyse und Dokumentation*, edited by Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, Wolfgang Mallman and Christian Meier, Köln: Wissenschaft und Politik 1973, 42.

45. In order to avoid a cacophony of languages, direct quotations have throughout the book been translated into English by the author, unless otherwise indicated.

