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**BETWEEN THE BLOCS:  
THE TWO GERMAN STATES IN INTERNATIONAL  
POLITICS, 1955–1990**

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*I. Introduction: Between Delineation and Entanglement*

Contemporary historians in the 1990s generally agreed to take a more integrated look at the history of divided Germany after the war.<sup>1</sup> But it is striking that studies concentrate on economic, technological, environmental, and socio-cultural developments,<sup>2</sup> while we still lack a comparative investigation of the classic areas of state activity, foreign and security policy. Since German unification, numerous studies have been published (in English and German) on the four areas that are relevant to the foreign and security policy of the two states: the role of the two German states in East–West crisis management; in NATO and the Warsaw Pact; in arms control; and in the project of building a common European home. But all deal almost exclusively with the Western or the Eastern part of post-war Germany.

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<sup>1</sup> Ulrich Mählert (ed.), *Die DDR als Chance: Neue Perspektiven auf ein altes Thema* (Berlin, 2016); Detlef Brunner, Udo Grashoff, and Andreas Kötzing (eds.), *Asymmetrisch verflochten? Neue Forschungen zur gesamtdeutschen Nachkriegsgeschichte* (Berlin, 2013); Frank Möller and Ulrich Mählert (eds.), *Abgrenzung und Verflechtung: Das geteilte Deutschland in der zeithistorischen Debatte* (Berlin, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Frank Bösch (ed.), *Geteilte Geschichte: Ost- und Westdeutschland 1970–2000* (Göttingen, 2015); Tobias Hochscherf, Christoph Laucht, and Andrew Plowman (eds.), *Divided, but not Disconnected: German Experiences of the Cold War* (Oxford, 2010); Udo Wengst and Hermann Wentker (eds.), *Das doppelte Deutschland: 40 Jahre Systemkonkurrenz* (Berlin, 2008).

This essay is a response to Christoph Kleßmann's call for all three aspects of Germany's dual statehood—demarcation, parallels, and entanglements—to be analysed.<sup>3</sup> It will take a comparative look at similarities and differences in the attitude of the West German and East German governments to Nato's double-track decision. The main focus will be on whether the dangers of the nuclear age undermined the antagonism between the systems, encouraging the political leaders of the German Federal Republic (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) to find specific German-German responses to the challenges which the East-West conflict posed for foreign and security policy in the 1980s. The essay will also look at the precarious geostrategic position of the two Germanies, situated both in the middle of the East-West conflict and on its borders, and ask what opportunities they had vis-à-vis the two superpowers, and where their scope for action was limited? It will look at how German-German chances to act changed over time. And, finally, the essay will investigate the spillover effects for German unification of the signing of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The comparative analysis will concentrate on two decision-makers in Bonn and East Berlin who embodied specifically German-German similarities in the field of tension between competing systems, parallels, and entanglement that characterized their relations: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the FRG's Foreign Minister, and Erich Honecker, General Secretary of the GDR's ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED).

## II. *The Federal Republic of Germany and NATO's Double-Track Decision*

The Alastair Buchan memorial lecture delivered by Helmut Schmidt on 28 October 1978 triggered a discussion in NATO about re-establishing a Eurostrategic balance. This culminated on 12 December 1979 in NATO's double-track decision, which was accepted by the alliance. Thus the FRG government was confronted with a double dilemma. The disintegration of the conditions for a policy of détente at the end of the 1970s cast doubt on its attempts to do away with the

<sup>3</sup> Christoph Kleßmann, 'Verflechtung und Abgrenzung: Aspekte der geteilten und zusammengehörigen deutschen Nationalgeschichte', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 43/29-30 (1993), 30-41, at 30.

Eurostrategic imbalance by way of negotiations.<sup>4</sup> The double-track approach gave the Kremlin a chance to overturn the *Nachrüstung* (rearmament) part of the treaty at the negotiating table by mobilizing the West European public and without having to make any concessions of its own. As far as the Reagan Administration was concerned, the negotiating part was limited to eliminating military imbalances by upgrading or retrofitting its weapons. This was the essence of the zero option announced by President Reagan on 18 November 1981, namely, to secure the deployment of mid-range nuclear weapons in Western Europe by raising demands that the Kremlin could not accept.

Similarly, the NATO double-track decision exposed the different foreign policy priorities within the FRG's governing coalition. The West German Foreign Office stressed the use of the deployment part, pointing out that rearmament was an inevitable response to the balance being disturbed by Soviet pre-deployment with medium-range nuclear missiles.<sup>5</sup> The West German Chancellery and Ministry of Defence, by contrast, argued politically, making a decision for deployment dependent on the outcome of arms control negotiations.<sup>6</sup> With the disintegration of rearmament and arms control as a result of the drastic deterioration in relations between the two superpowers when Reagan took office, and with the INF negotiations stalled in Geneva as expected, as the result of Reagan's zero option, the arms control part began to turn against its main protagonist. Despite threats to resign, Schmidt was unable to implement both elements of

<sup>4</sup> Helmut Schmidt, *Menschen und Mächte* (Berlin, 1987), 230–2; Hans-Dietrich Genscher, *Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 1995), 414–18, 421–4, 429–33.

<sup>5</sup> Genscher called this 'firmness when it matters', and 'a realistic policy of détente' building on 'an adequate defence capability'. With the 'revolution' in European policy introduced by Gorbachev's 'new thinking', Genscher's maxim became 'competitive assistance is better than an arms race'. Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 475; Hans-Dietrich Genscher, 'Meine persönliche Bilanz? Dankbarkeit', *Bonner General-Anzeiger*, 2 Oct. 2010, online at <<http://www.general-anzeiger-bonn.de/news/Hans-Dietrich-Genscher-Meine-pers%C3%B6nliche-Bilanz-Dankbarkeit-article28899.html>>, accessed 1 Feb. 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Helga Haftendorn, *Sicherheit und Entspannung: Zur Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1955–1982* (Baden-Baden, 1983), 595; ead., *Sicherheit und Stabilität: Außenbeziehungen der Bundesrepublik zwischen Ölkrise und NATO-Doppelbeschluss* (Munich, 1986), 115.

the NATO double-track decision within his own party.<sup>7</sup> The open differences between Schmidt and the Party leadership around its chairman Willy Brandt and Herbert Wehner, chairman of the parliamentary group, on a central issue of German security policy led to the breakdown of the social-liberal coalition. On 1 October 1982 the German *Bundestag* passed a vote of no confidence in the Chancellor with the support of the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and the Free Democratic Party (FDP), and elected Helmut Kohl as the new Federal Chancellor.<sup>8</sup>

Despite strong protests at home, the Kohl/Genscher government upheld the NATO double-track decision. On 22 November 1983 the German *Bundestag* voted 286 to 226 with 39 abstentions to support 'the decision of the Federal Government to start the deployment process on time, in line with its obligation deriving from the second part of the NATO double-track decision'.<sup>9</sup> The Kremlin took the *Bundestag's* decision as a reason to suspend the INF negotiations indefinitely one day later. After a year of waiting, on 22 November 1984, the US and Soviet governments agreed to launch 'new negotiations' on a range of issues relating to nuclear and space weapons. At a meeting in Geneva on 7–8 January 1985 the two foreign ministers agreed to hold Nuclear and Space Talks (NST). All questions raised in the three working groups on space, intercontinental, and medium-range weapons were to be 'considered in their interrelationship and resolved'.<sup>10</sup> One day after the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) elected Mikhail Gorbachev General Secretary on 11 March 1985, the NST negotiations began in Geneva.

The third phase of the INF negotiations was decisively influenced by Gorbachev's 'new thinking'. Based on an awareness of a growing

<sup>7</sup> Schmidt, *Menschen und Mächte*, 292; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 414, 467–8, 476.

<sup>8</sup> Schmidt, *Menschen und Mächte*, 334; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 453–64; Werner Link, 'Außen- und Deutschlandpolitik in der Ära Schmidt 1974–1982', in Wolfgang Jäger and Werner Link, *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, vol. v, pt 2: *Republik im Wandel 1974–1982: Die Ära Schmidt* (Stuttgart, 1986), 275–432.

<sup>9</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 10/36, Bonn, 22 Nov. 1982, pp. 2590–2.

<sup>10</sup> George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years As Secretary of State* (New York, 1993), 519.

interdependence between the states of the world community and the irrationality of a nuclear war, Gorbachev made a series of fundamental changes in the Soviet Union's foreign and security policy.<sup>11</sup> 'Universal human interests' should unconditionally take precedence over 'class interests'. Adversaries were to become 'partners' who would 'look together' for ways to guarantee 'universal security'. Military doctrines should be 'exclusively doctrines of defence'. Armament should be limited to a 'reasonably sufficient minimum' for defensive purposes. The permanent arms race should give way to a drastic reduction in the military arsenals of East and West. Asymmetric reductions in conventional and nuclear weapons were recognized as a binding principle for arms control negotiations.<sup>12</sup> The 'new thinking' put the implementation of a 'constructive and inclusive dialogue' at the centre of inter-state relations.<sup>13</sup> Recognizing 'the priority of humanity's survival', Gorbachev no longer saw security as a zero-sum game. Rather, he regarded it as a shared concern: security could only be achieved with, not against, the West.<sup>14</sup>

The 'new political thinking' was reflected in practical steps,<sup>15</sup> whose main beneficiaries were the arms control negotiations in Geneva, which had been suspended until March 1985. In order to cut the 'Gordian knot' at the INF negotiations,<sup>16</sup> Gorbachev in principle agreed to Reagan's zero option at the Reykjavik summit in October 1986.<sup>17</sup> In April 1987 he went a step further, offering to include nuclear weapons with a shorter range (500 to 1,000 km) on a global basis.<sup>18</sup> Gorbachev's willingness to make far-reaching concessions<sup>19</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Michail Gorbatschow, *Die wichtigsten Reden* (Cologne, 1987), 173, 179.

<sup>12</sup> Id., *Perestroika: Die zweite russische Revolution* (Munich, 1987), 179, 181–2, 337.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 188.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 186.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 176.

<sup>16</sup> Gorbatschow, *Die wichtigsten Reden*, 18.

<sup>17</sup> Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 759, 765–6, 775.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 890–1.

<sup>19</sup> Gorbachev also agreed to exclude the problem of third countries—the inclusion of French and British nuclear weapons and the American FBS systems stationed in Western Europe—and a link between the INF Treaty and the termination of the American SDI programme. Finally, he accepted the US demand for far-reaching verification measures. Svetlana Savranskaya and

paved the way for the INF Treaty, which he and Reagan signed on 8 December 1987 during their third summit in Washington. It committed the USA and the Soviet Union to eliminate all long-range (LRINF) and short-range (SRINF) ground-based missiles and cruise missiles within three years.<sup>20</sup>

The double zero option proposed by Gorbachev in the spring of 1987 put the government of the FRG into an 'extremely difficult position with regard to domestic and foreign policy'.<sup>21</sup> While the FDP under Foreign Minister Genscher actively supported the inclusion of the *Bundeswehr's* 72 Pershing I A carrier systems in the INF Treaty,<sup>22</sup> critics in the CDU/CSU, such as Bavarian Minister President Franz-Josef Strauß and Defence Minister Manfred Wörner, feared that a double zero option would remove another rung in the ladder of escalation, thus severely hampering the strategy of nuclear deterrence, given the Warsaw Pact's conventional superiority.<sup>23</sup> For Genscher, by contrast, the double zero option provided a chance not only to eliminate clear Soviet superiority in nuclear medium-range weapons,<sup>24</sup> but also to stop 'the vicious circle of armament, counter-armament, and re-armament' and thus to signal 'a revolution in disarmament'. In a further step, this would lead to a reduction in the Warsaw Pact's conventional superiority.<sup>25</sup> The US government was unwilling to allow the conclusion of the INF negotiations, which was within reach, to fail on account of what it saw as the less significant issue of the Pershing I A missile.<sup>26</sup>

Thomas Blanton (eds.), *The INF Treaty and the Washington Summit: 20 Years Later*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 238 (Washington, DC, 10 Dec. 2007, online at <<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB238/index.htm>>, accessed 1 Feb. 2019).

<sup>20</sup> A total of 677 LRINF and 169 SRINF US systems, and 889 LRINF and 957 SRINF Soviet systems fell under the terms of the treaty.

<sup>21</sup> Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 567.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 564, 567, 572, 580.

<sup>23</sup> Franz-Josef Strauß, *Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 1989), 513–16; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 565–80.

<sup>24</sup> In Genscher's opinion, it would have been to Germany's advantage if the lower limit for SRINF had been 150 km instead of 500. Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 562–3.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 566–7, 572–3, 575.

<sup>26</sup> Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 898–9; Paul Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost*:

After weeks of 'serious controversy' which took the coalition to the edge of 'collapse',<sup>27</sup> Chancellor Kohl announced his readiness, on 26 August, to dismantle the seventy-two systems that fell under German jurisdiction,<sup>28</sup> just fifteen days before the last medium-range missiles were disposed of. He called on the Soviet leadership to halt the ongoing modernization of short-range nuclear missiles (SNF) with a range of up to 500 km. The existing imbalance was to be reduced, in negotiations, to the lowest possible level and with equal upper limits.<sup>29</sup> Officially, this was a decision taken autonomously by the West German government, but as the warheads were under US control, there was ultimately nothing for Bonn to decide. As the US government expected of its loyal ally, Kohl complied with what the USA had decided in response to his initial concerns at the INF negotiating table.<sup>30</sup>

With the double zero option, the modernization of short-range nuclear missiles and battlefield weapons resolved by the NATO Defence Ministers in Montebello on 23 October 1983 became the focus of deliberations in the alliance. These nuclear weapons systems emphasized the FRG's special position in both geographical and political terms. Because of their short range, they threatened the German population and German territory, both East and West. In contrast to the dispute about the Pershing I A, there was broad consensus right across the political spectrum rejecting the alliance's plans for modernization.<sup>31</sup> The chairman of the CDU/CSU parlia-

*At the Center of Decision. A Memoir* (New York, 1989), 442–3.

<sup>27</sup> Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 569, 712.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 572, 541; Helmut Kohl, *Erinnerungen 1982–1990* (Munich, 2005), 550.

<sup>29</sup> Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 575–6.

<sup>30</sup> Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (London, 1990), 686; Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 984 n. 1. Cf. Wolfram Hanrieder, *Deutschland, Europa, Amerika: Die Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949–1994* (2nd edn. Paderborn 1995), 97–9; Helga Haftendorn, *Deutsche Außenpolitik zwischen Selbstbeschränkung und Selbstbehauptung 1945–2000* (Stuttgart, 2001), 307.

<sup>31</sup> The coalition partners had not decided whether the SNF negotiations should lead to a third solution. While Genscher basically endorsed this, Kohl initially ruled out such a result. Ronald D. Asmus, 'West Germany Faces Nuclear Modernization', *Survival*, 30/6 (1989), 499–514; Clay Clemens, 'Beyond INF: West Germany's Centre Right Party and Arms Control in the 1990s', *International Affairs*, 65/1 (1989), 55–74.

mentary group, Alfred Dregger, aptly expressed concerns about the Federal Republic being singled out for special treatment: 'The shorter the range, the more dead the Germans.'<sup>32</sup> Once again it was Genscher who advocated the abolition of all short-range nuclear systems. As far as he was concerned, it was a matter of continuing down the path paved by the INF treaty towards a 'broadly based disarmament process' and continuing the new 'dynamic' in East-West relations by withdrawing the land-based nuclear weapons remaining in Europe, without any 'ifs or buts'.<sup>33</sup> The West German government was able to achieve a first partial success at the NATO summit at the end of May 1988. A decision was postponed, and the communiqué mentioned modernization with the qualification 'where necessary'.

As his speech to the World Economic Forum in Davos on 1 February 1987 underlined,<sup>34</sup> Genscher firmly believed that Europe had reached a 'turning point' where security and stability could be created by far-reaching arms control agreements and the East-West relationship could be fundamentally changed politically. Soviet foreign policy under Gorbachev opened up new chances to realize the vision of a European peace order or a common European home. Genscher warned the West that it would be committing 'a mistake of historic proportions' if it let this chance go by because it could not leave behind its old way of thinking that assumed only the worst case whenever it looked at the Soviet Union. The possibility of and responsibility for 'influencing, advancing, and shaping developments from our side' arose out of the 'new thinking'. His motto was: 'Let's take Gorbachev seriously. Let's take him at his word.'<sup>35</sup> 'Firmly anchored in the alliance',<sup>36</sup> the Federal Republic of Germany, he believed, could be the 'driving force' or the 'pacemaker' behind a

<sup>32</sup> German: 'Je kürzer die Reichweite, desto toter die Deutschen.' Alfred Dregger, 'Die Deutschen wollen keine Atomartillerie', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 5 May 1988; see also Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 556, 577, 604.

<sup>33</sup> Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 583.

<sup>34</sup> In his *Erinnerungen* he wrote that he 'was now absolutely certain about the real intentions of Gorbachev and Shevardnadze'. *Ibid.* 527.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* 527; Hans-Dietrich Genscher, *Unterwegs zur Einheit: Reden und Dokumente aus einer bewegten Zeit* (Berlin, 1991), 137-50.

<sup>36</sup> Genscher firmly rejected a policy of 'neutralism' because it would turn 'Germany into a factor for insecurity in Europe again, and into the object of power political realities'. Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 586.

process for overcoming 'the division of Europe, step by step', and creating instead 'a pan-European, just, and lasting peace order' in which 'German unity' could be achieved.<sup>37</sup> Looking at Erich Hon-ecker's visit to Bonn in 1987, Genscher was convinced that a broadly based policy of co-operation could have an equally dynamic effect on German-German relations. It would deepen 'the feeling of a common past and a common future—that is, the sense of a common responsibility' in both parts of Germany.<sup>38</sup>

Gorbachev's startling announcement to the UN General Assembly, on 7 December 1988,<sup>39</sup> that the USSR would unilaterally implement far-reaching disarmament measures affecting both conventional and short-range nuclear weapons, along with the continuing political thaw in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, confirmed Kohl and Genscher in their resolve to press the alliance for an arms control policy solution to the problem of short-range nuclear weapons. In a speech to the *Bundestag* on 27 April 1989, Genscher referred to the dilemma which NATO's modernization plans presented for a German government. This modernization would involve nuclear systems 'which could reach the Polish and Czech people, who had suffered so much during the Second World War'. Similarly, these nuclear weapons would be able 'to reach the other part of our Fatherland'. As a minister, he said, he had taken an oath to 'devote all my strength to the good of the German people. This commitment does not end at the border that goes through the middle of Germany.'<sup>40</sup> In light of the encouraging political developments in Poland and Hungary, he concluded: 'Today the discussion about SNF proves to be even more ghostly than at the beginning of the year. Does one really want new missiles which are directed exactly against Lech Walesa's Poland and against Hungary on the way to democracy? Who can responsibly talk about the German question if he orders new nuclear missiles which will impact on the territory of the GDR?'<sup>41</sup> Poland and Czechoslovakia, as 'the first victims of German

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 529, 527, 585.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 551.

<sup>39</sup> Excerpts from Gorbachev's speech to the UN General Assembly Session on Major Soviet Military Cuts, *New York Times*, 8 Dec. 1988.

<sup>40</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 11/140, Bonn, 27 Apr. 1990, p. 10325; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 607, 608, 611.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with *Der Spiegel*, 25 Sept. 1989, 26–7.

aggression', would look at 'us, the Germans . . . and wonder how seriously the West was taking the idea of peace'.<sup>42</sup>

This argument, like the social-liberal coalition's new *Ostpolitik* in the late 1960s and early 1970s,<sup>43</sup> was based on national motives and provoked Washington's suspicions 'that the West German foreign minister was dangerously susceptible to the charms of Mikhail Gorbachev's "new thinking", excessively eager for good relations with Eastern Europe and personally obsessed with openings to East Germany'.<sup>44</sup> In the USA 'Genscherism' became synonymous with a willingness, based on illusions, to accommodate the Soviet Union.<sup>45</sup> The West German government's proposal of 20 April 1987 to start negotiations on short-range nuclear missiles was leaked to the press, and President George H. W. Bush and his national security adviser Brent Scowcroft called it 'a unilateral decision on an issue of such multilateral concern'. Bush was 'annoyed' with this 'unilateral move', which he saw as 'an example of how *not* to conduct alliance business'. He made it clear to Kohl that he did not want Bonn to confront him with 'a *fait accompli*' again. On the same day the NATO defence ministers confirmed that they would retain 'flexible nuclear forces across the entire spectrum and keep them up to date where necessary', while the West German government cast doubt on the 'mix of nuclear and conventional forces in Europe' with its negative attitude towards modernizing SNF.<sup>46</sup> Bush was determined not to let the West German government take control of this central issue of alliance policy. Until the spring of 1989 the US government was not prepared to give way to the West German government and agree to speedy disarmament talks about short-range missiles which, in its view, would lead NATO's strategy of deterrence onto the slippery slope of further

<sup>42</sup> Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 608, 615.

<sup>43</sup> Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, 1979), 405–12, 423–5, 529–34, 806–7, 809–10, 966–7; Christian Hacke, 'Henry Kissinger und das deutsche Problem', *Deutschland Archiv*, 8/9 (1975), 973–87.

<sup>44</sup> Flora Lewis, 'No Time for Politics', *New York Times*, 10 Mar. 1990.

<sup>45</sup> Jim Hoagland compared Genscher to a 'master contortionist', who distinguished himself by his 'craven enthusiasm for Gorbachev and his arms control policy'. Jim Hoagland, 'Genscher, Master Contortionist', *International Herald Tribune*, 18 Aug. 1988; cf. Emil J. Kirchner, 'Genscher and what lies behind "Genscherism"', *West European Politics*, 13/2 (1990), 159–77.

<sup>46</sup> George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York, 1998),

denuclearization. Instead, it made the start of negotiations on short-range nuclear weapons dependent on eliminating the imbalance in conventional weapons.<sup>47</sup>

To his critics, Genscher replied that they had not fully understood Gorbachev's new thinking. NATO could not 'stand against the course of history', could not block a process 'that had brought within reach developments that we in the West have been waiting decades for', namely, 'overcoming the division of Europe'.<sup>48</sup> With a view to the upcoming NATO summit, the governing coalition agreed on 18 April 1989 that a decision about modernizing the Lance short-range missile system would not be taken until 1991-2, 'in the light of developments in political and security policy'.<sup>49</sup> At the NATO anniversary summit in Brussels in late May 1989 NATO leaders and heads of government agreed to re-examine the issue of modernization in 1992 'in the light of overall security policy development'. The NATO foreign ministers had agreed to a compromise proposal of 'partial reductions' submitted by US Secretary of State James Baker as the target of the SNF negotiations.<sup>50</sup> Genscher could live very well with this resolution which, in theory, precluded a third zero solution, because for the present he had put a decision to modernize 'on ice'. 'A commitment to modernize without simultaneous negotiations' had become 'a commitment to negotiate without simultaneous modernization', as Genscher summed up the outcome of the summit.<sup>51</sup> His gamble paid off. With the changes of 1989-90, the question of modernizing short-range nuclear weapons became a footnote in the history of the alliance. On 3 May 1990 President Bush announced that the USA would not modernize the Lance short-range missile system (FOTL) or develop an air-based standoff missile, and that it would

67-71; James Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy* (New York, 1995), 87-8, 92.

<sup>47</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 60, 67, 71; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 604.

<sup>48</sup> Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 593, 598.

<sup>49</sup> In a policy statement on 27 April 1989 Kohl confirmed the government's aim of 'reducing existing imbalances by implementing drastic reductions and agreeing on equal upper limits'. Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 11/140, Bonn, 27 Apr. 1989, pp. 10303, 10302.

<sup>50</sup> Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, 93-4; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 82; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 618-9; Kohl, *Erinnerungen*, 678.

<sup>51</sup> Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 618-19.

discontinue the modernization of the nuclear artillery that had already started.<sup>52</sup>

Genscher achieved his declared aim of preventing the modernization of short-range nuclear weapons by postponing the decision to 1992. A few months later he also achieved his real strategic goal: the opening of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 marked the beginning of a process that, 329 days later, led to German unification. The beneficiaries of an increasingly wider East-West co-operation were the Germans, who achieved unity in peace and freedom on 3 October 1990. German unification, surprising as it was with the opening of the Berlin Wall on that historically fateful day, was not a 'whim of fate, but the fruit of a laborious, long-term, and patiently pursued policy of overcoming the division of Europe with the aim of also ending the division of Germany', as Genscher put it.<sup>53</sup>

### III. *The German Democratic Republic and NATO's Double-Track Decision*

NATO's double-track decision confronted the East German leadership with a politically sensitive challenge: the need to decide between subordination to Moscow and a willingness to engage in dialogue with Bonn. This balancing act became all the more difficult because at the beginning of the 1980s the balance in the GDR's relations with the Federal Republic and the Soviet Union had clearly shifted. To the extent that Moscow withdrew support from the GDR, especially in the area of energy supply, relations with the Federal Republic became all the more vital, particularly in the economic sphere.

Pointing the way, Leonid Brezhnev had explained to Honecker on 4 October 1979 how important it was 'that all the socialist countries form a united front on this question. Of course, the GDR's position plays a big part here.' Two days later he announced a 're-armament' if US medium-range weapons were deployed in Western Europe. Honecker endorsed the Kremlin's attitude. At the meeting of

<sup>52</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 268.

<sup>53</sup> Hans-Dietrich Genscher, 'Vorwort', in Richard Kiessler and Frank Elbe, *Ein runder Tisch mit scharfen Ecken: Der diplomatische Weg zur deutschen Einheit* (Frankfurt/Main, 1996), 7.

the Warsaw Pact's Political Consultative Committee on 15 May 1980 Honecker, like Brezhnev, condemned the NATO double-track decision as attempted blackmail by the West, 'which would considerably increase the chances of NATO forces in Western Europe using nuclear weapons against the Warsaw Pact states'.<sup>54</sup> On the crucial question of how to proceed vis-à-vis the West, the GDR did not yet have to declare its hand. While Schmidt was visiting Moscow in late June 1980, Brezhnev agreed to negotiate with the USA without pre-conditions.<sup>55</sup> This was in line with Honecker's advice, given to Schmidt to take to Moscow and dispensed at the funeral of Yugoslav president, Josip Tito, on 8 May 1980, that negotiations should precede any (re-)rearmament.<sup>56</sup> The second conclusion that he drew revealed differences with Moscow. While the Soviet leadership called for closed ranks to put pressure on Bonn, Honecker preferred the option of keeping in touch with the government of the FRG and doing whatever he could 'to prevent the international crisis affecting relations between their two states'.<sup>57</sup> Like Schmidt vis-à-vis Washington, Honecker felt exposed to Moscow's suspicions that he was working with Bonn to protect European détente from the disruptive influence of the two superpowers in order to pursue his own interests in German policy, which were contrary to the interests of the Soviet Union as the leading power in the Eastern bloc.

Honecker had a first partial victory for his damage-limitation policy at his meeting with Schmidt at Lake Werbellin in December 1981. Both agreed that in view of the threat emanating from Europe, the two German states had great responsibility for preserving the peace. 'German soil must never again give rise to war, but only to peace' was the core of their ideas on the 'coalition of reason' to which they had both, in a pioneering process, agreed.<sup>58</sup> Honecker's return visit to

<sup>54</sup> For Honecker's and Brezhnev's speeches see 'Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security: Collections', online at <<http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/lory1.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic1762.html?lng=en&id=17108&navinfo=14465>>, accessed 1 Feb. 2019.

<sup>55</sup> Schmidt, *Menschen und Mächte*, 118.

<sup>56</sup> For the conversation between Schmidt and Honecker see Heinrich Potthoff, *Bonn und Ost-Berlin 1969–1982: Dialog auf höchster Ebene und vertrauliche Kanäle. Darstellung und Dokumente* (Bonn, 1997), 525.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 516.

<sup>58</sup> For the most important documents and memos on the talks see Detlef

Bonn, which had been agreed, had to be postponed several times because of resistance from Moscow. At a secret meeting in Moscow on 17 August 1984 General Secretary Konstantin Chernenko demanded that Honecker, his counterpart in East Germany, show unconditional loyalty to the bloc and called on him to renounce any independent German–German initiatives which had led the GDR to make ‘unilateral concessions’ to the FRG. ‘In the situation that has arisen’, he advised Honecker to ‘refrain from making the visit’.<sup>59</sup> Adopting the role of an ‘assistant’ to the Soviet Union who had to resign in the case of a conflict,<sup>60</sup> which the Kremlin had assigned to the GDR, Honecker again cancelled his visit to Bonn planned for 4 September 1984.<sup>61</sup> For the Kremlin, the bone of contention was an accusation against Honecker which a member of the Politburo, Werner Krolikowski, had made in a letter to his Soviet comrades. Behind Honecker’s back, it accused him of pursuing an ‘irresponsible, double-faced, zig-zag policy’, and claimed that pursuing German–German understanding was more important to him than showing loyalty to the Soviet Union’s foreign policy.<sup>62</sup> Apart from a num-

Nakath and Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan, *Von Hubertusstock nach Bonn: Eine dokumentierte Geschichte der deutsch-deutsch-Beziehungen auf höchster Ebene 1980–1987* (Berlin, 1995), 57–73; Potthoff, *Bonn und Ost-Berlin*, 652–97.

<sup>59</sup> For the minutes of the meeting see Detlef Nakath and Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan, *Die Häber-Protokolle: Schlaglichter der SED-Westpolitik 1973–1985* (Berlin, 1999), 398–421.

<sup>60</sup> Egon Winkelmann, *Moskau, das war’s* (Berlin, 1997), 27, 181, 235.

<sup>61</sup> Honecker had first cancelled a planned visit to Bonn on 28 Apr. 1983. The reason given was bad relations caused by the death on 10 April 1983 of a West German traveller in transit at the border crossing at Drewitz. Instead Honecker met the Bavarian Minister-President Franz-Josef Strauß in Castle Hubertusstock on 24 July 1983 for detailed political talks. Heinrich Potthoff, *Die Koalition der Vernunft: Deutschlandpolitik in den 80er Jahren* (Munich, 1995), 145–57; Nakath and Stephan, *Von Hubertusstock nach Bonn*, 132–44; eid., *Die Häber-Protokolle*, 353–60; Winkelmann, *Moskau, das war’s*, 109; Strauß, *Erinnerungen*, 484.

<sup>62</sup> Peter Przybylski, *Tatort Politbüro*, vol. i: *Die Akte Honecker* (Berlin, 1991), 342, 347, 354–5. The same conclusion was drawn by a small group of conservative, Moscow-oriented Politburo members: Willi Stoph, Erich Mielke, and Alfred Neumann. Iwan Kusmin, ‘Die Verschwörung gegen Honecker’, *Deutschland Archiv*, 28/3 (1995), 286–90; Georgi Schachnasarow, *Preis der Freiheit: Eine Bilanz von Gorbatschows Berater* (Bonn, 1996), 142–3; Nakath and

ber of agreements worth millions,<sup>63</sup> what was at stake was a loan for billions, brokered by Strauß, which the GDR needed to avert impending insolvency.<sup>64</sup>

Honecker's zig-zag course was visible in the question of (re-)rearmament threatened by Brezhnev as early as October 1979. In view of the German *Bundestag's* decision on deployment, the CPSU Politburo had announced, on 12 May 1983, that it would move operational tactical missiles to the GDR and the Czecho-Slovak Socialist Republic (CSSR), and cruise missiles to the European part of the Soviet Union.<sup>65</sup> At a meeting of foreign ministers of the Warsaw Pact in Prague on 6–7 June 1983 and at a summit of party chiefs in Moscow on 28 June 1983, Foreign Minister Oskar Fischer and Honecker endorsed the conclusion 'to reduce radically medium-range nuclear weapons in Europe on the basis of the principle of parity and equal security'.<sup>66</sup> In response to the Kohl government's determination to implement the rearmament part of NATO's double-track decision in case of a failure of the negotiated solution, the GDR National Defence Council (Nationaler Verteidigungsrat) announced on 25 October 1983 that its intention was 'to begin with preparatory measures for the deploy-

Stephan, *Von Hubertusstock nach Bonn*, 22–3, 49; Gerhard Schürer, *Gewagt und verloren: Eine deutsche Biographie* (Frankfurt/Oder, 1996), 179, 188; Günter Mittag, *Um jeden Preis: Im Spannungsfeld zweier Systeme* (Berlin, 1991), 35–7, 43, 112–14, 117.

<sup>63</sup> See Hermann Wentker, *Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen: Die DDR im internationalen System 1949–1989* (Munich, 2007), 421–2.

<sup>64</sup> Strauß, *Erinnerungen*, 470–9; Kohl, *Erinnerungen*, 173–90; Schürer, *Gewagt und verloren*, 156–8; Mittag, *Um jeden Preis*, 82–7; Manfred Kittel, 'Franz-Josef Strauß und der Milliardenkredit für die DDR 1983', *Deutschland Archiv*, 40/4 (2007), 647–56.

<sup>65</sup> Julij A. Kwitzinskij, *Vor dem Sturm: Erinnerungen eines Diplomaten* (Berlin, 1993), 322, 325.

<sup>66</sup> 'Kommunique der Tagung des Komitees der Minister für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der Teilnehmerstaaten des Warschauer Vertrages in Prag', 7 June 1983, 3, online at <[http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/kms2.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/PHP/20337/ipublicationdocument\\_singledocument/8b89dfd6-8d10-4f98-aec5-006e25a8e2d1/de/070483\\_Communique\\_de.pdf](http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/kms2.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/PHP/20337/ipublicationdocument_singledocument/8b89dfd6-8d10-4f98-aec5-006e25a8e2d1/de/070483_Communique_de.pdf)>, accessed 13 March 2019; Gemeinsame Erklärung ('Moskauer Appell'), *Neues Deutschland*, 29 June 1983.

ment of tactical missiles'.<sup>67</sup> At a reception of Warsaw Pact defence ministers, Honecker added a qualifying statement, namely, that 'the GDR . . . will do everything in its power [to ensure] that a war will never be launched from German territory'.<sup>68</sup> At the International Karl Marx Conference on 11 April 1983 he had declared, as the 'order of the day', that

all political and social forces genuinely committed to peace, irrespective of different political programmes, ideological positions, and religious faiths, will work together across class barriers and other divisions, to protect the peoples of Europe from the catastrophe of a nuclear war. . . . Defending peace as the highest good of mankind is the primary, common, and unifying interest. And a commitment to peace leaves a great deal of scope for mutually beneficial co-operation in a wide variety of fields.<sup>69</sup>

In an interview with *Stern* magazine published on 3 November 1983 Honecker admitted that 'we are not, of course, thrilled by the need for rockets to be deployed on GDR territory as a countermeasure'. If an approximate balance could not be maintained 'in any other way', he suggested, deployment should be kept to the 'lowest possible level'. And when relations between the two German states normalized further, he said, this would 'in any case have a positive effect on overall relations in Europe'.<sup>70</sup> Previously, in a letter to Chancellor Kohl, Honecker had suggested that 'no stone should be left unturned to prevent a new round of the nuclear arms race'. At the end of the letter he emphasized that 'a Europe free of nuclear weapons is, ultimately, the goal of the European people. In the name

<sup>67</sup> 'Mitteilung des Nationalen Verteidigungsrates der DDR', *Neues Deutschland*, 25 Oct. 1983.

<sup>68</sup> 'Erich Honecker empfing Komitee der Verteidigungsminister der Staaten des Warschauer Vertrages', *Neues Deutschland*, 21 Oct. 1983.

<sup>69</sup> His speech is printed in Erich Honecker, *Reden und Aufsätze*, vol. ix (Berlin East, 1985), 274–91, at 284–5; Erich Honecker, *Neues Deutschland*, 12 Apr. 1983.

<sup>70</sup> 'Besser nachverhandeln als nachrüsten: Interview Erich Honeckers für die BRD-Zeitschrift *Stern*', *Neues Deutschland*, 4 Nov. 1983.

of the German people, we endorse this goal.' In his reply, Kohl picked up on the phrase 'a necessary coalition of reason' used by Honecker and continued: 'All my efforts and all my commitment will go to help reason to prevail in all areas.'<sup>71</sup>

The appeal by both sides to the 'coalition of reason' lay behind Kohl's and Honecker's concern to minimize the damage to German-German relations caused by the hardening in American-Soviet relations, and to find commonalities wherever possible. Three days after the German *Bundestag's* decision Honecker, at the 7th meeting of the Central Committee of the SED, confirmed the deployment of Soviet operational tactical missiles in the GDR in response to the deployment of US medium-range missiles in the FRG. But he added that this re-arming 'causes no rejoicing in our country'. Looking at German-German relations, he again stressed that his aim was 'to limit any damage as much as possible'. On the basis of existing agreements, 'the achievements should be preserved and . . . extended'.<sup>72</sup> In a telephone conversation with the Kohl on 19 December 1983, Honecker used the Chancellor's term 'community of responsibility' (*Verantwortungsgemeinschaft*) and expressed the hope that 'realism and reason' would really 'gain the upper hand' in East-West relations.<sup>73</sup> He explained what he understood by 'realism and reason' in an interview with the French weekly *Révolution* on 22 December 1983, where he expressed the expectation that 'sooner or later . . . negotiations will take place on a different basis, which will make it possible to find practical solutions'.<sup>74</sup>

In short, both East Berlin and Bonn insisted on ostentatiously displaying continuity in their mutual relationship, under the motto of co-operation instead of a 'new ice age'.<sup>75</sup> Not least because of the GDR's growing financial dependence on the FRG, it was imperative

<sup>71</sup> The letters are printed in Nakath and Stephan, *Von Hubertusstock nach Bonn*, 144-6, at 146, 155-9, at 155.

<sup>72</sup> Honecker's speech is printed in *Neues Deutschland*, 26-27 Nov. 1983. See also Honecker, *Reden und Aufsätze*, vol. x (Berlin East, 1986), 8-38, at 9.

<sup>73</sup> Nakath and Stephan, *Von Hubertusstock nach Bonn*, 159-70, at 159; Kohl, *Erinnerungen*, 277.

<sup>74</sup> 'DDR setzt Politik zur Sicherung des Friedens entschlossen fort', *Neues Deutschland*, 23 Dec. 1983.

<sup>75</sup> Honecker used the term 'new ice age' in his final remarks at the International Karl Marx Conference on 16 April 1983. Honecker, *Reden und Auf-*

for Honecker to stay in close contact with Bonn in the shadow of the medium-range nuclear missiles.

Honecker considered his policy of damage limitation vindicated by Gorbachev's readiness to resume a dialogue with the West and to agree far-reaching disarmament measures. In an interview with the *Saarbrücker Zeitung* he expressed unlimited support for Gorbachev's suggestions for disarmament. He welcomed a radical reduction or even total elimination of nuclear weapons as a necessary step towards removing the scourge of an 'atomic inferno'.<sup>76</sup> Honecker claimed his working visit to Bonn from 7 to 11 September 1987 as 'a significant political success for the GDR, an important result of its policy of reason and realism'. 'His active advocacy' of peace, disarmament, and détente, Honecker went on, left Kohl no other choice but to 'reiterate his support for a global double zero option in dealing with medium-range missiles'. Similarly, Honecker seemed to have achieved the long-held goal of 'independence and self-sufficiency' for the GDR 'in its internal and external relations' with the FRG.<sup>77</sup> Honecker saw the signing of the INF treaty and Gorbachev's willingness also to agree to asymmetric reductions in conventional armed forces as confirming his view that the policies of bridge-building, and of reason and realism had produced the hoped-for results. By agreeing to the double zero option 'without any ifs or buts',<sup>78</sup> he said, the 'devil's stuff' (*Teufelszeug*) had disappeared, and the 'nightmare of a nuclear war' had been removed from Europe and the two German states.<sup>79</sup>

sätze, ix. 292–5, at 295. See also Erich Honecker to Helmut Kohl, 5 Oct. 1983, in Nakath and Stephan, *Von Hubertusstock nach Bonn*, 144–6, at 146.

<sup>76</sup> 'DDR wirkt jederzeit aktiv für die Sicherung des Friedens: Interview Erich Honeckers für *Saarbrücker Zeitung*', *Neues Deutschland*, 13 Nov. 1985.

<sup>77</sup> 'SED-Politbürovorlage', 15 Sept. 1987, on Honecker's visit to Bonn, reprinted in Andreas Herbst et al. (eds.), *Die SED: Geschichte, Organisation, Politik. Ein Handbuch* (Berlin, 1997), 788–94.

<sup>78</sup> Thus Honecker in a speech to a meeting of the Political Advisory Committee in Berlin (East) on 28 May 1987. See Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security: Collections, online at <[http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/kms2.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/PHP/19214/ipublicationdocument\\_singledocument/04713d92-2251-4365-8ade-59e211447c9f/de/Speech\\_Honecker\\_1987\\_26p.pdf](http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/kms2.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/PHP/19214/ipublicationdocument_singledocument/04713d92-2251-4365-8ade-59e211447c9f/de/Speech_Honecker_1987_26p.pdf)>, accessed 1 Feb. 2019, p. 52.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* 46.

The large degree of agreement on security policy between the SED and the CPSU was reflected in the new military doctrine adopted at the end of May 1987 by the Warsaw Pact's Political Consultative Committee in East Berlin. Following the instructions of the CPSU's 26th Party Congress in February 1986, member states henceforth adopted the doctrine of 'sufficient defence capability'. To take a fundamentally defensive approach meant that armed forces could be reduced to a reasonable minimum, offensive forces broken up, and asymmetries in nuclear and conventional forces eliminated through armaments negotiations. Having established that in the nuclear age security was 'indivisible', the new doctrine concluded that security could only be guaranteed by working together. Thus the 'universal human interest' of protecting humankind from a 'nuclear disaster' was given precedence over class interest in socialism winning any future war.<sup>80</sup>

With the Warsaw Pact's Berlin Declaration, the process of rethinking its military mission and its philosophical foundations began to accelerate in the GDR. Following the logic of the new Warsaw Pact military doctrine, GDR academics at the Friedrich Engels Military Academy, the Institute for International Politics and Economics (IPW) in East Berlin, and the Institute for International Relations in Potsdam all came to the conclusion that 'peace based on hostile deterrence had to be replaced by a peace of understanding between the political opponents'. 'Peace', cutting across class barriers, 'was the primary, common, unifying interest.'<sup>81</sup> Even if the principles of the new military policy 'were not followed', and 'the new thinking did not overcome the political pressures and ideological blinkers . . . until

<sup>80</sup> The PBA's 'Berlin Declaration' on the new military doctrine is reprinted in *Neues Deutschland*, 30–31 May 1987; *Militärwesen*, 31/8 (1987), 3–6.

<sup>81</sup> Wolfgang Scheler, 'Neues Denken über Krieg und Frieden in der NVA', in Wolfgang Wünsche (ed.), *Rührt euch! Zur Geschichte der NVA* (Berlin, 1998), 508–25, at 518. Cf. Erhard Crome and Lutz Kleinwächter (eds.), *Neues Denken in der DDR: Konzepte zur Sicherheit in Europa in den 1980er Jahren* (Potsdam, 2014); Heiner Bröckermann, 'Zur Militär- und Sicherheitspolitik der SED am Ende der DDR', in Rüdiger Wenzke (ed.), *'Damit hatten wir die Initiative verloren': Zur Rolle der bewaffneten Kräfte in der DDR 1989/90* (2nd edn. Berlin, 2015), 17–42; Heiner Bröckermann, *Landesverteidigung und Militarisierung: Militär- und Sicherheitspolitik der DDR in der Ära Honecker 1971–1989* (Berlin, 2011), 715–51.

the social collapse of autumn 1989,<sup>82</sup> the debate between conservative and reformist groups contributed to the fact that the role of the two states working together within their alliances in seeking ways to protect common security was stressed. This was highlighted by the Palme Report of the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security of June 1982 and the SED–Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) discussion paper of 27 August 1987, which had endorsed the concept of common security.<sup>83</sup> At home, in the light of the public protest movement which was taking to the streets of Leipzig and was active throughout the GDR in the late 1980s, the debate sent a message that forms of non-violent conflict resolution were being considered.<sup>84</sup>

Although the year 1987, when Honecker visited Bonn and his demand for disarmament and co-operation was fulfilled, marked the culmination of his political work, from then on he was only able to reap the rewards of anger. He faced four escalating challenges which sealed his political fate and, ultimately, that of the GDR.

First, Gorbachev's new thinking represented a fundamental change in relations with his Eastern European allies: the 'philosophy of the tank' was replaced by that of 'freedom of choice'. It was high time to understand that 'socialism cannot be based on bayonets, tanks, and blood'.<sup>85</sup> In his speech to the UN General Assembly on 7 December 1988, Gorbachev conceded to each socialist brother state 'freedom of choice' (*svoboda vybora*) to embark on the best path to socialism in accordance with national characteristics. In practical

<sup>82</sup> Wolfgang Schwarz, 'Neues sicherheitspolitisches Denken in der DDR (1980–1990): Das Institut für Internationale Politik und Wirtschaft', in Crome and Kleinwächter (eds.), *Neues Denken in der DDR*, 55–112, at 79.

<sup>83</sup> 'Common Security': *Der Palme-Bericht. Bericht der Unabhängigen Kommission für Abrüstung und Sicherheit* (Berlin, 1982); Grundwertekommission der SPD/Akademie für Gesellschaftswissenschaften beim ZK der SED, 'Der Streit der Ideologien und die gemeinsame Sicherheit', *Neues Deutschland*, 28 Aug. 1987.

<sup>84</sup> Scheler, 'Neues Denken', 524; Wilfried Schreiber, 'Neues Denken in der NVA', in Crome and Kleinwächter (eds.), *Neues Denken in der DDR*, 139–200, at 173.

<sup>85</sup> The background to this was provided by the events of March and October 1956—traumatic for the Soviet Foreign Minister—when tanks were sent in against the civilian population of Tbilisi and Budapest. Eduard Scheward-

terms this meant abandoning the Brezhnev Doctrine,<sup>86</sup> by which the Soviet Union claimed the right to intervene militarily in socialist states if the Kremlin considered that the achievements of socialism were under threat, as in the Prague Spring in 1968.<sup>87</sup>

Its unequivocal rejection of the use of military force against allies exposed the GDR's 'basic existential dilemma',<sup>88</sup> namely, that its claim to power was at no time based on political and economic achievements, but on the presence of Soviet military forces in Germany (GSSD), the 'anti-fascist protective wall', an expanding repressive bureaucracy (MfS), and a growing foreign debt incurred to finance Honecker's increasingly expensive economic and social policies while the competitiveness of the GDR's national economy was in constant decline. By the end of the 1980s the GDR's leaders could no longer count on the Soviet Union to guarantee their state's existence. What Brezhnev had told Honecker in the summer of 1970 was still true in 1989: 'Erich, I tell you frankly, never forget that the GDR cannot exist without us, without the Soviet Union, its power and strength. Without us, there can be no GDR.'<sup>89</sup>

Second, the SED leaders made it clear that they were determined to continue on the path towards a unified economic and social policy which they had been following since 1971. They were prepared for

nadse, *Die Zukunft gehört der Freiheit* (Reinbek, 1991), 16, 60, 102, 121, 205, 215, 220-4.

<sup>86</sup> At the Warsaw Pact's Bucharest summit in July 1989, the Soviet Union officially revoked the Brezhnev Doctrine. See 'Communiqué of the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee Conference, 7-8 July 1989 in Bucharest', in Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security: Collections, online at <[http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/kms2.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/PHP/102814/ipublicationdocument\\_singledocument/f8fc6bac-7342-48f2-8239-15e12b018af8/en/Communique\\_1989.pdf](http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/kms2.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/PHP/102814/ipublicationdocument_singledocument/f8fc6bac-7342-48f2-8239-15e12b018af8/en/Communique_1989.pdf)>, accessed 1 Feb. 2019.

<sup>87</sup> Leonid I. Brezhnev, 'Speech by the Soviet Communist Party General Secretary at the 5th Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party, Warsaw, November 12, 1968', *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 20/46 (1968), 3-4; Matthew J. Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003); Daniel Küchenmeister and Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan, 'Gorbatschows Entfernung von der Breschnew-Doktrin', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 42/8 (1994), 713-21.

<sup>88</sup> Ingrid Muth, *Die DDR-Außenpolitik 1949-1972: Inhalte, Strukturen, Mechanismen* (2nd edn. Berlin, 2001), 52.

<sup>89</sup> Wentker, *Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen*, 394.

foreign policy commitment, but categorically excluded the possibility of *perestroika* and *glasnost* in the GDR.<sup>90</sup> Chief ideologist Kurt Hager summed this up in an interview with *Stern* magazine, posing a much quoted rhetorical question: 'If your neighbour was hanging new wallpaper, would you feel obliged to re-paper your flat too?'<sup>91</sup> As Gerhard Schürer, head of the Planning Committee, had recognized as early as 1972, the GDR could not finance a unified economic and social policy out of its own means. Instead of increasing the efficiency of the GDR's economy by structural reforms, the SED leadership raised foreign loans to finance higher imports of consumer goods. The result was that between 1971 and 1981 the GDR's foreign debt rose from 4.5 billion to 26 billion in Western currency (*Valutamark*).<sup>92</sup> At the beginning of the 1980s two events further exacerbated the already tense situation. High interest rates on the international financial markets forced the GDR to pay higher interest rates to roll over its debt. And in the summer of 1981 Brezhnev informed Honecker that oil deliveries to the GDR would be cut by 2 million tons annually. This meant that the GDR could export less refined oil products to the West, and thus had reduced foreign exchange receipts.<sup>93</sup>

For the GDR, continued co-operation with the FRG was necessary for its survival. At the start, the GDR could only avert bankruptcy by accepting bank loans guaranteed by the government of the FRG. According to Schürer's plan of October 1989, receipts from foreign exchange covered only 35 per cent of the *Valutamark* required for loan repayments, interest payments, and imports. Sixty-five per cent of expenditures were covered by new loans. By 1989 the GDR's debt in capitalist foreign countries had risen to 49 billion *Valutamark*; in the years that followed, its annual loans totalled 8 to 10 billion *Valutamark*. Schürer came to a devastating conclusion: 'Since the 8th Party

<sup>90</sup> See esp. Alexandra Nepit, *Die SED unter dem Druck der Reformen Gorbatschows* (Baden-Baden, 2004); Günter Sieber, 'Schwierige Beziehungen: Die Haltung der SED zur KPdSU und zur Perestroika', in Hans Modrow (ed.), *Das Große Haus: Erfahrungen im Umgang mit der Machtzentrale in der DDR* (2nd edn. Berlin, 1995), 71–95.

<sup>91</sup> 'Kurt Hager beantwortet Fragen der Illustrierten *Stern*', *Neues Deutschland*, 10 Apr. 1987; Kurt Hager, *Erinnerungen* (Leipzig, 1996), 384–6.

<sup>92</sup> Schürer, *Gewagt und verloren*, 123–7.

<sup>93</sup> Winkelmann, *Moskau, das war's*, 23, 90–7.

Congress, the GDR's debt in the non-socialist economic area has risen to levels that call the country's solvency into question.<sup>94</sup> In early May 1988, the old SED leadership had categorically rejected Schürer's 'Reflections for Further Work on the National Economic Plan for 1989 and Beyond', which asked for a drastic reduction in the credit-financed import of consumer goods in favour of an increase in the gross investment rate, especially in the area of processing machinery.<sup>95</sup> Even though Egon Krenz, as the new General Secretary of the SED, 'took note' of Schürer's 1989 conclusions and 'worked with them',<sup>96</sup> time and options were no longer available. Honecker's catchphrase, 'Socialism in the colours of the GDR', however, did not develop the dynamic he projected for the period up to 2000.<sup>97</sup> On the contrary, attempts by the SED leadership to stabilize the GDR's economy by conservative system management ended in the virtual insolvency of an economically largely rotten system in the crisis year of 1989.<sup>98</sup>

Third, just as the leaders of the GDR were not prepared for a culture of discussion within the party, they were not willing to recognize the peace movement that emerged in the country in the late 1970s as a partner in the struggle for peace. In their commitment to détente and disarmament, the SED leadership saw an opportunity to strengthen not only the GDR's image as a power actively fighting for

<sup>94</sup> 'Analyse der ökonomischen Lage der DDR mit Schlußfolgerungen: Dokumentation der Politbürovorlage Gerhard Schürers vom 30. Oktober 1989', *Deutschland Archiv*, 25/10 (1992), 1112–20; Schürer, *Gewagt und verloren*, 216–21.

<sup>95</sup> Schürer, *Gewagt und verloren*, 152–6, 181–4, 203–6; Mittag, *Um jeden Preis*, 240–1, 259–60, 280–1, 284–5, 289–90, 307–8, 310–15, 332–3; Hans-Hermann Hertle, *Der Fall der Mauer: Die unbeabsichtigte Selbstauflösung des SED-Staates* (2nd edn. Opladen 1999), 34–41, 66–70, 143–8, 323–21; id., 'Der Weg in den Bankrott der DDR-Wirtschaft: Das Scheitern der "Einheit von Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik" am Beispiel der Schürer/Mittag-Kontroverse im Politbüro 1988', *Deutschland Archiv*, 25/2 (1992), 127–45.

<sup>96</sup> Schürer, *Gewagt und verloren*, 221.

<sup>97</sup> 'Bericht des Politbüros an die 7. Tagung des ZK der SED, Berichterstatter: Erich Honecker', *Neues Deutschland*, 2 Dec. 1988.

<sup>98</sup> See esp. André Steiner, *Von Plan zu Plan: Eine Wirtschaftsgeschichte der DDR* (Munich, 2004); Hans-Hermann Hertle, *Der Fall der Mauer*; Günter Kusch, Rolf Montag, Günter Specht, and Konrad Wetzker, *Schlußbilanz der DDR: Fazit einer verfehlten Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik* (Berlin, 1991).

peace on the international stage, but also their legitimacy with their own people. Instead, oppositional groups formed in reaction to the expectations for more freedom of movement and liberalization raised but not fulfilled by the GDR's leaders.<sup>99</sup> The Federation of Evangelical Churches in the GDR (Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR), as the only major social organization tolerated by the SED outside the framework of democratic centralism, became the point of contact for these groups, dispensing advice and enabling communication.<sup>100</sup> The movement for leaving the GDR in the second half of the 1970s was followed in the early 1980s by the peace movement from below, which made peace an issue going beyond ideological and political claims by East and West.<sup>101</sup> As broad sections of GDR society were living under the impression that they were in a permanent economic and political crisis, the narratives of the exit movement and the autonomous peace movement converged in the late 1980s, and were adopted by large sections of the population which had not previously acted together against the SED state. The parts of the population that, as the 'silent majority', had so far kept out of politics were seized by an elemental rage at the prevailing conditions. The Alliance for Germany's victory in the elections for the GDR *Volkskammer* on 18 March 1990 was a clear signal that the silent majority, adopting the slogan 'We are *one* people', had placed their hopes and expectations on the West German model.<sup>102</sup> The new *Ostpolitik* introduced by the

<sup>99</sup> Klaus-Dietmar Henke, Peter Steinbach, and Johannes Tuchel (eds.), *Widerstand und Opposition in der DDR* (Cologne, 1999); Erhart Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition in der DDR 1949–1989* (Berlin, 1997).

<sup>100</sup> Christian Hanke, *Die Deutschlandpolitik der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland von 1945 bis 1990* (Berlin, 1999); Gerhard Besier, *Der SED-Staat und die Kirche*, vol. iii: *Höhenflug und Absturz* (Berlin, 1995).

<sup>101</sup> Detlef Pollack, 'Zwischen West und Ost, Staat und Kirche: Friedensgruppen in der DDR', in Philipp Gassert, Tim Geiger, and Hermann Wentker (eds.), *Zweiter Kalter Krieg und Friedensbewegung: Der NATO-Doppelbeschluss in deutsch-deutscher und internationaler Perspektive* (Munich, 2011), 269–82.

<sup>102</sup> Jens Gieseke, "'Seit langem angestaute Unzufriedenheit breitester Bevölkerungskreise': Das Volk in den Stimmungsberichten des MfS", in Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.), *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90: Als in Deutschland die Realität die Phantasie überholte* (Munich, 2009), 130–48; Helge Heidemeyer (ed.), *Opposition und SED in der Friedlichen Revolution: Organisationsgeschichte der alten und neuen politischen Gruppen 1989/90* (Düsseldorf, 2011); Steven Pfaff,

West German social-liberal coalition was based on a policy of change through rapprochement, that is, they gambled—successfully, as it turned out—on weakening the SED state from inside and transforming it peacefully, step by step, by more contact, communication, and co-operation.<sup>103</sup> The dynamism emanating from the policy of détente put an end to the SED's ideas of safeguarding the GDR's socialist future by means of a wide security net. Oliver Bange aptly summed up the causal connection: 'the GDR actually negotiated her own demise at Helsinki.'<sup>104</sup>

Fourth, Gorbachev's 'new thinking' in foreign and security policy deprived Honecker of his trump card, namely, presenting himself as the advocate of a policy of realism and reason in the shadow of the Soviet Union's policy of denial since the end of the 1970s. Since the West German government's support for the double-track decision at the latest, the GDR had become much less significant for the Kremlin. While Gorbachev did not veto Honecker's visit to Bonn, he did not leave the diplomatic floor to him. Honecker's trip to Bonn was preceded by Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker's visit to Moscow early in July. Gorbachev gave him a message for the Chancellor: 'The Soviet leadership feels that it is essential to rethink the relationship between the USSR and the FRG, and to lift it to a new level by a joint

*Exit-Voice Dynamics and the Collapse of East Germany: The Crisis of Leninism and the Revolution of 1989* (Durham, NC, 2006); Konrad H. Jarausch and Martin Sabrow (eds.), *Weg in den Untergang: Der innere Zerfall der DDR* (Göttingen, 1999).

<sup>103</sup> Willy Brandt expressed the correlation between détente and transformation in the light of the dramatic changes in Central Eastern Europe: 'Civic freedom can hardly gain space without the "destabilization" of encrusted structures.' Willy Brandt, *Gemeinsame Sicherheit: Internationale Beziehungen und deutsche Frage 1982–1992*, ed. Uwe Mai, Bernd Rother, and Wolfgang Schmidt (Bonn, 2009), 368–9.

<sup>104</sup> Oliver Bange, 'The GDR in the Era of Détente: Conflicting Perceptions and Strategies, 1965–1975', in Poul Villaume and Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *Perforating the Iron Curtain: European Détente, Transatlantic Relations, and the Cold War, 1965–1985* (Copenhagen, 2010), 57–77, at 57; Hermann Wentker, 'Öffnung als Risiko: Bedrohungsvorstellungen der DDR-Führung infolge der Ost-West-Entspannung', in Torsten Diedrich and Walter Süß (eds.), *Militär und Staatssicherheit im Sicherheitskonzept der Warschauer-Pakt-Staaten* (Berlin, 2010), 297–318; Jens Gieseke with the assistance of Doris Hubert, *Die DDR-Staatssicherheit: Schild und Schwert der Partei* (Bonn, 2000), 40–86, at 68, 86.

effort. We are ready for this.’ Alluding to the Russo-German Treaty of Rapallo (1922), Gorbachev declared at a Politburo meeting on 17 July that rapprochement between Bonn and Moscow was ‘possible’.<sup>105</sup> In Kohl’s view, the withdrawal of the US Pershing II medium-range missiles from the Federal Republic had had a positive effect on Gorbachev, ‘one which could not have been predicted’. This concerned his personal relationship with Gorbachev.<sup>106</sup> Honecker overlooked that the withdrawal of the missiles had encouraged a rapprochement between Bonn and Moscow, and had displaced the GDR from the Kremlin’s political radar. This change ultimately contributed to the Kremlin handing over the key for German unity to the Kohl/Genscher government at the decisive talks held in the Caucasus in mid July 1990.<sup>107</sup>

#### IV. Conclusion: Peaceful Change

The arguments about NATO’s double-track decision reflect the pattern of competition, parallelism, and entanglement so characteristic of post-war relations between the two German states. Because of their precarious geostrategic position in the middle of the East-West conflict and on its borders, both German states faced the same fundamental security dilemma, namely, that they could not be defended, either with nuclear or conventional weapons, without running the risk of largely destroying what they were trying to defend. East and West German politicians and generals had been aware of this since the mid 1950s from their participation in NATO and Warsaw Pact manoeuvres. The system of nuclear deterrence that had developed between the two superpowers since the 1960s led to something that the two German states had in common, the view that ‘German soil must never again give rise to war, but only to peace’, as Schmidt and Honecker declared at their meeting at Lake Werbellin.

From the end of the 1970s the deteriorating relationship between the USA and the Soviet Union revealed a second feature that Bonn

<sup>105</sup> Alexandr Galkin and Anatolij Tschernajew (eds.), *Michael Gorbatschow und die deutsche Frage: Sowjetische Dokumente 1986–1991* (Munich, 2011), 46, 49–50.

<sup>106</sup> Kohl, *Erinnerungen*, 551.

<sup>107</sup> At this meeting Gorbachev no longer questioned an all-German membership of NATO.

and East Berlin had in common. Schmidt, Kohl, and Genscher, like Honecker, made every effort to remain in contact at all levels of the internal German communications network. They saw themselves as 'interpreters' or 'mediators' between the two superpowers with the declared aim of preserving what had been achieved so far in German-German relations. Like Kohl, Honecker stuck to his policy of promoting a 'community of responsibility' towards 'Europe and the German people', based on 'personal commitment'.<sup>108</sup> The aim was to expand co-operation between the two German states in all areas of politics, and to do everything possible to maintain peace in Europe and to protect humanity from a nuclear disaster.

The third shared feature presented itself to the two German states in a negative way and with a different weighting in each case. The double zero option, including the seventy-two Pershing I A missiles under German control, showed that Bonn had a very limited ability to enforce its ideas of security policy in the alliance if Washington had other priorities.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, its demand for the decision to modernize nuclear short-range and battlefield weapons to be put on ice until 1992 was accepted by the alliance and at the NATO summit at the end of May 1989 in Brussels. What came to its aid in this was the 'overall development of security policy' in Eastern Central Europe, including the GDR, which had made any modernization of short-range nuclear weapons superfluous.

Honecker took a two-pronged approach that combined allegiance to Moscow with stronger co-operation with the FRG. He succeeded in protecting German-German relations from the crisis in international relations, and managed to conclude further agreements with Bonn, including the loan for a billion *Valutamark* guaranteed by the FRG government that was of existential significance for the GDR's solvency on international capital markets. Yet his policy of damage limitation and building bridges had a price. He had to accept the Soviet policy of (re-)rearmament, which provided for the deployment of operational tactical nuclear weapons on GDR soil. In addi-

<sup>108</sup> This is the assessment by the Permanent Representative in East Berlin, Hans-Otto Bräutigam, expressed in a telex dated 25 Nov. 1983. Karl-Rudolf Korte, *Deutschlandpolitik in Helmut Kohls Kanzlerschaft: Regierungsstil und Entscheidungen 1982-1989* (Stuttgart, 1998), 190, 567.

<sup>109</sup> Hanrieder, *Deutschland, Europa, Amerika*, 93, 97; Haftendorn, *Deutsche Außenpolitik*, 285, 291, 294.

tion, he had to bow to Moscow's veto and again cancel his already planned return visit in early September 1984. The conclusion of the INF treaty turned out to be a Pyrrhic victory for Honecker. While nuclear weapons were eliminated by the treaty, in the period that followed all that was left for him was to harvest the fruits of wrath caused by his policy of reason and realism.

The four strategic challenges which Honecker faced in the post-INF period clearly exposed the asymmetries between Bonn and East Berlin. Genscher, 'taking Gorbachev at his word', had made himself the champion of both the double zero option and a freeze on the Lance modernization. He saw his gamble pay off. System-opening co-operation in all areas of policy created, step by step, a 'complex network of relations' between East and West,<sup>110</sup> thanks to which the division of Europe was peacefully overcome and German unity achieved in consensus with the Four Powers on the basis of the Two Plus Four Agreement. Conversely, it could be argued that without the policy of change through rapprochement, without the 'Helsinki effect' which grew out of the CSCE Final Act,<sup>111</sup> without Gorbachev's rejection of 'tank philosophy' and the Brezhnev doctrine, and without a reduction of armaments to a sensible minimum for defensive purposes, the division of Europe and Germany would not have been achieved, and the social upheavals would have been violently crushed, as they had been in 1953, 1956, and 1968.<sup>112</sup>

The loser in these post-INF developments was Honecker, whose attempts to present the GDR as a state of peace and to renew a GDR version of socialist society did not stop his dwindling support among his own people from ebbing away altogether. In response to mass protests and a mass exodus, he had to resign from all his posts on 18 October 1989. The GDR's de facto insolvency and the opening of the

<sup>110</sup> Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 609.

<sup>111</sup> Oliver Bange, 'Der KSZE-Prozess und die sicherheitspolitische Dynamik des Ost-West-Konflikts 1970-1990', in id. and Bernd Lemke (eds.), *Wege zur Wiedervereinigung: Die beiden deutschen Staaten in ihren Bündnissen 1970 bis 1990* (Munich, 2013), 87-104, at 87-8; Oliver Bange, *Sicherheit und Staat: Die Bündnis- und Militärpolitik der DDR im internationalen Kontext 1969 bis 1990* (Berlin, 2017), 241-99.

<sup>112</sup> Olav Njølstad, 'Introduction: The Cold War in the 1980s', in id. (ed.), *The Last Decade of the Cold War: From Conflict Escalation to Conflict Transformation* (London, 2004), pp. xi-xxiii, at xviii-xxii.

Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 meant that the days of the SED regime were numbered. This ineluctable development towards unification exposes the basic asymmetry between the foreign and security policy of the GDR and that of the FRG. The outcome for the GDR was determined and constrained by Moscow's imperial rule, West Germany's pull, and its own internal contradictions.<sup>113</sup> Going beyond this, our comparative analysis confirms Kleßmann's analysis that the tension between competition, parallelism, and entanglement in the post-war history of the two German states forms 'the specific profile of developments after 1945'. Without it, the evolution of the two German states, both internally and externally, 'cannot be understood'.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>113</sup> Wentker, *Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen*, 3–6, 69, 211, 233, 394, 556, 560, 563.

<sup>114</sup> Christoph Kleßmann, 'Spaltung und Verflechtung: Ein Konzept zur integrierten Nachkriegsgeschichte 1945 bis 1990', in id. and Peter Lautzas (eds.), *Teilung und Integration* (Bonn, 2005), 20–36, at 33; Kleßmann, 'Verflechtung und Abgrenzung', 30.

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