

# GERMANY AND THE POLITICAL ENGINEERING OF *OSTPOLITIK* (A HISTORIES APPROACH AND BONN'S PERCEPTIONS AFTER THE END OF COLD WAR)

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## *Ostpolitik and the Cold War*

The sintagma *Ostpolitik* entered the vocabulary of International Politics in the late 1960s in the middle of Cold War. To many analysts at the time and in our contemporary period<sup>1</sup> it seemed to mark that Germany's return to the International system as a national actor.

The traditional political-ideological goal of creating a liberal-capitalist international seder of democratic states was linked with geopolitical-strategic efforts to prevent Soviet hegemony in Europe.

This security interest could be realised during the East-West conflict *via* a complementary strategy. The containment of Germany through its integration into the West at the same time served to contain the Soviet Union by creating a counterbalance. This *double containment* was the key component of the American policy in Europe after the Second World. Accordingly, the transatlantic and trans-Pacific security should be retained to ensure that Japan and Germany do not succumb to hegemonic temptations.

Until then, the foreign policy's decisionmakers had mostly regarded

Germany as a problem rather than a state which pursues its own national interests.

But this notion was quite wrong. Germany, in this case we need to say West Germany, had its own, foreign policy interests almost since it came into existence in 1949. By the time *Ostpolitik* came along, this was by 1969/1970<sup>2</sup>, a set of policies, institutions and alliance was in place which had to become essential to the role played by the Bonn government - the terrible child of the Cold War - during the peak of the detente era.

Indeed, the treaties with Bucharest (1967), Belgrad (1968), Moscow (1970), Warsaw (1970), Prague (1973) and East Berlin (1972) - the landmarks of *Ostpolitik* - which the new government of Willy Brandt (S.P.D.) concluded between 1970 and 1973 can only be understood in the context of Bonn's foreign policy (especially the political and geo-economical framework of Eastern policy) between 1949 and 1969.

The main step towards a coherent German policy in relation with the Eastern European Sovietization actors was taken by the government of Konrad Adenauer in the early 1950s. At that time the Bonn republic was still not sovereign, but the Western

powers realized that West Germany could not remain a Cold War bulwark against further Soviet expansion unless it was allowed to contribute to European recovery. Cold War policies to contain Soviet influence in Europe, and indeed beyond, could not without the consent of the majority of the German people and therefore without the consent of their elected government.

The emerging compromise between the Bonn government and the Western allies was wrapped in a very complex set of relationships which came to be called "European Integration". One set of relationships focused on economic issues and developed into what is now called the European Union. The other was N.A.T.O. and dealt with the security policy of the Occident.

Two points of view emitted by the first German Chancellor after W.W. II,

### *The Ostpolitik of Brandt's government*

The Paris Agreement of 1954 (was signed by the democratic Occidental powers) had preserved the German republic through stopping the regime of Interallied occupation.

A basic historical fact in the reconciliation process between Bonn and *Ostländer* was the Romanian political decision of the association of War's state declared at 23 August 1944. This political act had been accepted by the Great National Assembly (the legislation forum in the Communist Romania) which was emitted by it in 1955<sup>3</sup>.

It was in relation with this background that Willy Brandt and his new coalition government opened a series of negotiations in 1969 which led to the bilateral treaties with Moscow, Warsaw, Bucharest, East Germany and eventually with Prague (there is a conflict referring to the Sudet question and the German minority in Czechoslovakia).

Konrad Adenauer, are of key importance to our topic research.

The first concerns his overall assessment of the options for German foreign and security policy. In hindsight it is clear that Adenauer was absolutely right in his assessment of the long-term nature of the German problem. The Americans and the West Europeans were of course pleased to see that the "Bonn republic" was led by people who had a clean record as far as the Nazi past was concerned.

In other words, Adenauer realized that there would have to be a voluntary and irreversible surrender of German sovereignty. The chancellor would have had that basis of security for the Federal Germany to be under "N.A.T.O. umbrella" against the Soviet threat" (Germany of West was accepted in the Northern-Atlantic alliance in 1955).

Except for the treaty with East Germany, there was nothing in those treaties which changed the *status quo* of the political and territorial transformation after W.W.II.

In our view, Germany had placed in the main targets of the *Eastern Policy* the relations with *Kremlin*; and Bonn displayed a coherent and utilisation policy which was rejected by the *Doctrine of Hollstein*, antithesis for a political strategy of compromise between the Western democracies and the Soviet power.

At the time of the Great Coalition between the Social-Democratic Party (S.P.D.) and the Democrat-Christian Union (U.C.D.) in the period 1968-1969 the "landscape of East" was developed, prepared by Willy Brandt and his constitutor, dr. Egon Bahr.

The Western powers, particularly U.S.A. could hardly oppose *Ostpolitik* since their own detente efforts went way beyond the *status quo* and were coming for a whole new

set or relationship with Moscow<sup>4</sup>. U.S. foreign Secretary, Henry Kissinger would have preferred to be the only one to the Kremlin leaders, in quality of political leader of the one Superpower.

Kissinger and other politicians were suspicious as to the motives behind Bonn's

new *Ostpolitik*, but eventually they had to admit that such regional European detente efforts probably help strengthen rather than weaken the Western camp, and particularly N.A.T.O., as a main organisation of security for the Occidental powers.

### ***The new dimensions of Ostpolitik after the End of Bipolarism***

*The German geopolitical perception of the Eastern space*<sup>5</sup>.

The geopolitical and geoeconomical object of analysis for Ostpolitik was East Central Europe and in other terms the concept of "Central Europe" the location "between Germany and Russia (Soviet Union/Russian Federation)", between the Russian *near abroad* and the German *Mittleuropa*, a geoeconomical building, especially, and also in the sense of georeligious (a Catholic-protestant component) dimension<sup>6</sup>. "South-Eastern Europe" is another term which should be examined. It's of a German origin, and has been traditionally applied to those countries located between Germany and Russia, situated south-east of the former.

Therefore, one may reasonably claim that there existed a strong and all-embracing tendency to study and examine the region of South-East (Balkan) Europe in the greatest possible and most accurate insight into the latter as a natural supplementary area of the German union (the term for "Ergänzungswirtschaft") and enable its economic capacities to be utilized to the highest possible degree for the purposes dictated by the ambitious German objectives.

If it is borne in mind that the overall trade relations of the German State (Wilhelminian Empire, the Republic of Weimar, the Nazi *Reich*, the Western Germany) with Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Romania<sup>8</sup>, Greece and Turkey

both in the sphere of commodity trade and financial transactions.

Among the various term which individualize possible sub-divisions of the area "between Germany and Russia", there is also a locution such as "the Danubian States". However, in the German approach, countries like Austria, former Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania, have usually been seen as its "core", and Germany it's "the soul" of this Danubia area<sup>9</sup>.

According to paradigma which was emitted by the father of the Anglo-Saxon school of Geopolitics, Halfred I. Mackinder "a Middle Tier" of really independent states between Germany and Russia"<sup>10</sup>, many German geopolitician analysts in the interwar period (like Ernst Schmidt<sup>11</sup>, H. Grothe<sup>12</sup>, W. Francke<sup>13</sup>, W. Hoffmann<sup>14</sup>, G. Herlt<sup>15</sup>) wrote about the *Mittleuropa* question.

For the geoeconomical dynamics of German Power in *Mittleuropa* ("Middle Europe") see C. Buchet, "Security of Eastern Europe in '90 years. The German Perceptions", in *Romanian World*, N.I.S.T., no. 25, 1997, p. 3; Idem, "Romania and Europa at the German Hour", in *Romanian World*, N.I.S.T., no. 36, 1998, p. 2; Pierre George and Jean Tricart, *L'Europe Centrale*, Paris, P.U.F., 1954, vol. I, pp. 292-293; Gordon East, *Historical Geography of Europe*, Paris, Gallimard, 1939, pp. 50-54.

## ***Germany, Ostpolitik and Status Quo after the Cold War***

N.A.T.O. is inextricably linked to solving the *German problem* without upsetting the European state system: A Germany that is structurally more powerful than any other European country except Russia must be accommodated. The Versailles Treaty attempted to solve this problem through discrimination and controls, only to foster resentment and ultimately the Nazi expansionism.

After World War II, a different conclusion was drawn: Germany was to be integrated by means of cooperative and

multilateral arrangements, if possible in a European System that would neither have been unified in 1990, more strikingly and unexpectedly unified as a full member of N.A.T.O.

Through a new *Ostpolitik* in the post Cold War Era, Bonn followed a supremacy in the E.U.'s system of power (according to work hypothesis was predicted by Professor Werner Weidenfeld)<sup>16</sup> and a destruction of contents had been established in the system of the Treaty of Versailles.

## ***Germany, the Balkans and the Jugoslavian crisis (1991-1994)***

Historically, the Balkans had been an area of German interference and rivalry with other power (especially with Russia). During the W.W. II the Wehrmacht established a brutal occupation regime in Serbia, whereas the Croats had the opportunity to build up their own state, the Independent State of Croatia run by the notorious "ustasha" leader, Ante Pavelić.

In The First World War, the Germans entered the war on the side of their ally Austria-Hungary with the battle *Serbien muß sterben* ("Serbia has to die")<sup>17</sup>.

The notion of Germany's special economic interest in the Balkans was transformed into a permanency of German foreign policy and remained active until the very end of the Second World War<sup>18</sup>.

Many analysts still insist that the economic interests that underlie Germany's contemporary Balkan policy betrays its ignorance of the available statistical data.

But after the beginning of the Jugoslavian crisis, every night German T.V. stations delivered reports about new Serbian attacks on towns populated mostly by Croats. The role of Croatian paramilitary groups was never discussed.

*Bild* published the results of a survey among its readers which asked whether the German government was doing enough to help Croatia. Allegedly, 89,2% answered

"no"<sup>19</sup>. Whereas *Bild* and German T.V. were delivering quick information to the masses, the conservative abides *Die Welt* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* provided background for the political and intellectual élites. In editorials and commentaries, Serbia was called the "aggressor" that harbored "the obsession of a master race with conquests".

Serbian troops were referred to as non-European "barbarians" or as *Chetniks*, the name for Serbs during W.W. II who fought brutally for the restoration of monarchy.

In concluding, the *Realpolitik* of German recognition for Croatia and Slovenia was based on rebuilding the natural, traditional German sphere of influence: *Mittleuropa*. Furthermore, the fact that most of the Croats were Catholic gave them some credit among Catholic circles in Southern Germany. Stephen Kinzer of the "New York Times" misquoted H. Kohl as saying "a great victory for Germany", but, also some critics called Germany "an unpredictable giant in our midst" and asserted that the political "dwarf" was gone forever, Croatia and Slovenia were labeled as "Bonn's new babies"<sup>20</sup>. Through this unilateral political act, Germany has eliminated the versaillean "containment" of "the risk of Serbies" (Jacques Bainville).

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Wolfram F. Hanrieder, *Deutschland, Europa, Amerika. Die Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1949-1989*, Paderborn, Ferdinand Schoenigh, 1991, pp. 7-8.
- <sup>2</sup> Richard Löwenthal, Hans Peter Schwartz, *VonKaltenkrieg zur Ostpolitik*, Stuttgart, Serwald Verlag, 1974, p. 67; A. J. Ryder, *Twentieth century Germany from Bismarck to Brandt*, London, Oxford U.P., 1972, p. 89; Dietrich Geyer, "Ostpolitik und Gesichtsbewusstsein in Deutschland", in *Viertel jahrhefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 34, 1986, p. 148; Arnulf Baring, *Unser neue Grössewahn*, Stuttgart, Deutsche Verlag - Anstalt, 1988, p. 77; Michael Kreile, *Osthandel und Ostpolitik*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, 1978, p. 138.
- <sup>3</sup> *Relații internaționale. Cronologie în perioada postbelică (International Relationships. Chronology in the postwar period)*, vol. I, București, Editura politică, 1980, p. 171. For entering of West Germany in N.A.T.O. and implications of this act for the sistem of Ostpolitik see C. Buchet, "N.A.T.O. The Strategic Landscape, Diplomacy and the Security's question", in *The Files of History*, IV, no. 4 (37), 1999, p. 20-21.
- <sup>4</sup> Richard Löwenthal, Hans Peter Schwarz, *op. cit.*, p. 67; C. Buchet. *Ostpolitik. An historial approach in Romanian World* no. 39/1999, p. 3.
- <sup>5</sup> Daniel Vernet, *La renaissance allemande*, Paris, Flammarion, 1992, pp. 123-124
- <sup>6</sup> Gregory Treverton, *America, Germany and the Future of Europe*, Princeton, N.J. Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 171. Philippe Moreau Deforges, "L'Allemagne et l'avenir de l'unification européenne", in *Politique Étrangère*, nr. 4, Hiver, 1991, 56 année, pp. 76-77. For the religious composant of the Germanscentric *Mittleuropa* see our book was entitled *Religion and Power in the International Contemporary Relations*, Editura didactică, 1998, pp. 43, 59 and 61-63.
- <sup>7</sup> Michael Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastwards. A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich*, Cambridge U.P., 1988, p. 78; L. Gruchmann, *Nationalsozialistische Aussenpolitik 1933-1938. Die Konstruktion einer "deutschen Monroe Doktrin"*, Stutgart, G.U.B., 1962, p. 81; Pierre Gallois, "Vers une prédominance allemande", in *Le Monde*, 16 July 1993, p. 4; Uwe Nehrlich, "L'Allemagne - un pays comme les autres", in *Politique Étrangère*, no. 1, 1995, p. 102.
- <sup>8</sup> I. Chiper, "The Romanian-German Relations in 1933", in *Studies*, no. 4, 21, 1968; C. Buchet, "The Economical German-Romanian Relations" (1920-1928), in volume *History as a lecture of World*, Iași, 1994.
- <sup>9</sup> Karl Kaiser, *Südosteuropäische Seschichte und Geschichtswissenschaft*, Wien, Köln, Böhlan Verlag, 1990, pp. 91-92; Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts. A Journey Through History*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1993, p. XXIII.
- <sup>10</sup> Henry R. Cooper Jr., "On Making Central Europe", in the *Slavic Review*, vol. 52, no. 3, Fall 1993, p. 593.
- <sup>11</sup> Ernst Schmidt, *Die rumänischen Staates in ihrer historische Entwicklung*. München, 1932.
- <sup>12</sup> H. Grathe. *Die Demonstrasse in ihrer wirtschafspolitischen Wertung*, April 1, 1918-1919, p. 189.
- <sup>13</sup> W. Franke, *Die Danon und ihre wirtschafliche Bedeutung für Deutschland*, November, 11, 1918, pp. 679-681.
- <sup>14</sup> W. Hoffmann, "Südosteuropa und wir", in *Deutsche Wirtschaftszeitung*, no. 25, 1928, pp. 227-229.
- <sup>15</sup> G. Hert, "Deutsche Intelligenz und deutsches Kapital für den Balkan" in *Industrie und Handels Zeitung*, october 31, 1921.
- <sup>16</sup> Werner Weidenfeld, "Neue Ostpolitik-Strategie für eine Gesamteuropäische Entwicklung", in *Romanian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. III, 1/1997, pp. 23-25.
- <sup>17</sup> Andrej Mitrovič, "German's Attitude Toward the Balkans 1912-1914", in the vol. *East Central Society and the Balkan Words*, New York, 1987, p. 310.
- <sup>18</sup> I. Chiper, *The Protocol of Suchemin and the German Diplomacy*, Bucharest, A.D.I.R.I., 1969.
- <sup>19</sup> *Bild Zeitung*, 9 october 1991, p. 2.
- <sup>20</sup> Horst Albert, "Der Balkan-Krise und den Vereinten Nationen", in *Europa ...*, no. 2, 1993, p. 38; H. Wynsendts, *L'engrenage. Chroniques jugoslaves, juillet 1991-août 1992*, Paris, Fayard, 1993, p. 50.