

**BRITAIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO DÉTENTE:  
THE CONFERENCE ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION  
IN EUROPE, 1972–1975**

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## ABSTRACT

### **Britain's Contribution to Détente: The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1972–1975**

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DPhil Thesis in International Relations

This thesis examines Britain's role in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Based on multi-archival research and interviews with key diplomats, it presents the first in-depth study of Britain's involvement in the negotiations leading up to the Helsinki Final Act of 1 August 1975. It draws on Marc Trachtenberg's notion of the 'constructed peace', and Alexander Wendt's concept of 'cultures of anarchy' to elucidate how the rapprochement process at once stabilised and transformed the East-West conflict. This forms the theoretical framework of the thesis.

The thesis revises the interpretation of détente as a status quo project driven by the imperatives of 'Realpolitik'. Rather, different conceptions of stability and change challenged each other during the Helsinki talks. British diplomacy and the Final Act to which it contributed in fact linked the consolidation of the status quo to an ultimately transformative agenda that was infused with liberal ideas such as human rights. Realpolitik blended with Moralpolitik.

To develop this argument, the thesis' narrative first assesses Britain's role in the early days of détente politics in the 1950s and 1960s. It then traces Britain's role in the three main phases of the Helsinki process: the transition from bilateral to multilateral détente (1970-1972); preliminary talks (1972-1973); official negotiations (1973-1975). The British were defensive détente sceptics at the beginning of this process, but became ambitious and positive contributors over the course of the talks.

The thesis thus argues that London played a significant part in the CSCE. British foreign policymakers were initially architects of the Cold War, but then early and active proponents of détente until the mid-1960s, when their continental partners adopted a more proactive approach. London was to return to the forefront of détente diplomacy when the CSCE process got under way. Its involvement in the CSCE also marked an important step in Britain's own transformation into a European middle power. The multilateralisation of détente coincided with Britain's integration into the European Community, providing a propitious environment in which London's negotiators acted with determination and skill, thus reasserting their country's influence despite its continuing relative decline.

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Who could these men be?  
What were they talking about?  
What authority could they represent?  
– Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, 1915

When I first came to Oxford in the autumn of 2005, I encountered a strange world filled with odd words whose meaning eluded me: ‘sub-fusc’, ‘battles’, ‘Bod’, ‘bop’, ‘punting’, ‘pigeon hole’... I did not even know what ‘the other place’ was, let alone where it was supposed to be. Likewise, when I started working on the Helsinki talks, I encountered a world no less alien. It was filled with obscure acronyms – CSCE, ESC, MPT, CBM, MAC, ECE, MBFR... – and, overall, made little sense to me. Why would a negotiation of thirty-odd states stall over the placement of a comma? What does it mean to ‘mentally register a draft text’? Or why would a delegate, while the talks were in session, recite Orwell’s *1984*?

At the onset, then, both Oxford and the CSCE provided me with quite a few Kafkaesque moments. That I feel at home in both of these unique worlds now is in large measure due to a long list of individuals, only some of whom can be mentioned here. First and foremost, I am forever indebted to Professor Anne Deighton about whom I could not speak more highly. She went above and beyond the call of duty in offering sage advice, cheerful encouragement, and constructive criticism. Thankfully, she persistently declined to ‘mentally register’ a verbally outlined draft chapter, always pushing me to table an actual one instead. For all of this – and for her gracious patience – I am profoundly grateful. Another key figure linking the CSCE and Oxford is Richard Davy whose warm friendship and boundless enthusiasm regarding all things Helsinki deserve to be formally ‘registered’ here.

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This list would be incomplete without mentioning my family. Without my father, this thesis would not have been finished in good time. His material support and inquisitive mind (‘When will you be done?’ ‘What is taking you so long?’ ‘Why...?’) contributed significantly to its completion. Furthermore, I sincerely thank the Aspisheim ‘clan’ – including my aunt Karin, my uncle Fritz, and my cousin Kai-äh-Jens – for providing a warm welcome on my returns.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to two outstanding women: to my mother, Christiane Hebel (1948-2003), who passed away after fighting bravely for many years; and to my grandmother, Anneliese Beyer, on whose unconditional love I continue to rely. Danke für alles.

## List of Abbreviations

AAPD	Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty
BAOR	British Army of the Rhine
BDOHP	British Diplomatic Oral History Programme
CAB	Records of the Cabinet Office
CANA	National Archives of Canada
CBM(s)	Confidence-building measure(s)
CCBH	Centre for Contemporary British History
CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union (Germany)
CEC	Commission of the European Communities
CFPF	Central Foreign Policy Files (US State Department)
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy (European Union)
Cf.	Confer
Ch.	Chapter
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
Cmnd.	Command Paper
Col.	Column
Cp.	Compare
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DBPO	Documents on British Policy Overseas
DCI	Director of Central Intelligence (Agency)
DUS	Deputy Under-Secretary of State
Ed(s).	Editor(s)
E(E)C	European (Economic) Community
ECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
EDC	European Defence Community
EESD	Eastern European and Soviet Department
EPC	European Political Cooperation
ESC	European Security Conference
F(C)O	Foreign (and Commonwealth) Office
Fn.	Footnote
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GVN	Government of the Republic of Vietnam
HAK	Henry A. Kissinger
HMG	Her Majesty's Government
Ibid.	Ibidem
IOF	Inviolability of frontiers
IR	International Relations
JIC	Joint Intelligence Committee
LTBT	Limited Test Ban Treaty
MAC	Mutually Acceptable Conditions
MBFR	Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction Talks
MemCon(s)	Memorandum/Memoranda of Conversation(s)
MFN	Most favoured nation

MPT	Multilateral Preparatory Talks
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NARA 2	National Archives & Record Administration 2, College Park, Maryland, USA
NATO(A)	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Archives)
NPMS	Nixon Presidential Materials Staff
(D)NSA	(Digital) National Security Archive
NSC	National Security Council
NNA	Neutral and non-aligned states
OEEC	Organisation for European Economic Cooperation
P./pp.	Page/pages
PAAA	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes
Para(s).	Paragraph(s)
PCF	Peaceful change of frontiers
PREM	Records of the Prime Minister's Office
PRO	Public Records Office of the United Kingdom
PUS/PUSD	Permanent Under-Secretary of State/Permanent Under-Secretary's Department
QRR	Quadripartite Rights and Responsibilities
RG	Record Group
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SCEWR	Standing Committee on East-West Relations
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SPC	Senior Political Committee (NATO)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
TelCons	Telephone Conversation Transcripts
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UKNA	National Archives of the United Kingdom
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
US/USA	United States of America
USNARA	National Archives & Record Administration of the United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Vol(s).	Volume(s)
WOD	Western Organisations Department
WWII	Second World War

# INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines Britain's role in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (henceforth, CSCE). It presents the fullest account to date of London's involvement in this process, based on multi-archival research and interviews with key diplomats. After years in relative obscurity, the Helsinki talks are now widely acknowledged as the highpoint of multilateral détente in Europe and for their role in paving the way for the peaceful ending of the Cold War. Recent years have seen a close re-examination of the CSCE policy of key actors, but Britain has remained largely unstudied. To date, there is no in-depth account of London's part in the negotiations leading up to the Helsinki Final Act of 1 August 1975. Even the specialist literature on the CSCE pays scant attention to London's diplomacy while broader accounts of détente mention it only in passing, thus conveying an image of the British as marginalised Cold Warriors and passive bystanders to the rapprochement between East and West.

One might wonder whether the lack of research results from a lack of importance. Perhaps the British have been overlooked for a reason; maybe their part was too marginal to merit close attention? This is by and large the picture that the current literature conveys. Even British scholars hold that London played a 'procedural' role at best.<sup>1</sup> Yet a mere glance at the published primary sources casts doubt on the validity of the received wisdom. For example, in the run-up to the Helsinki talks, US President Richard Nixon and his National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger, complained bitterly about London's part in pushing them towards the

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Clarke, 'A British View', in Richard Davy (ed.), *European Détente: A Reappraisal* (London: Sage Publications, 1992), pp. 86-113 (110).

CSCE.<sup>2</sup> In July 1972, Nixon told a UK official that he had ‘never wanted the conference – it was some of the European countries, not least the United Kingdom, who had originally pressed for it’.<sup>3</sup> One month later, Kissinger criticised London along the same lines.<sup>4</sup> And roughly two years later, Andrei Gromyko reproached the British for their tough stance at Helsinki, fuming that they were transforming ‘an ant [...] into an elephant’, as the Soviet Foreign Minister put it.<sup>5</sup> That the UK was a nuisance to both superpowers before as well as during the conference does not seem to fit with the notion of a marginal actor.

Furthermore, there is evidence suggesting that London made a substantial contribution. In an interview conducted for this study, the head of the East German delegation to the CSCE, Siegfried Bock, credited the British with having played an ‘impressive’, even a ‘leading role’. ‘They were’, Bock told me, ‘without a doubt one of the fathers of the Final Act’.<sup>6</sup>

## Research Questions

What, then, was London’s real role in the CSCE? Which of the above statements is more accurate? Can they be reconciled? More generally put: what aims did the British pursue in the negotiations and what was their contribution to the Final Act? These are

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Milhous Nixon (1913-1994) served as US President from January 1969 until his resignation in August 1974. Henry Alfred Kissinger (\*1923) served as US National Security Adviser from January 1969 until November 1975 and as Secretary of State from September 1973 until January 1977.

<sup>3</sup> See Gill Bennett and Keith Hamilton (eds.), *Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series III, Volume II, The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1972-75* (London: The Stationery Office, 1997), document number 12, paragraph 2. Documents from this volume will henceforth be quoted as follows: DBPO, III/II, document number (No.), paragraph (para.) or footnote (fn.).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, fn. 4. Kissinger repeated this criticism throughout the time period covered in this thesis. See, for example, Summary Record of a Meeting of the [North Atlantic] Council (NAC), Brussels, 19 June 1974, NATO Archives (NATO), Brussels, Belgium, CR(74)28-Part 3 (record dated: 5 August 1974).

<sup>5</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 85, para. 1. Andrei Andreyevich Gromyko (1909-1989) served as Soviet Foreign Minister from February 1957 until July 1985.

<sup>6</sup> Author’s interview with Professor Siegfried Bock, Berlin, Germany, 11 June 2008. Siegfried Bock (\*1926) was a leading GDR diplomat. He joined the East German Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1951, headed the ‘Grundsatzabteilung’ (Policy Planning Staff) between 1967 and 1977 and led the GDR delegation throughout the CSCE negotiations.

the primary research questions tackled in this thesis. Three chapters based on recently declassified documents from both sides of the Atlantic are dedicated to this task. The answers these chapters provide are the principal empirical contribution that this thesis makes to existing research.

However, this thesis also pursues a secondary line of inquiry: it uses Britain's role in the CSCE to inform two important academic debates, one focusing on the nature of *détente*, the other centring on the United Kingdom. First, the key debate of the scholarship on *détente* pertains to the relationship between *détente* and the East-West conflict. Did the practitioners of *rapprochement* intend to stabilise the Cold War or pave the way for its demise? The CSCE provides highly relevant evidence to inform this contested question, which is why recent scholarship has started to move beyond the focus on bilateral *détente*, turning to the Helsinki talks for answers.

In their analyses of the CSCE negotiations and their outcome, scholars have focused on the role of the human rights provisions, and how these co-existed with status quo elements, such as the Final Act's endorsement of state sovereignty and the inviolability of frontiers. Jeremi Suri, an often-cited historian of *détente*, has noted that 'the treaty [sic!] reflected the deep, contested, and often uncertain intermingling of *realpolitik* and human rights in the era of *détente*'.<sup>7</sup> Contradicting this admission of ambivalence, however, he concludes rather unequivocally that the Final Act was 'an essentially conservative document'.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, Suri is equally unambiguous when he contends that there was a 'consistent transatlantic agreement on [...] the role of human rights as forces for order and stability' and, using a problematic source as evidence – Henry Kissinger – alleges that '[n]one of the negotiators [...] expected that

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<sup>7</sup> Jeremi Suri, 'Détente and Human Rights: American and West European Perspectives on International Change', *Cold War History*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (November 2008), pp. 527-545 (540).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 530.

the human rights provisions would play a powerful role in undermining the basic Cold War markers of authority'.<sup>9</sup> Another leading scholar of détente, Jussi Hanhimäki, while noting the tension between traditional and transformative elements within the Final Act, nonetheless praises the innovative outcome of the conference: 'What the CSCE [...] brought clearly to the international arena was a focus on human security, on the rights of people rather than the prerogatives of states'.<sup>10</sup>

The move towards examining the multilateral dimension of the East-West rapprochement marks an important step that can advance the change-versus-continuity debate. Indeed, this thesis contends that an examination of multilateral détente can serve as a supplement and corrective to existing scholarship on the bilateral dimension. The CSCE embodied multilateral détente most fully. It can thus be seen as a microcosm in which differing conceptions of détente competed and coalesced. As will be argued later, these conceptions varied in their emphases on the balance between human rights and the status quo. If analysed carefully, the CSCE can provide important insights into the change-versus-continuity debate. This thesis adds to the discussion by analysing London's CSCE diplomacy. Did foreign policymakers see Helsinki as a conservative project aimed exclusively at stabilising the status quo or did they pursue a transformative agenda? If the former was the case, which aspects of the status quo did the British aim to preserve? If the latter, what did they want to change and how? Which role did human rights play in the conservative and transformative projects? I will tackle these questions using British CSCE diplomacy as evidence and demonstrate that Suri's claims do not stand up to a close inspection of the empirical record. I will show that the CSCE was the site of considerable

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Jussi Hanhimäki, 'Détente in Europe, 1962-1975', in Melvyn P. Leffler and O. Arne Westad (eds.), *Crises and Détente*, The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 198-218 (216).

transatlantic *disagreement* about the nature of *détente* and argue that this contestation stemmed from partially conflicting conceptions of *détente*.

The second theme analysed in this thesis revolves around Britain's transformation from a global great power into a middle power. I argue that Britain's involvement in the East-West conflict is inseparably linked to the country's relative decline after the Second World War. British leaders' ironic roles as both architects of the Cold War and as pioneers of *détente* are two sides of the same coin. These roles result in large part from the attempt to bolster British power under changing circumstances.

The subject of decline is omnipresent in scholarship on British foreign policy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, taking centre stage in classics such as Frederick Northedge's *Descent from Power* or functioning as the backdrop to specialist studies on decolonisation, the Anglo-American 'special relationship' or London's Cold War policy.<sup>11</sup> It is no coincidence that Dean Acheson's quip – 'Great Britain has lost an Empire and not yet found a role' – is almost always cited in these writings.<sup>12</sup> An analysis of Britain's role in the CSCE can help elucidate the 'declinist' debate, not least because the multilateralisation of *détente* coincided with a historical juncture in the country's international role: its accession to the European Community. Indeed, declassified documents reveal that British officials themselves were highly conscious that the CSCE marked a turning point. For example, the head of the UK delegation saw the Helsinki talks as a litmus test for his country's international stature: 'If

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<sup>11</sup> Frederick Northedge, *Descent from Power: British Foreign Policy, 1945-1973* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974). Another classic that weaves these themes together is Donald Watt, *Succeeding John Bull: America in Britain's Place, 1900-1975: A Study of the Anglo-American Relationship and World Politics in the Context of British and American Foreign-Policy-Making in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Avi Shlaim, 'Britain's Quest for a World Role', *International Relations*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (May 1975), pp. 838-856 (846). Dean Parker Acheson (1893-1971) served as US Secretary of State from January 1949 until January 1953. He made the remark in December 1962.

Britain is not to be a major European Power in the context of the CSCE, she can hardly hope to be a Power anywhere'.<sup>13</sup>

How, then, did the CSCE process, and détente more generally, impact on the British role in East-West diplomacy and vice versa? Did this unwieldy mass gathering hasten Britain's decline by further marginalising a country whose power-base was waning? Or did it provide a propitious forum to reassert London's influence over East-West affairs despite its material decline? By tackling these questions, this thesis adds to the existing literature on UK foreign policy in the 1960s and 1970s, which has omitted or downplayed the multilateral dimension due to the lack of archival evidence. A good example is that Brian White's seminal study *Britain, Détente and Changing East-West Relations* – arguably the authoritative book on British détente – merely devotes two paragraphs to London's CSCE diplomacy.<sup>14</sup> Writing in the early 1990s before the relevant archives were opened, White alludes to 'some important contributions' on the part of the UK delegation, but nonetheless construes the CSCE as evidence for the 'decline of British influence on the direction of East-West relations'.<sup>15</sup> Making full use of the opening of archives, this thesis will study these contributions in detail. This, in turn, will serve as the basis for a re-evaluation of the British role. London's involvement in the CSCE, I will argue, does not fit as neatly into the pattern of continuous decline as White's analysis suggests.

Shedding light on these two themes – the nature of détente and the transformation of Britain's international role – constitutes the secondary line of enquiry pursued in this thesis. However, the primary research goal is to trace London's role in the CSCE in general, a task which will be accomplished by

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<sup>13</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 37, para. 22.

<sup>14</sup> Brian White, *Britain, Détente and the Changing Structure of East-West Relations* (London/New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 123-124.

<sup>15</sup> White, *Britain, Détente and the Changing Structure of East-West Relations*, p. 13.

presenting an in-depth, chronological narrative of British CSCE diplomacy. The relationship between the two lines of enquiry – between the main historical narrative and the two themes – is a subtle and reciprocal one. Let us therefore be clear about how exactly they connect in the context of this thesis. As noted, the primary research topic is Britain’s role in the CSCE. The thesis will trace London’s involvement, focusing on the negotiations of the Final Act, which started in November 1972 and ended in July 1975. This is where the thesis aims to make its core contribution to existing scholarship. In addition, London’s CSCE diplomacy will be used as evidence to inform and refine the debates on the two themes outlined above; conversely, these themes will help sharpen the historical narrative and relate it to overarching research programmes. This blend of historical process-tracing and thematic analysis is meant to bring focus to the historical analysis while at the same time avoiding the rigidity of a case study approach.<sup>16</sup> As we will see, the British role was a complex one and this thesis is primarily interested in doing justice to this complexity rather than ‘testing’ the evidence against narrow themes. The relationship between the evidence presented in the historical narrative and the analytical devices is more flexible, which is why the individual chapters will not be structured according to the two themes. Instead, we will return to them intermittently and use them as ‘signposts’. They will serve as devices to sharpen the narrative, rather than forcing the narrative into a thematic, or hypothesis-driven, straightjacket.

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<sup>16</sup> This is not to suggest that a more strictly thematic approach is impossible or uninformative. Indeed, shorter studies require a more restrictive and hence more theme-driven research design. For an analysis of British CSCE diplomacy using a case study approach, see Kai Hebel, ‘A “Transatlantic Bridge”? Britain and the Conference on Security and Co-operation, 1972-1975’ (Unpublished MPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 2007) and Kai Hebel, ‘Die “Brückenbauer”? Großbritannien als transatlantischer Vermittler in der KSZE, 1972-1978’, in Matthias Peter and Hermann Wentker (eds.), *Der KSZE-Prozess: Internationale Politik und gesellschaftliche Transformation* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, forthcoming).

## Literature Review

The historiography of the CSCE negotiations mirrors the historiography of détente more generally. Following along the lines of the negative press commentary of 1975, when détente was already on the downturn in the US, many observers claimed that the Final Act rubberstamped Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe.<sup>17</sup> Like détente as a whole, the CSCE was widely seen as having worked in Moscow's favour and as having stabilised and prolonged the Cold War. This assessment represents 'the mainstream view of pre-1989 Cold War historiography'.<sup>18</sup>

In the post-1989 era, scholars have re-examined the CSCE. They have almost exclusively concentrated on the period after the signing of the Final Act, focusing on the role of human rights during the Helsinki follow-up process. They have broken with the 'mainstream view' by interpreting the process as a catalyst for normative change and a contributor to the peaceful ending of the Cold War. The first major study in this line of inquiry was William Korey's book *The Promises We Keep*, published shortly after the implosion of the Soviet Union, which showed how human rights became increasingly central to US foreign policymaking during the CSCE follow-up process.<sup>19</sup> From an International Relations (IR) perspective, Daniel Thomas' seminal book *The Helsinki Effect* advanced a theoretically sophisticated argument about the transformative impact of the human rights norms enshrined in the Helsinki Accords. Thomas maintained that these norms helped change both inter-state and state-society relations, thus contributing to the largely non-violent demise of

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<sup>17</sup> Surprisingly, this popular misconception is perpetuated in otherwise impeccable works such as Tony Judt's magnum opus *Postwar*. See Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: William Heinemann, 2005), pp. 501-502.

<sup>18</sup> Floribert Baudet, "'It was Cold War and We Wanted to Win: Human Rights, "Détente", and the CSCE', in Andreas Wenger, Vojtech Mastny, and Christian Nuenlist (eds.), *Origins of the European Security System: The Helsinki Process Revisited, 1965-75* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 183-198 (183).

<sup>19</sup> William, Korey, *The Promises We Keep: Human Rights, the Helsinki Process, and American Foreign Policy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).

authoritarianism in the Communist bloc.<sup>20</sup> The most recent addition to the documentation of the ‘Helsinki effect’ is Sarah Snyder’s superb transnational history of the ‘Helsinki network’.<sup>21</sup>

While these works and other writings in this line of inquiry typically feature an opening chapter on the CSCE negotiations, their primary research goal lies elsewhere and there is a sense, either left implicit or explicitly stated, of a disconnect between the bargaining that produced the Final Act and the ensuing ‘Helsinki effect’. According to this popular interpretation, states involved in the CSCE pursued status quo-oriented policies, which yielded transformative results only accidentally when human rights activists radicalised the Helsinki Accords. In this view, the CSCE appears as a sub-plot in a grand story of unintentional consequences, a verdict captured well in the title (though not the content) of a perceptive article by Jussi Hanhimäki: ‘Conservative Goals, Revolutionary Outcomes: The Paradox of Détente’.<sup>22</sup> Without a doubt, the theoretical and historical writings about the ‘Helsinki effect’ have made a major contribution to the scholarship of détente. By emphasising the transformative effects of détente, they have highlighted the flaws and omissions of ‘the mainstream view of pre-1989 Cold War historiography’.

There is, however, a commonality between the writings of the pre- and post-1989 era. As Floribert Baudet rightly points out, the focus on dissidents and other

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<sup>20</sup> Daniel Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). The scholarly debate about Thomas’ work seizes on the role of the dissidents and tends to overlook the other dimension of the ‘Helsinki effect’ just mentioned: the normative change on *inter-state* relations. By expanding the notion of security and by qualifying the bedrock norm of non-intervention, the Final Act marked an important watershed in the development of ‘postmodern’ norms like human security and the ‘responsibility to protect’. This thesis illuminates this aspect of the ‘Helsinki effect’ by tracing how these normative innovations came about as the results of tough bargaining before the signing of the Final Act in August 1975.

<sup>21</sup> Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Jussi Hanhimäki, ‘Conservative Goals, Revolutionary Outcomes: The Paradox of Détente’, *Cold War History*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (November 2008), pp. 503-512. It should be noted that Hanhimäki’s argument centres on the conservative nature of *American* détente policy; he acknowledges the transformative aspects introduced by European détente, including the CSCE. See *ibid.*, p. 504.

non-state actors in the post-1989 scholarship has largely failed to ‘explore the possibility of *state* actors challenging the status quo’ in deliberate fashion.<sup>23</sup> By drawing a sharp line between the CSCE negotiations and the transformative ‘Helsinki effect’, these writings have reinforced what I call the ‘status quo consensus’ in détente/CSCE historiography. This consensus spans across a broad continuum of views revolving around the relationship between détente and change. It ranges from the view of détente as a catalyst for change that was *unforeseen* by policymakers to the stronger claim that détente produced change that was *unwanted* to the extreme contention that détente deliberately and successfully *forestalled* change.

The latter line of thinking is most powerfully advanced in Jeremi Suri’s prolific writings. He sees détente as a ‘profoundly conservative response to internal disorder. [...] Leaders abandoned their hopes for political change in order to smother the challenges they faced at home’.<sup>24</sup> Recently, Suri has attempted to integrate the CSCE in his larger oeuvre and to use Helsinki as evidence for his grand interpretation of détente. His article, mentioned above, is the result of this endeavour.

The immense pluralism within this line of writing notwithstanding, the common ground that holds the status quo consensus together is the view of détente as an intrinsically conservative project pursued by foreign policymakers who did not consciously seek change. We will discuss the merits of this claim throughout the course of this thesis; however, for the purposes of this literature review, the key point is that the consensus view rests on a shaky empirical foundation. The pre-1989 historiography lacked access to archival materials and the post-1989 scholarship has focused largely on the role of non-state actors in the Helsinki follow-up process, thus

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<sup>23</sup> Floribert Baudet, “‘It was Cold War and We Wanted to Win’”, p. 184 (my emphasis).

<sup>24</sup> Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 5.

neglecting the CSCE negotiations and the intentions of the negotiators of the Final Act.

This gap is most clearly on display in Suri's writing on the CSCE. We will engage with his interpretation of *détente* later, but for now let us use his work to illustrate the lacuna in the scholarship which this thesis aims to fill from a British perspective. As we have seen, Suri claims that the Final Act was an 'essentially conservative document'; that negotiators did not intend to challenge the status quo; and that widespread transatlantic agreement existed on this point. His major source to back these bold claims was Henry Kissinger; indeed, the lack of engagement with non-American sources in general and the newly available archival documents from European archives in particular is glaring. Although the sub-title of Suri's article – 'American and West European Perspectives on International Change' – promises an analysis of views from both sides of the Atlantic, the piece is essentially about Kissinger.<sup>25</sup> Unsurprisingly, the piece concludes that *détente* was a uniformly status quo-oriented policy and that Americans and West Europeans were essentially on the same page. However, especially given the far-reaching nature of these claims, a less US-centred look at the CSCE and a more thorough engagement with European sources is necessary. This thesis fills this gap for Britain's involvement in the Helsinki negotiations. Rather than treating Kissinger's views of the CSCE and of West European *détente* as an authoritative assessment, it examines the Helsinki talks through the eyes of British foreign policymakers and diplomats and their continental European partners. This will serve as a solid empirical foundation to reassess Suri's

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<sup>25</sup> Quantitative content analysis can be misleading, but in this case it is revealing. Whereas Kissinger alone is explicitly mentioned or directly quoted sixty-six times, European leaders are relegated to the role of bit players: Brandt is mentioned six times, de Gaulle four times and Pompidou only once. British leaders are omitted altogether.

thought-provoking oeuvre and the status quo consensus in the historiography of détente more generally.

Over the last five to ten years, the negotiations of the CSCE have become a subject of thorough archival-based research. A series of conferences has produced several edited volumes whose individual chapters provide useful if necessarily brief sketches of the CSCE diplomacy of most states involved in the negotiations of the Final Act. Nonetheless, large gaps remain and existing scholarship suffers from methodological problems that hamper the usefulness of single-country studies. Let us focus on the first aspect here and discuss methodological issues in the section below.

While the edited conference volumes mentioned above have produced a series of first sketches of single-country case studies, the literature is marked by important lacunae. At the time of this writing, no authoritative account of the entire conference exists. Furthermore, we lack an account of the NATO and Warsaw Pact caucuses as well as of the role of key actors such as the Soviet Union or France.<sup>26</sup> Fortunately, however, Angela Romano and Thomas Fischer have made important contributions by providing archival-based studies of the CSCE diplomacy of the EC and the neutrals/non-aligned, respectively.<sup>27</sup>

In the absence of overarching narratives connecting the micro-level stories of individual states' policies and the meso-level accounts of individual groupings, we are left with three sets of CSCE literature, each of which suffers from the lack of access to the archives – a problem compounded by the fact that no records were kept at Helsinki of the official negotiating sessions. The first set consists of compilations of

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<sup>26</sup> Jussi Hanhimäki, “‘Dr. Kissinger’ or ‘Mr. Henry’? Kissingerology, Thirty Years and Counting”, *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 27, No. 5 (November 2003), pp. 637-676 (fn. 48). It should be mentioned, however, that several doctoral projects are currently underway that will fill some of these gaps in the near future.

<sup>27</sup> Angela Romano, *From Détente in Europe to European Détente: How the West Shaped the Helsinki CSCE* (Bruxelles/Oxford: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2009); Thomas Fischer, *Neutral Power in the CSCE: The N+N States and the Making of the Helsinki Accords 1975* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2009).

documents such as working papers or press statements that, en lieu of an overarching narrative of the course of the negotiations, are necessarily of limited value.<sup>28</sup> The second set comprises eyewitness accounts of diplomats involved in the CSCE. While these reminiscences are tremendously helpful in contextualising the archival evidence by providing interesting details of the negotiations and the atmosphere in which they took place, they are ultimately of limited value to the researcher. Apart from the fact that – as Duff Cooper candidly admitted – *Old Men Forget*, they also choose to remember selectively.<sup>29</sup> The third set of literature consists of scholarly works conducted before most of the archives opened their doors. These studies tried to make up for the lack of access to official documents by relying heavily on the use of interviews with officials, some of whom chose to stay anonymous.<sup>30</sup>

Taken together, these three sets of literature and the new wave of writings emanating from the specialist conferences of recent years provide a reasonably good, if still incomplete, picture of the complicated negotiation process. The same cannot be said, however, of scholarship on Britain's role during détente in general and London's role in the CSCE in particular. An upsurge of interest or a more balanced

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<sup>28</sup> Examples include Igor Kavass, Jacqueline Granier and Mary Dominick (eds.), *Human Rights, European Politics, and the Helsinki Accord: The Documentary Evolution of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1973-1975*. (6 Vols., Buffalo: William S. Hein & Co, 1981) and Vojtech Mastny, *Helsinki, Human Rights, and European Security: Analysis and Documentation* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1986).

<sup>29</sup> The most influential book in this category remains John Maresca's *To Helsinki*, which provides an interesting insight into the workings of the American delegation. Yet Maresca's work is skewed by the disproportionate emphasis on the relations between the superpowers, as my analysis of the global solution initiative in Basket III will make clear. Maresca altogether omits the vital role that the British played in ending one of the most gruesome deadlocks during the Geneva phase. See John Maresca, *To Helsinki: The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1973-1975* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985). Other important eyewitness accounts are Michael Alexander, *Managing the Cold War: A View From the Front Line* (London: Royal United Services Institute, 2005); Luigi V. Ferraris (ed.), *Report on a Negotiation: Helsinki-Geneva-Helsinki, 1972-1975* (Alphen aan den Rijn: Sijthoff & Noordhoff, 1979); and Luigi V. Ferraris, 'On the Backstage of the Negotiations in View of a European Security Conference, 1966-1969', in Carla Meneguzzi Rostagni, (ed.), *The Helsinki Process: A Historical Reappraisal* (Padova: CEDAM, 2005), pp. 139-159. (Alfred Duff Cooper was a British politician and diplomat; *Old Men Forget* is the title of his autobiography.)

<sup>30</sup> A noteworthy study in this category is Marianne Hanson, *The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe: The Evolution of a Code of Conduct in East-West Relations* (Unpublished D.Phil. Thesis, University of Oxford, 1992).

reassessment of the British part is currently not in sight. To this day, no in-depth study of London's involvement in the talks exists. Indeed, even the edited volumes that resulted from the abovementioned series of conferences rarely feature a chapter on the United Kingdom.<sup>31</sup> Those that do largely repeat the received stereotypes, basing their affirmation of received wisdom on a selective reading of the available record.

The main body of scholarship on the UK can thus still be summed up with Philip Williams' rundown of London's CSCE policy published in the mid-1980s: 'limited interests at stake, limited expectations, and limited aims'.<sup>32</sup> While the essays by FCO historian Keith Hamilton have gone some way towards challenging the prevailing picture, the notion of Britain as a purely defensive status quo power keeps dominating the scholarly literature.<sup>33</sup> Echoes of this simplistic picture can be found even in otherwise cutting-edge research, such as Daniel Möckli's brilliant account of the emergence and decline of a joint European foreign policy between 1969 and 1974. Summarising the attitudes of the FRG, France and Britain vis-à-vis the CSCE, Möckli rehashes the familiar picture of the British as the eternal *détente* sceptics.<sup>34</sup> It should be mentioned, however, that he stresses the surprising lack of scholarly interest in the Conservative government of Edward Heath, thus indirectly acknowledging that we might be missing vital information.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> This includes Wenger/Mastny/Nuenlist (eds.), *Origins of the European Security System*; Meneguzzi Rostagni (ed.), *The Helsinki Process*; and Leopoldo Nuti (ed.), *The Crisis of Détente in Europe: From Helsinki to Gorbachev, 1975-1985* (London: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>32</sup> Philip Williams, 'Britain, Détente and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe', in Kenneth Dyson (ed.), *European Détente: Case Studies of the Politics of East-West Relations* (London: Frances Pinter, 1986), pp. 221-236 (225).

<sup>33</sup> Keith Hamilton, *The Last Cold Warriors: Britain, Détente and the CSCE, 1972-1975* (Oxford: St Antony's College, 1999); Keith Hamilton, 'Cold War by other Means: British Diplomacy and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1972-1975', in Wilfried Loth and George-Henri Soutou (eds.), *The Making of Détente: Eastern and Western Europe in the Cold War, 1965-75* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 168-182.

<sup>34</sup> Möckli contends that London, unlike Paris and Bonn, lacked any positive aims for the CSCE. Daniel Möckli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War: Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the Dream of Political Unity* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009), p. 59.

<sup>35</sup> Möckli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War*, p. 47. Edward Richard George 'Ted' Heath (1916-2005) served as Prime Minister from June 1970 until March 1974.

Geraint Hughes has recently made a similar point, noting that ‘British policy towards East-West détente has generally been overlooked’.<sup>36</sup> His argument that this neglect results from the time delay associated with the declassification process is hardly convincing, however. As Hughes himself acknowledges, the détente policies of countries like France have received much more attention, despite the fact that the French declassification process is comparatively restrictive. Paris lacks an equivalent to Germany’s voluminous *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (AAPD) series, the equally monumental *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) series or the leaner yet more accessible volumes of the *Documents on British Policy Overseas* (DBPO) series. It makes more sense, therefore, to see today’s relative neglect of Britain’s role in European détente as a lingering echo of the historiography of the 1970s and 1980s. As a reaction to Harold Wilson’s foreign policy, earlier contemporary writings tended to see the British as benign bit players; as supportive of other states’ endeavours – especially of Ostpolitik – but uninterested in formulating an active policy of their own.<sup>37</sup> Under the influence of Thatcherism, the historiography seems to have hardened, thus resuscitating the ‘Cold Warrior’ image from the 1940s and early 1950s.

Whatever the precise causes may be, scholarly interest in British détente policy has been limited in the past and continues to be so. In the early 1970s, Josef Korbel stated categorically: ‘Great Britain’s policy of détente requires no elaborate discussion’. To justify his omission of London’s role, he claimed that, due to their pragmatic tradition, the British had ‘shunned away from grandiose schemes,

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<sup>36</sup> Geraint Hughes, *Harold Wilson’s Cold War: The Labour Government and East-West Politics, 1964-1970* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2009), p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> Korbel, *Détente in Europe: Real or Imaginary?*, pp. 61-62. Frederick Northedge and Audrey Wells, *Britain and Soviet Communism: The Impact of a Revolution* (London/Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982). James Harold Wilson (1916-1995) served as Prime Minister from October 1964 until June 1970 and from March 1974 until April 1976.

spectacular state visits, and eloquent phrases’.<sup>38</sup> However, this is empirically half-true at best as well as argumentatively unsound. As we will see in the next chapter, British statesmen in the 1950s and 1960s *did* push for spectacular ‘parleys at the summit’. Since traditions change slowly, any alleged break in that policy in the late 1960s and 1970s has to be explained differently. Clearly, we *do* need a more ‘elaborate’ discussion than Korbelt offers and this thesis intends to contribute to this lacuna.

However, even in view of the traditionally low interest in London’s détente diplomacy, the relative lack of fresh scholarship is noteworthy, particularly given that the wealth of and access to British archival materials is exceptional. Scholars of détente frequently stress how extraordinarily helpful UK documents are, which is why they are so frequently used to elucidate the foreign policies of *other* states.<sup>39</sup> Unpublished official documents relevant to this thesis have been released even before their mandatory declassification was due under the Thirty Years Rule. In contrast to some US documents – for example, materials in the Nixon Presidential Materials Project (NPMP) and files which Henry Kissinger withholds from the public domain –, British documents are readily available at the UK National Archives. As Chief FCO Historian Gill Bennett noted, she and her colleagues had had ‘full access to all classes of FCO documentation’, with ‘no exceptional cases [...] where it has been necessary on security grounds to restrict the availability of particular documents’.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Korbelt, *Détente in Europe*, p. 61.

<sup>39</sup> For praise along these lines, see Hanhimäki, “‘Dr. Kissinger’ or ‘Mr. Henry’?”, fn. 48. Takeshi Yamamoto, *The Road to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1969-1973: Britain, France and West Germany* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2007), p. 16. Cf. also Mary Sarotte, ‘The Frailties of Grand Strategies: A Comparison of Détente and Ostpolitik’, in Fredrik Logevall and Andrew Preston (eds.), *Nixon in the World: American Foreign Relations, 1969-77* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 146-163 (156-157).

<sup>40</sup> Gill Bennett, ‘Preface’, in Gill Bennett and Keith Hamilton (eds.), *Britain and the Soviet Union, 1968-1972*, Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series III, Volume I (London: The Stationery Office, 1997), p. xviii. (Henceforth, DBPO, III/I). The files from the Permanent Under-Secretary’s Department (PUSD) constitute the only potentially significant exception. For the first time ever, documents from PUSD have been included in an official governmental publication. This certainly adds

Furthermore, researchers profit enormously from the on-going publication of new volumes in series III of the Documents on British Policy Overseas. All of these volumes draw from an unprecedentedly wide range of departments, including the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the Cabinet and Prime Minister's Office, the PUSD, and the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). The volumes fall into two categories: the first gives general overviews of broad subjects or developments whereas the second category focuses on specific ones, providing detailed documentation on the nuances of policy formulation and implementation. Researchers of London's involvement in the CSCE are in the particularly fortunate position that an entire volume of series III falls under the second category, specifically dealing with the conference and the FCO's laborious preparation for and conduct of the negotiations.<sup>41</sup> This volume alone contains more than 140 documents directly related to the CSCE.

The other books in series III provide invaluable background information, which help set the Helsinki talks in the broader context of British foreign policy between 1968-1976. The other volumes provide fascinating insights into the general state of Anglo-Russian relations from 1968-1972 (volume I) and the wider field of détente in Europe from 1972-1976 (volume III). In 2006, two additional volumes were published, which fall under the second category.<sup>42</sup> While the specifics of the 'Year of Europe', the energy crisis, and Portugal's road to democracy are not directly relevant to the CSCE, the volumes' numerous references to Helsinki point to the

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to the richness of series III, but it should be noted that access remains partially restricted, as some materials with intelligence content have not been declassified. *Ibid.*, p. vi.

<sup>41</sup> DBPO, III/II.

<sup>42</sup> Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon (eds.), *The Year of Europe: America, Europe and the Energy Crisis, 1972-74*, Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series III, Volume IV (London: Routledge, 2006). (Henceforth, DBPO, III/IV.) Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon (eds.), *The Southern Flank in Crisis, 1973-76*, Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series III, Volume V (London: Routledge, 2006). (Henceforth, DBPO, III/V.)

wider significance of the talks and highlight how the CSCE was embedded in the complex détente panorama of the 1970s.<sup>43</sup>

However, the abundance of printed documents does not change the fact that the choice of the materials has been highly selective and that the basis for inclusion and exclusion remains somewhat obscure. The introduction to series III does concede that ‘a very selective approach’ was used, but fails to specify what the criteria were.<sup>44</sup> This omission magnifies the methodological problem highlighted in Anne Deighton’s review of the series: the story-telling approach adopted by the official historians.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, independent research remains indispensable, both to control for selection bias and to look for alternative narratives and additional evidence. This is all the more important given that some of the commentary by the official historians displays a clear bias. For example, rather than dispassionately summarising the debates within the FCO about détente, Gill Bennett praises Thomas Brimelow’s frequent interventions against a pro-active détente policy as incarnations of ‘the cold voice of reason’.<sup>46</sup> Yet Brimelow was widely known for his extreme anti-Soviet views and we should be careful to equate his (or the official historians’) view with British opinion.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> This panorama, in turn, was linked to global processes of transformation that gathered steam during the decade, leading contemporary scholars to portray the 1970s as the end of the post-war era. For the view that the conclusion of the CSCE marked the end of said era in Europe, see Hanhimäki, ‘Détente in Europe, 1962-1975’, pp. 199. The 1970s have also been interpreted as a watershed in transatlantic relations, with structural shifts prompting West Europeans to pursue a more assertive policy vis-à-vis a United States in relative decline. Cf. Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945: From ‘Empire’ by Invitation to Transatlantic Drift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 169. For a wide range of essays on the historical significance of the decade in a global perspective, see Niall Ferguson et al. (eds.), *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>44</sup> Bennett, ‘Introduction to Series III’, DBPO, III/I, p. v.

<sup>45</sup> Anne Deighton, ‘Ostpolitik or Westpolitik? British Foreign Policy, 1968-75’, *International Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 4 (October 1998), pp. 893-901 (900-901).

<sup>46</sup> Bennett, ‘Preface’, DBPO, III/I, p. xvii. Thomas Brimelow (1915-1995) held two key positions in London during the CSCE negotiations, serving as Deputy Under-Secretary from 1969-1973 and as Permanent Under-Secretary from 1973-1975.

<sup>47</sup> Indeed, one obituary refers to him as ‘the toughest-minded and most intransigent of all the Cold Warriors’. See Tam Dalyell, ‘Obituary: Lord Brimelow’, *The Independent*, 4 August 1995. Brimelow’s exceedingly tough stance was a recurring theme in the interviews conducted for this study. His role in blocking a proactive approach to détente will be discussed in chapter three.

## Framework

*Détente is a French word we employ to conceal the fact that we have only the vaguest of ideas what we are trying to say.*  
– George Ball<sup>48</sup>

To fulfil the research tasks outlined above, it is necessary to clarify the core concepts employed in this thesis and to ground these in an analytical and interpretative framework. This applies most of all to one term: *détente*. While it has become a commonplace to say that the CSCE was the highpoint of European *détente*, practitioners as well as scholars use this core term rather loosely. Thus, George Ball's quip about *détente* as 'the vaguest of ideas' is not far off the mark. Most importantly, I argue, the relationship between *détente* and Cold War needs clarification. Shall we subsume the former under the latter, for example by conceiving of *détente* as a fleeting *historical period* – an interlude of five to ten years – in the middle part of the Cold War? Or shall we conceive of *détente* in opposition to the Cold War, conceiving of it primarily as a *political project* – a 'challenge to the excesses of bipolarity', as Jussi Hanhimäki has argued?<sup>49</sup> Underlying both interpretations of *détente* lurks the more fundamental question: what, if anything, is it that makes *détente* different from the Cold War? And how can we explain the emergence of *détente* in causal terms? Was it driven primarily by shifts in the material balance of power or by ideational changes in popular attitudes? Which factors were more salient: military parity between the blocs, political changes within them or subterranean transnational dissent underneath them?

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<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Werner Lippert, 'H-Diplo Review of "Special Forum: U.S.-Soviet Relations in the Era of *Détente*"', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (September 2009)', H-Diplo Review No. 257b, 18 February 2010, p. 2. Available at <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/reviews/> (last accessed 29 June 2010).

<sup>49</sup> Hanhimäki, '*Détente* in Europe, 1962-1975', p. 198.

This thesis does not claim to provide all-encompassing answers to these questions; it aims, however, to contribute to the study of these wider issues by pursuing the two lines of inquiry sketched above and by introducing a conceptual and interpretative framework. The conceptual aspect of the framework clarifies core terms while the interpretative part functions as the ‘hinge’ between the empirical research – the in-depth study of British détente policy as exemplified by the CSCE – and the aforementioned wider issues. In sum, the framework is meant to bring greater analytical precision to the study of détente and to locate the CSCE in a wider historical and political context.

This section proceeds in three steps. First, it discusses several obstacles to studying détente in rigorous fashion and argues that ‘pericentrism’, while adding to our understanding of the East-West rapprochement, fails to clarify important conceptual aspects associated with détente. Second, to remedy these problems, it introduces a framework for the study of détente that revolves around an interpretative and a conceptual claim. Drawing on Marc Trachtenberg’s work about the stabilisation of the Cold War, the framework interprets European détente primarily as the process of revising the ‘constructed peace’ on the divided continent.<sup>50</sup> During the 1960s, the core pillars on which that peace had been built were being called into question; détente can be understood as the process of renegotiating these fundamentals. Seen from this angle, the CSCE appears as an important multilateral stage in this process.

The conceptual argument is that we can only use the term ‘détente’ in academically rigorous fashion if we distinguish it clearly from ‘Cold War’; to do so, we need to ground both terms in an overarching theoretical framework. Drawing on

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<sup>50</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

structural Constructivism, I define *détente* and Cold War in relationship to Alexander Wendt's concept of 'cultures of anarchy'.

### *Obstacles*

The fuzziness of the very term '*détente*' poses a serious obstacle to the study of the East-West conflict. It is all-too-often used indiscriminately as a blanket term for multiple contexts, denoting, respectively, a historical period ('an era of negotiations'), a foreign policy (as in 'Kissinger's *détente*'), a foreign policy goal (as in to 'ease' tension or 'normalise' relations), and a foreign policy outcome (as in 'a more relaxed state of interaction between East and West'). Not all of these uses are fully compatible, however. For example, it is often said that *détente* amounted to a sophisticated form of containment, in which case the real goal was not to decrease tension, but to hold the Soviet Union in check at reduced cost.<sup>51</sup> This, in turn, would mean that the term '*détente*' merely served as a convenient political cover to cloak balance-of-power dynamics. It follows that there is no added *analytical* value to using the term '*détente*' and it would be more parsimonious to keep using the terms 'containment' and 'Cold War' instead. Indeed, by employing such a politicised term, scholars might run the risk of falling prey to practitioners' rhetoric, thus losing rather than gaining analytical traction.

Thus, the problem of multiple usage is inextricably bound up in the problem of politicisation. In that sense, '*détente*' belongs to a class of concepts that Wolfram Hanrieder has called 'political abstracts', i.e. notions 'imposed on diplomatic parlance and the public debate by the makers and not the observers of historical events'.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> For the view that US *détente* represented a return to the type of limited containment advocated by George Kennan, see Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 211.

<sup>52</sup> Wolfram Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe: Forty Years of German Foreign Policy* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. x.

Political abstracts such as ‘international community’, ‘world opinion’, or ‘special relationship’ are frequently employed instrumentally by policymakers to self-servingly suit the political demands of the day. The resulting fuzziness makes it difficult to use these terms in scholarly fashion.

To add another layer of complexity to this unwieldy state of affairs, recent research has moved beyond seeing *détente* in East-West terms and has begun to explore more carefully how the rapprochement between the blocs was linked to changes in *intra*-bloc relations.<sup>53</sup> There is plenty of empirical evidence that *détente* *between* the blocs impacted in important ways on the power dynamics *within* the respective camps – and vice versa. One counter-intuitive consequence of this interaction effect was that *détente* lowered tension between East and West, but heightened tension *within* the West. As we will see, policymakers in London were deeply worried about *détente*’s impact on West-West relations; their CSCE policy was to a large extent geared towards maintaining transatlantic unity.

But not only a middle power like Britain entertained this concern. In his memoirs, Kissinger notes that *détente* ‘posed a serious challenge to us. [...] The stark fact was that if America was intransigent, we risked being isolated within the Alliance and pushing Europe toward neutralism’.<sup>54</sup> That even the Western hegemon was worried is particularly good evidence for the saliency of this factor as a driver of *détente*. To a significant extent, then, *détente* was an *inward*-looking policy: NATO states’ policy towards the East was always also ‘Westpolitik’. To grasp this effect theoretically Tony Smith has elaborated the notion of ‘pericentrism’, an important idea that leading scholars deem so central as to argue that ‘*any* analysis of European

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<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Mary A. Heiss and S. Victor Papacosma (eds.), *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Intra-bloc Conflicts* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2008).

<sup>54</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 403.

détente needs to employ Tony Smith's concept'.<sup>55</sup> Smith's 'pericentric' framework highlights the agency of 'junior members in the international system' and their part in shaping the Cold War. These actors, Smith argues, need to be taken into account not only for the sake of comprehensiveness, but because of their crucial causal impact:

My point is not simply that any history of the Cold War that neglects these actors is incomplete, but to argue more forcefully that in critical ways, fundamental features of this epic contest can only be understood by seeing the governments of countries such as North Korea and China, East and West Germany, Great Britain and Israel, Egypt and Cuba [...] as having had *principal roles* to play that gave the Cold War the *character* it came to have.<sup>56</sup>

Smith's main point is an important one and by examining one of these 'junior partners' in detail, this thesis aims to contribute to the 'pericentric' research agenda for the study of détente. Before doing so, however, at least one key point needs clarification to render 'pericentrism' useful to this study (and vice versa). Smith's framework is agnostic about what kind of impact minor powers can have on the 'character' of the East-West conflict. As he states explicitly, these actors have sometimes moderated and sometimes exacerbated tension. This point, too, is well-taken, but it is problematic that Smith does not clarify what *type* of impact the 'junior partners' had and what he means by 'character'. Does he argue that minor powers have changed the *atmosphere* of the East-West conflict or does he make the stronger claim that they have changed the *structure* of the Cold War system? Smith's talk of 'fundamental features' seems to suggest the latter, while his reference to the 'character of the period' seems to indicate the former.<sup>57</sup> Clarifying this point is essential if 'pericentrism' is to add to our understanding of, on the hand, the

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<sup>55</sup> Hanhimäki, 'Détente in Europe, 1962-1975', p. 201 (my emphasis).

<sup>56</sup> Tony Smith, 'New Bottles for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Fall 2000), pp. 567-591 (568) (my emphasis).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 569.

relationship between the ‘junior partners’ and the hegemons and, on the other hand, the relationship between Cold War and détente.

Drawing on Smith, Jussi Hanhimäki uses structural terminology when he observes that ‘[t]here was much more fluidity and bargaining within the blocs than is usually portrayed. *Multipolarity existed under the cloak of bipolarity*, and the weak influenced the policies of the strong’.<sup>58</sup> This is another important point and this thesis will provide evidence drawn from the examination of British CSCE policy to corroborate this finding. Indeed, the criticism, quoted above, that London’s diplomacy elicited from both superpowers points in that direction. And yet, how, in theoretical terms, can different polarities co-exist? After all, the core theoretical assumption of Neo-Realism – the dominant structural theory in International Relations – is precisely that polarities are unequivocal, with each polarity determining distinct outcomes.<sup>59</sup>

Let us draw a preliminary conclusion. Using détente in analytically rigorous fashion is difficult because it is used as a multi-purpose term, denoting a historical period as well as a political project, as a goal well as an outcome etc.; because of its politicised nature; its unclear relationship to other core terms such as Cold War; and its multi-directional impact, i.e. its effect on East-West as well as West-West relations. Due to this latter aspect of détente, the ‘pericentric’ framework is crucial to this thesis. Its emphasis that shifts in East-West relations were often due to alterations in West-West relations (and vice versa) captures major aspects that concern us here. It stresses the likelihood that the CSCE diplomacy of the superpowers was significantly influenced by alliance politics, with ‘junior partners’ like Britain potentially playing an important part. Likewise, it raises the possibility that London’s East-West

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<sup>58</sup> Hanhimäki, ‘Détente in Europe, 1962-1975’, p. 200.

<sup>59</sup> See Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York/London: McGraw-Hill, 1979), pp. 70, 98, 129-131.

diplomacy reacted not just to developments in East-West relations, but to changes in intra-Western relations.

The ‘pericentric’ framework thus usefully points to the possibility that ‘junior partners’ on both sides of the Iron Curtain can nudge their respective hegemons towards Cold War-type confrontation as well as towards détente. But by failing to clarify the exact nature of the impact of the ‘junior partners’, ‘pericentrism’ obscures rather than elucidates the nature of the relationship between Cold War and détente. The remainder of this section introduces an interpretative and conceptual framework designed to address this crucial question. Once the relationship between Cold War and détente has been defined more clearly, the problems of multiple-purpose usage become less of an obstacle to using détente as an analytical tool.

#### *Détente and the ‘Constructed Peace’*

To understand the nature of détente, we need to have a clear understanding of what the Cold War was about. Scholars often deem détente ‘different’, but leave it unclear what the nature and degree of that difference was. This section seeks to clarify these crucial issues by defining détente in relationship to Marc Trachtenberg’s notion of a ‘constructed peace’.<sup>60</sup> Trachtenberg’s seminal work is a promising starting point for our conceptual endeavours as it offers a take on the Cold War in Europe and its subsequent transformation that is both persuasive and parsimonious. Once grounded in International Relations theory, the idea of a constructed peace becomes a fruitful building block for an interpretative and conceptual framework capable of dealing with the complexities of détente.

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<sup>60</sup> To enhance readability, the quotation marks around this core term will henceforth be dropped. The same applies to other key terms; once introduced, they will not be marked by quotation marks, except to emphasise a particular point.

As far as in-a-nutshell formulas go, the core structural issues underlying the Cold War can be roughly understood along the lines of the famous quip about NATO's functions: 'to keep the Russians out, the Germans down, and the Americans in'.<sup>61</sup> In essence, Trachtenberg's seminal work on the onset of the Cold War and its subsequent taming is a powerful and sophisticated reworking of these basic themes. Based on a rich source of Western documents, the US historian argues that the East-West conflict hardened into the Cold War over the issue of German power.<sup>62</sup> The alarming prospect of a resurgent West Germany, especially one armed with nuclear weapons, was only resolved in the early 1960s through a tacit spheres-of-influence settlement. By 1963, Trachtenberg contends, such a settlement – a constructed peace – fell into place, which rested on each side's acknowledgement of the status quo in Europe and the concomitant, unspoken pledge of non-interference in each other's sphere.<sup>63</sup>

A relatively stable system had [...] come into being. This system was built on three main pillars: a general respect for the status quo in central Europe, especially in Berlin; the non-nuclear status of West Germany; and a continuing, large-scale American military presence on German soil. All these things were closely bound up with each other; in particular the American presence and the non-nuclear status of Germany were two sides of the same coin. If Germany was to remain non-nuclear, the Americans would have to remain in central Europe to provide the necessary counterweight to Soviet power. [...] The existence of this web of linkages tended to tie everyone into the status quo.<sup>64</sup>

This settlement worked because it safeguarded the basic security interests of all parties involved, thus stabilising Europe, but its in-built weaknesses and the high costs it incurred in political and humanitarian terms made it prone to revision. One

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<sup>61</sup> The bon mot is commonly attributed to Lord Ismay, NATO's first Secretary General (1952-1957), but no reliable source exists. Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945*, p. 8.

<sup>62</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, pp. vii-viii.

<sup>63</sup> Trachtenberg sees 1963 as the 'watershed year' because that was when the Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT) – the only explicit manifestation of the web of understandings underpinning the constructed peace – was signed. The LTBT codified Germany's non-nuclear status. See *ibid.*, p. 352.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 398-399.

major structural weakness was that the constructed peace relied on Europeans' active support in maintaining the division of their continent and their acquiescence in the dominance of the superpowers. This was, of course, most problematic for the Germans who had to support a settlement that jeopardised their national identity and shackled their military power. This weakness necessitated that the aforementioned web of understandings be kept informal – no Western leader could openly say that the constructed peace required the continued division of Germany.

The settlement was thus left precariously vague, prompting repeated demands by the Soviet Union to formalise the 'peace' in bilateral agreements and at a European security conference.<sup>65</sup> Western leaders and their officials understood the psychological problem that the tacit nature of the settlement presented to Moscow. For example, when discussing the European security conference with a member of the West German Bundestag, Helmut Sonnenfeldt remarked:

In this area we face a psychological problem – Soviet paranoia, which leads the Soviets always to suspect that someone is trying to put something over them. Personally, I sometimes think treaties with the USSR are in part a kind of necessary psychotherapy [...].<sup>66</sup>

Western leaders understood Moscow's security concerns regarding Germany, but could not engage in more explicit 'psychotherapy' for fear of alienating the West Germans. Bonn's active support for Western defence efforts, personified by Konrad Adenauer and enshrined in his policy of 'Westbindung', was too important.<sup>67</sup> Consequently, the constructed peace remained a tacit settlement with ambivalent

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<sup>65</sup> Trachtenberg does not discuss détente or the Soviet idea of a European security conference in his book, but he mentions that throughout the 1950s the phrase 'European security' functioned as a code word for the problem of West German power. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>66</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Helmut Sonnenfeldt/Alois Mertes, C[christlich] D[emokratische] U[nion], 1 August 1974, US National Archives and Record Administration (USNARA), Record Group 59, Department of State, Office of the Counselor, Entry #A1 5339-A, Country and Subject Files, 1973-1976, Box 3.

<sup>67</sup> Konrad Hermann Joseph Adenauer (1876-1967) served as the first Chancellor of the FRG from September 1949 until October 1963.

effects: it stabilised Europe by managing the crucial German problem, but only at the price of blocking a dialogue on precisely that question.

During the course of the 1960s, I argue, at least one of the three ‘main pillars’ – the US presence – was being called into question and European détente can be understood as the main policy response to that change. The advent of nuclear parity raised serious doubts about the US nuclear guarantee on which the Western structure of deterrence rested. This shift was further exacerbated by growing Congressional pressure (‘Mansfieldism’) for unilateral troop cuts in Europe.<sup>68</sup> These alterations jeopardised the structure of dual containment on which the constructed peace was built: a weakened, semi-isolationist US might not be able to ‘to keep the Russians out and the Germans down’.

International settlements are made and unmade not only in light of changes in the material balance of power, however. Even classical Realists – an unlikely group to acknowledge the power of ideas – concede that immaterial factors are of fundamental importance to international stability. Henry Kissinger, for example, explains the emergence and durability of major international settlements such as the Concert of Europe with reference to two core factors: they need to be buttressed by a balance of power as well as by a ‘shared sense of justice’ among the major stakeholders and their societies.<sup>69</sup> The basis for durable settlements, Kissinger argues, is ‘not only a physical equilibrium, but a moral one’.<sup>70</sup>

The latter point is underdeveloped in Trachtenberg’s work.<sup>71</sup> However, we need to understand both aspects, if we are to understand the relationship between the

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<sup>68</sup> Trachtenberg, ‘The Structure of Great Power Politics, 1963-1975’, in Leffler/Westad (eds.), *Crises and Détente*, pp. 482-502 (486).

<sup>69</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1994), p. 79.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* See also, *ibid.*, pp. 119, 245.

<sup>71</sup> Trachtenberg concedes that the set of shared understandings underpinning the ‘peace’ were of ‘fundamental importance’, but he does not explore these non-material factors. This lack of engagement

constructed peace and détente. The constructed peace, I argue, was being called into question in the 1960s as a result of both material and immaterial changes. As discussed above, one of its ‘main pillars’ was threatened by the advent of nuclear parity, but it would be simplistic to see détente exclusively against the backdrop of this material shift.

In the 1960s, the socio-cultural and ideological ground in which these ‘pillars’ were rooted began to shake as various incarnations of European nationalism and transnational protest movements started posing a ‘challenge to the excesses of bipolarity’.<sup>72</sup> Gaullism, for instance, denounced ‘les deux hégémonies’ as illegitimate, calling for a ‘l’Europe européenne’, free from both Soviet as well as American domination.<sup>73</sup> ‘German Gaullists’ like Franz-Josef Strauß combined the reassertion of (Western) Europe with calls for West German participation in nuclear decision-making.<sup>74</sup> More moderate West German leaders of the post-Adenauer era, while generally refraining from direct criticism of US hegemony, nonetheless questioned Bonn’s policy of ‘Westbindung’. After two decades, that policy had not brought the country any closer to unification and, as time wore on, concerns about the survival of

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haunts his most recent writings, which try to grapple with how the détente of the 1960s and 1970s impacted on the constructed peace. For example, in his contribution to the *Cambridge History of the Cold War*, he explains Willy Brandt’s Ostpolitik as a direct result of the waning of the American nuclear guarantee. This contradicts the point he makes in his book. If the constructed peace was *not* based primarily on military deterrence, then changes in the material balance of power alone cannot adequately explain the move towards revising the spheres-of-influence settlement. This inconsistency can be rectified by conceiving of détente as a reaction to changes in the material as well as the ideational structure underpinning the ‘peace’.

<sup>72</sup> Hanhimäki, ‘Détente in Europe, 1962-1975’, p. 198. The impact of the protest movements will be discussed in chapter three.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et Messages: Vers le Terme*, Volume 5 (Paris: Plon, 1970), p. 98. Charles de Gaulle (1890-1970) served as President of France from January 1959 until April 1969. Although he is the most obvious reference point for Gaullism, the latter is treated here as a socio-political movement that is irreducible to single personalities.

<sup>74</sup> Franz-Josef Strauß (1915-1988) served as West German Minister of Defence from October 1956 until December 1962. He remained a dominant figure of the democratic right until his death in October 1988.

German national identity grew. This was one core impetus propelling the architects of the ‘Neue Ostpolitik’ – Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr – into action.<sup>75</sup>

There is little that these various forces and the actors representing them have in common apart from the overall effect they exerted by putting core aspects of the constructed peace under pressure. Their analyses of the core problems and the remedies they advocated differed widely. Some wanted to perpetuate the status quo by putting the constructed peace on a more formal footing. Others wanted to revise it because they opposed its geopolitical and ideological effects. Paradoxically, however, all of these revisionist projects used *détente* as a vehicle to achieve their opposing goals. Moscow wanted to reduce tensions to transform the constructed peace into an explicit settlement to guarantee the division of Germany; Bonn wanted to lower tensions to overcome that division.<sup>76</sup>

How can researchers deal with this complexity? Given the ubiquitous use of the term ‘*détente*’ in politics and academia, introducing a host of rival terms to better map the complexity does not seem a promising move. But how, then, can we analyse and interpret *détente* and distinguish between the very different aspirations driving states’ attempts to relax tension? We need, I argue, a framework that is general enough to map the complexity of the subject matter, but specific enough to discriminate sharply between core meanings of *détente*. For example, the framework needs to distinguish between *détente as a policy (or policy goal) pursued by individual actors* (a unit-level phenomenon) and *détente as an effect on the macro-*

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<sup>75</sup> Oliver Bange, ‘Ostpolitik as a Source of Intra-Bloc Tensions’, in Heiss/Papacosma (eds.), *NATO and the Warsaw Pact*, pp. 106-121. Willy Brandt (1913-1992) served as West German Foreign Minister from December 1966 until October 1969 before becoming the first Social Democratic Chancellor (October 1969-May 1974). Egon Bahr (\*1922) was Brandt’s key foreign policy adviser.

<sup>76</sup> Bange, ‘Ostpolitik as a Source of Intra-Bloc Tensions’. See also Carole Fink and Bernd Schaefer, ‘Introduction’, in Carole Fink and Bernd Schaefer (eds.), *Ostpolitik, 1969-1974: European and Global Responses* (Washington, D.C. and New York: German Historical Institute and Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 1-8.

*level* (a system-level phenomenon). This distinction is fundamental to advancing the change-vs.-stability debate discussed at the outset of this section and to clarifying the ‘pericentrist’ argument about the impact of ‘junior partners’ on the policies of the hegemony and the on East-West conflict more generally.

Both facets of the term can be usefully defined in reference to the notion of the constructed peace. Let us start with the more general aspect: *détente* as an outcome on the macro-level. The spheres-of-influence settlement that fell into place in the early 1960s had the overall effect of transforming the East-West conflict. This is a point that Trachtenberg makes most forcefully, albeit his lack of a theoretical framework makes his analysis needlessly hazy, as the overdose of adjectives indicates: ‘The Cold War became a different kind of conflict, more subdued, more modulated, more artificial, and, above all, less terrifying’.<sup>77</sup> What makes Trachtenberg’s argument particularly interesting is that he explains this transformation not crudely in Neo-Realist terms of balancing:

[T]he stability of the system did *not* result from a balance of military power in central Europe. It was not simply a question of the presence American forces having a certain deterrent effect [...]. The *political effects* were more subtle and wide-ranging, and were of fundamental importance [...]; a political system had come into being, and this system was not based on nuclear deterrence alone.<sup>78</sup>

The ‘political effects’ that Trachtenberg describes in a host of adjectives are known to International Relations scholars as the effects of regimes. Regimes are international institutions that bring order to inter-state relations by enabling states’ ‘expectations [to] converge in a given issue-area’.<sup>79</sup> The constructed peace did precisely that: the

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<sup>77</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 398. The abundance of adjectives used points to a haziness in Trachtenberg’s conceptualisation of the East-West conflict. The following section will introduce a conflict typology, which anchors both Cold War and *détente* in a theoretical framework with the aim of enhancing clarity (and reducing the number of vague adjectives).

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 399 (my emphasis).

<sup>79</sup> The traditional definition goes back to Stephen Krasner’s work in the 1980s when he defined regimes eclectically as ‘principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actor

Cold War was transformed once each side came to believe that the status quo would not be challenged through the use of force. Let us try and reduce the number of adjectives and enhance analytical clarity by defining the constructed peace more precisely. This, in turn, will enable us to refine our understanding of détente and its relationship to the Cold War.

I define the constructed peace as a regime consisting of a core institutional arrangement and a core norm.<sup>80</sup> The core arrangement is the partition of Europe (particularly, of Germany) into two spheres of influence; the core norm governing that arrangement is non-interference.<sup>81</sup> The constructed peace was backed by material forces – each side possessed a massive military arsenal – but what ultimately produced stability were the understandings that went along with the spheres-of-influence settlement; these understandings steadied actors’ expectations about each other’s behaviour. This is what Trachtenberg means by ‘political effects’.

These effects were momentous; the constructed peace transformed the East-West conflict. Its effects were so ‘wide-ranging’ due to their impact on the *system-level*. The constructed peace did not just change the threat perception of one or several actors (this would be a mere unit-level phenomenon); its ‘fundamental importance’ derives from its systemic impact. This is why Trachtenberg refers to the constructed peace as a ‘political system’; since a system is by definition more than the sum of its

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expectations converge in a given issue-area’. Stephen Krasner, ‘Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables’, *International Organization*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Spring 1982), pp. 185-205 (185).

<sup>80</sup> This thesis joins contemporary research projects, which modify Krasner’s work by using a leaner definition that is easier to operationalise: regimes are defined by a core institutional arrangement built around a core norm. The former can be any type of organizational structure – ranging from a formal international organisation like the United Nations (UN) to informal arrangements, such as a sphere-of-influence arrangement – the latter can be any type of shared ideational structure. Krasner now concedes that this leaner definition is preferable. See Alexander Betts, *Regime Stretching: How International Institutions Adapt at Implementation*, unpublished paper presented at the International Relations Colloquium, University of Oxford, 25 November 2010, fn. 9.

<sup>81</sup> This coincides with Daniel Thomas’ observation that, prior to impact of the ‘Helsinki effect’, interstate relations in Europe were governed by the traditional notion of sovereignty and its corollary norm of non-intervention. See Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect*, p. 211.

parts, we are necessarily dealing with a system-level effect.<sup>82</sup> Why is this important? If we are to advance the study of European détente, then surely we have to go beyond mental gymnastics. The foregoing analysis, I argue, adds to our understanding in at least one way. By invoking the concept of regimes, we have connected Trachtenberg's historical scholarship to IR theory, which in turn has yielded a clearer analysis of the type of change that occurred in the early 1960s and beyond. As a regime, the constructed peace produced system-level effects that are irreducible to the material structure of that system. The military arsenals on both sides of the Iron Curtain served as important pillars of the constructed peace, but the political understandings were the key to producing stability. These understandings transformed brute military deterrence into a political spheres-of-influence *settlement*. They enabled actors' expectations to converge, thus reducing the volatility that characterised the pre-1963 era. To sum up this reconceptualization of Trachtenberg's work, let us put it in theoretical terms: a *regime* (the constructed peace) acted as the key *intervening variable* between the system's *structure* (bipolarity) and its *outcome* (a more stable and relaxed pattern of interaction between states, i.e. détente). Instead of using a plethora of adjectives, we should strive for parsimony and use one term to describe this system-level outcome: détente.

Let us now turn to the second core meaning of the term. How can we conceptualise détente *as a policy* or *policy goal*? Again, I argue that linking it to the notion of the constructed peace can enhance our understanding of what the proponents of European détente tried to achieve and how they went about implementing their goals. Despite its momentous effects, the constructed peace remained a most rudimentary regime. Fully established regimes are characterised by

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<sup>82</sup> For a rigorous, general theorisation of systems as analytical concepts, see Niklas Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme: Grundriß einer allgemeinen Theorie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1987).

joint ‘principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures’.<sup>83</sup> Agreement among the main actors on these elements leads to a more stable regime. Once in place, these elements regulate actors’ behaviour, thus allowing them to stabilise expectations about each other’s future actions. Yet given the sensitive nature of the German question, the constructed peace could not develop some of these aspects at all and was barred from formalising others. Even the central norm of non-interference remained an unspoken understanding. As noted above, Trachtenberg argues that the constructed peace worked because it satisfied the most basic security interests of the main actors involved. However, while the tacit nature of the spheres-of-influence settlement (i.e. the rudimentary nature of that regime) was necessary to ensure the acquiescence of some (notably, West Germany), it posed a problem to others. The Soviet Union’s détente policy, for example, can be understood as an attempt at formalising the constructed peace. Moscow consistently pushed for the formal recognition of key aspects of the settlement, including Germany’s division, its non-nuclear status, a general commitment to non-interference and the inviolability of European frontiers etc. This strong emphasis on codification, though decried by Sonnenfeldt as a result of ‘Soviet paranoia’, can be understood in perfectly rational terms as the attempt to turn the constructed peace from a rudimentary into a full-fledged, formalised regime.

Not all détente policies were as fixated on stabilising the current state of affairs, however. In the core debate about the nature of détente, most scholars tend to subscribe to the view that states’ détente policies were a mix of both conservative and transformative elements. For example, as noted above, Hanhimäki interprets European détente as a ‘European challenge to the excesses of bipolarity’.<sup>84</sup> This is a highly useful phrase; it stresses both transformative and status quo elements and is

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<sup>83</sup> Krasner, ‘Structural Causes and Regime Consequences’, p. 185.

<sup>84</sup> Hanhimäki, ‘Détente in Europe, 1962-1975’, p. 198.

compatible with the perspective adopted here. Europeans did not necessarily oppose the bipolar system fundamentally, but what many of them objected to was the volatility of the pre-1963 era, the high humanitarian costs of the post-1963 era (including the division of their continent on which the constructed peace rested) and their subjugation to the whims of the superpowers throughout these periods. Their challenge, therefore, was an ambivalent project. It sought to revise certain aspects of the constructed peace while maintaining the stability flowing from that regime. Since nobody wanted a return to the crisis-ridden heyday of the Cold War, Europeans had to try and modify the problematic features of the regime without destabilising key actors' expectations. This delicate balancing act is evident in détente policies such as West Germany's *Neue Ostpolitik*. Its proponents went through great pains to reassure both superpowers and their key allies, constantly emphasising that their policy did not amount to a fundamental break with the understandings associated with the constructed peace.

How does British détente policy fit into this panorama? As noted in the literature review, existing accounts portray the UK as a status quo power lacking positive goals for the CSCE.<sup>85</sup> But, as we will see in great detail later, even a cursory reading of Foreign Office documents reveals frequent references to transformative goals in internal communication. To 'introduce another germ of freedom into the East' was defined as a key ambition for the CSCE as early as August 1972.<sup>86</sup> At the same time, UK documents from the late 1960s and 1970s are infused with a deep anxiety that détente would bring about too much change, for example by undermining

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<sup>85</sup> For the latest expression of this view, see Martin Brown, 'A Very British Vision of Détente: The United Kingdom's foreign policy during the Helsinki process, 1969-1975', in Piers Ludlow (ed.), *Overcoming the Iron Curtain: Visions of the End of the Cold War in Europe, 1945-1990* (Oxford: Berghahn, in press), pp. 139-156.

<sup>86</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 11, para 4g.

the West's will to maintain an adequate defence posture.<sup>87</sup> For example, Crispin Tickell<sup>88</sup>, the chief official in charge of both the CSCE and the Vienna-based Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction Talks (MBFR), saw British security as being endangered by two developments.<sup>89</sup> On the one hand, Tickell worried that the 'US [...] nuclear deterrent is no longer total' and, on the other hand, he saw Western publics' resolve declining:

What people want to hear is [...] that the twenty five years of the cold war are coming to an end; that the German treaties, Berlin agreement, S[trategic] A[rms] L[imitation] talks and eventual European security conference will produce a more rational and stable system in Europe; and that to crown this we shall all be able to cut defence expenditure through mutual and balanced force reductions along the line of the old Iron Curtain. In short, Czechoslovakia notwithstanding, East and West can kiss and make friends.<sup>90</sup>

In other words, the Foreign Office worried that détente would undermine the constructed peace. Civil servants feared that détente was producing an atmosphere that led Western publics to believe that an alternative to the constructed peace ('a more rational and stable system') was attainable and that military deterrence (a core pillar of the constructed peace) was superfluous.

Even this sketchy overview shows nuances in the British attitude that cannot be captured with a simple change-versus-stability dichotomy. Although the Foreign Office saw British interests as deeply intertwined with the maintenance of core aspects of the status quo, it also wanted to promote certain changes. To varying degrees, the same could be said for both superpowers and key European states. We can do justice to these ambivalences by defining their détente policies in relation to

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<sup>87</sup> For an in-depth discussion of this aspect, see chapter three.

<sup>88</sup> Crispin Tickell (\*1930) joined the British Diplomatic Service in 1954. Before becoming the head of Western Organisations Department in 1972, he was Private Secretary to successive Chancellors of the Duchy of Lancaster and thus intimately involved in the negotiations leading up to Britain's accession to the European Community.

<sup>89</sup> Preliminary talks on MBFR started in the Austrian capital in January; the official negotiations started in October and lasted until February 1989.

<sup>90</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 2, paras. 3, 6.

the constructed peace and by distinguishing between policies designed to revise or maintain the spheres-of-influence settlement.

I will therefore term a policy aimed at preserving core aspects of the constructed peace ‘conservatory’ (or ‘defensive’) détente. In contrast, policies are ‘transformative’ (or ‘offensive’) if they seek to fundamentally alter that regime, either by revising its material foundations (the three ‘main pillars’ mentioned by Trachtenberg), its institutional framework (the spheres-of-influence settlement) or its norms (most importantly, non-interference and the related norm of the inviolability of frontiers).

This typology is general enough so that it can map the current debates in the literature, but it is precise enough to provide us with a sharper sense of what exactly it was that individual policies sought to reinforce or revise. Instead of saying that détente wanted to change or reinforce the status quo (or both), we gain a clearer idea both of the nature of the status quo and of the policies that were directed at it. Let us illustrate this by returning briefly to the debate about human rights. Using our typology, we can see that this discussion essentially revolves around the question whether human rights were part of the ‘conservatory’ or the ‘transformative’ project. As we have seen, there was a certain tension between Suri’s admission that détente represented an ‘uneasy combination of conservative and revolutionary motives’ and his unequivocal claim that human rights clearly served to stabilise the status quo. In other words, he contended unambiguously that human rights formed part of the ‘conservatory’ project.<sup>91</sup> In this view, human rights norms were successfully incorporated into the constructed peace, with the Final Act playing an active part in

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<sup>91</sup> Suri, ‘Détente and Human Rights’, p. 529.

that process – hence the verdict of the Helsinki Accords as ‘an essentially conservative document’.<sup>92</sup>

Using our typology, we can resolve this tension by pointing to the possibility that human rights were simultaneously part of the ‘conservatory’ as well as the ‘transformative’ projects. In fact, I will argue later that British human rights policy at the CSCE was marked by this dualism. London used human rights as a propaganda tool, but also saw the promotion of civil liberties as paving the way for future change. The former aspect was an expression of ‘defensive’ détente; by firming up public opinion, the Foreign Office wanted to curb domestic pressure for defence cuts, which would have undermined the military pillar of the constructed peace. The latter facet was a manifestation of ‘transformative’ détente, based on officials’ genuine belief that the spread of liberties would eventually undermine the cohesion of the Warsaw Pact, thus leading to a new system beyond the constructed peace.

### *Détente and Cold War as ‘Cultures of Anarchy’*

The preceding section has elaborated a framework for the study of détente built around a regime theoretical reconceptualization of the notion of the constructed peace. The framework has been used to flesh out and define two distinct phenomena whose relationship is usually left unexplored: détente as a system-level effect/outcome and détente as a policy/policy goal. I have argued that both phenomena are different from what is commonly referred to as the ‘Cold War’: following Trachtenberg, I have maintained that the constructed peace has had a momentous system-level effect by transforming the Cold War in Europe in the early 1960s; following Hanhimäki, I have argued that Europeans’ détente policies aimed at

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 530.

challenging the ‘excesses of bipolarity’ without returning to the pre-1963 volatility of the Cold War. This implies that détente cannot be subsumed under the Cold War, as is often the case when the former is seen as a phase of the latter.

Thus far, however, the precise relationship between détente and Cold War has been left unexplored. Yet it is not enough to simply say that one is ‘different’ from the other. To specify their relationship, it is necessary to ground both phenomena in an overarching theoretical framework. To construct this framework, I draw on Alexander Wendt’s concept of ‘cultures of anarchy’.<sup>93</sup> Wendt starts by making the structure/process distinction discussed above. The way that present-day Russia and the USA relate to each other, Wendt notes, is of a different quality today than it was between the Soviet Union and the USA. From a purely structural point of view, this is puzzling given that the international system is still anarchic and that the distribution of power within this dyad has not fundamentally changed. He then restates his core argument – familiar since his epochal article *Anarchy is What States Make of It* – that an anarchical structure does not dictate how states relate to each other: ‘Five hundred British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the US than five North Korean ones because of the shared understandings that underpin them’.<sup>94</sup> In other words, the relationship between states is a socio-cultural one; beliefs about ‘the Other’ cannot be read off the material *structure* of the system, but result from the ways in which states see and relate to each other, i.e. from *process*.

Wendt argues that there are three ideal type ‘cultures of anarchy’: ‘Hobbesian’, ‘Lockean’, and ‘Kantian’. These cultures produce distinct outcomes because of the way actors relate to each other: in a Hobbesian culture, states see each

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<sup>93</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 246-312 et passim.

<sup>94</sup> Alexander Wendt, ‘Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics’, *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 391-425. The quote is Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 255.

other primarily as enemies; a Lockean culture is predominantly defined by rivalry; and in a Kantian culture, states relate to each other as friends. The Hobbesian and Lockean cultures are the most important ones for the purposes of this thesis. Wendt writes:

An enemy does not recognise the right of the Self to exist as a free subject [...], and therefore seeks to 'revise' the latter's life or liberty [...]. A rival, in contrast, is thought to recognize the Self's right to life and liberty, and therefore seeks to revise only its behaviour or property [...].<sup>95</sup>

These differences in the perception of the 'Other' have tremendous repercussions: 'once a logic of enmity gets started states will behave in ways that make them existential threats [...]'.<sup>96</sup> In contrast, under a Lockean logic, 'rivals expect each other to act as if they recognize their sovereignty [...] as a right, and therefore not to try and to conquer or dominate them. [...] Unlike friends, however, the recognition among rivals does not extend to the right to be free from violence in disputes'.<sup>97</sup>

This qualitative difference between Hobbesian enmity and Lockean rivalry, I argue, represents the difference between the Cold War and *détente*. The constructed peace has enabled states to escape the strict zero-sum logic inherent in a Hobbesian culture of anarchy, thereby paving the way for a limited amount of cooperation. In the literature on *détente*, this process is usually described as a 'normalisation' of relations. Drawing on Wendt's concept, we can ground this rather hazy characterisation in a general theory of international relations. Seen from this perspective, we gain a general understanding of what 'normal' relations are: this is the Lockean culture in which states pursue *Realpolitik*, compete with each other over influence and resources, engage in balancing etc. While their rivalry frequently leads to conflicts, states

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 263.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 279.

normally respect the legitimacy of each other's existence and hence respect bedrock norms such as sovereignty and non-interference.

To conclude, the Wendtian notion of cultures of anarchy enables us to conceptualise the relationship between Cold War and *détente* in very general though distinctive terms. Understood as a *policy*, *détente* can be defined as the attempt to move away from a Hobbesian culture of anarchy predominantly defined by enmity and towards a Lockean culture marked chiefly by rivalry. It is the attempt to curb what Hanhimäki has aptly called the 'excesses' of Cold War and to replace them with the normality of Lockean Realpolitik.<sup>98</sup>

Wendt's notion also helps us define *détente* as a system-level effect or outcome. Understood as a systemic *outcome*, *détente* is a Lockean culture. In a state of *détente*, the East-West conflict has been successfully transformed into a Lockean culture of anarchy: the pattern of interaction follows the logic of rivalry, not enmity – at least to an extent, the '*excesses* of bipolarity' have been successfully curbed. This is what Trachtenberg means when he states that the emergence of the constructed peace marked the demise of the Cold War.<sup>99</sup>

### **Sources and Methodology**

The attribution of causality in complex multilateral settings is a difficult task. It poses severe methodological problems that many studies do not explicitly address. Thus, it is hard to find a study of the CSCE policy of a particular state which does *not* claim that the actor under consideration played an active, even a leading, role. Michael Morgan claims that '[t]he Canadians persevered' in setting the agenda in NATO; Baudet contends that 'the Dutch had disproportional influence', and Korey, referring

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<sup>98</sup> Hanhimäki, 'Détente in Europe, 1962-1975', p. 198. See the sub-section above.

<sup>99</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 399.

to the Foreign Office's hard-nosed line on human rights, claims that 'the candour of the British carried the day – and the conference'.<sup>100</sup> It is, of course, possible that certain states yield considerable influence at certain junctures or even throughout the CSCE, but given the multilateral nature of the talks, we should nonetheless be careful not to make overly sweeping statements that suggest a 'one-man show'.

Typically, researchers work primarily with documents from a single country and are predisposed to a favourable view of the merits and impact of 'their' state – a 'classic pitfall of mono-archival research on international relations'.<sup>101</sup> This problem can at least partially be overcome by drawing on multiple archives and by resisting the temptation, natural though it might be, to stress the agency of any single actor. Taking the complexity of processes like the Helsinki negotiations seriously means acknowledging that multilateral dynamics cannot be reduced to single actors. Since multilateralism 'stretches states' interests', the bargains that are struck do not correspond to any single states' preferences.<sup>102</sup> Mindful of these problems, strong claims about Britain's impact will be substantiated by independent, non-UK sources and a conscious effort will be made to highlight interaction effects: while British foreign policymakers and diplomats had an impact on the Helsinki negotiations, the reverse is also true: the British approach to the CSCE, and the aims underlying it, change over the course of the talks.

The empirical core of this thesis rests almost exclusively on primary sources. As pointed out above, this stands in stark contrast to previous accounts of British

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<sup>100</sup> Michael Morgan, 'North America, Atlanticism and the CSCE', in Wenger/Mastny/Nuenlist (eds.), *Origins of the European Security System*, pp. 25-45 (37). Korey, *The Promises We Keep*, p. xx. Baudet, "It was Cold War and We Wanted to Win", p. 187. A noteworthy exception to this tendency is Marta Dassù's analysis of Italy's role in the negotiations, see Marta Dassù, 'An Italian View', in Richard Davy (ed.), *European Détente*, pp. 114-144.

<sup>101</sup> Bange, 'Ostpolitik as a Source of Intra-Bloc Tensions', fn. 38.

<sup>102</sup> John G. Ruggie, 'Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution', in John G. Ruggie (ed.), *Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Praxis of an Institutional Form* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. xii.

CSCE policy and the conference in general, which suffered from the lack of primary sources. Regarding printed sources, the five volumes of series III of the *Documents on British Policy Overseas* discussed in the literature review constitute the most important source of documentation. The first three volumes of that series in particular are a goldmine that has proved invaluable to this study. Its American and West German equivalents – especially FRUS XXXIX and the AAPD series – were helpful supplements to the printed British sources.

To supplement and balance the printed materials, this thesis builds on extensive research in British, American, German, Canadian, and NATO archives. Naturally, the UK National Archives (formerly Public Record Office [PRO]) in Kew were the most important source. In particular, I have consulted the records of the two lead departments in charge of the CSCE – Western Organisations Department (WOD) and East European and Soviet Department (EESD) – along with the records of the Cabinet and Prime Minister's Office. In addition, the papers of James Callaghan (Baron Callaghan of Cardiff), held at the Bodleian Library of the University of Oxford, have been consulted.<sup>103</sup>

In the US, archival research was conducted at the National Archives & Record Administration 2 (NARA2) in College Park, Maryland and at the Gerald F. Ford Presidential Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan. At NARA2, the Nixon Presidential Materials (which are now in transit to the Nixon Presidential Library in Yorba Linda, California) were consulted, with a focus on the National Security Council (NSC) Files, which include the President's Trip Files, the President-Kissinger Memoranda of Conversations (Memcons), the Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, the Kissinger

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<sup>103</sup> Leonard James Callaghan (1912-2005) served as Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs from March 1974 until April 1976 before succeeding Harold Wilson as Prime Minister (April 1976-May 1979).

Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telcons), and the Records of the Counsellor, Helmut Sonnenfeldt. These sources have been supplemented by an examination of the State Department's Central Foreign Policy Files (CFPF) of the time period under consideration.<sup>104</sup>

In addition to the archival research undertaken for this study, semi-structured interviews have been conducted with diplomats from all three groupings involved in the CSCE negotiations. I have focused on leading British civil servants, including Sir Crispin Tickell, who headed WOD and who, as noted above, was principally in charge of the Helsinki talks as well as MBFR, and Sir Brian Fall and Mr George Walden, who played central roles in the preliminary talks. To gauge non-British views, I have conducted interviews with leading diplomats of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) – Professor Siegfried Bock (the head of the CSCE delegation) and Peter Steglich (a delegation member). An interview with Professor Karl Birnbaum, who served first on the Swedish and later on the Austrian delegation, has proved valuable insights from a neutral perspective. Last not least, I have interviewed Mr Richard Davy who covered the CSCE process as a journalist for *The Times*.<sup>105</sup>

## **Structure**

The first chapter analyses London's role in the international politics of the East-West conflict in the 1950s. It argues that, having acted as architects of the Cold War in the preceding decade, British foreign policymakers became pioneers of détente. They

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<sup>104</sup> These files, popularly known as the State Department Cables, are available online at the website of the US National Archives: <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/series-description.jsp?s=4073&cat=all&bc=sl> (last accessed 25 March 2011).

<sup>105</sup> All of these interviews have been recorded and fully transcribed, with one exception where the interviewee preferred not to commit his views to tape. Transcripts can be supplied by the author. It should be noted that Henry Kissinger and Helmut Sonnenfeldt have declined interview requests.

brokered compromises on specific issues and, more generally, contributed to re-legitimising the very notion of negotiating with the enemy.

The second chapter covers the 1960s, contending that London became marginalised at a time when Europeans started to formulate independent strategies of détente aimed at revising the constructed peace.

The third chapter concentrates on the period between 1970 and 1972 during which the multilateralisation of European détente took place. It argues that British policymakers played an important role in pushing NATO towards the CSCE and MBFR, despite their profound concern that détente would have a detrimental impact on public opinion.

The following four chapters trace Britain's role during the negotiations leading up to the Final Act. They depict in detail how the CSCE functioned as a microcosm of détente in which participants sought to pursue their preferred approach to the revision of the constructed peace. This included the British whose role underwent a significant transition during the proceedings.

Chapters four and five cover the preparatory talks during which crucial aspects about the nature of the talks were negotiated between thirty-four negotiations. Chapter four shows that, as détente sceptics and newcomers to the European Community, the British started cautiously into the Helsinki process, their part being largely confined to the Western caucus. Chapter five argues that the UK delegation, encouraged by the success of West European cooperation in particular, started to play a more proactive and ambitious role.

Chapters six and seven examine the official stages of the CSCE, focusing on the main working phase in Geneva. Over the course of two strenuous years, the bargains struck in the pre-talks were renegotiated and translated into concrete texts.

Chapter six shows how the deadlock in Geneva strained transatlantic relations, with Kissinger largely failing to enlist British support for rushing the West Europeans along. Chapter seven argues that the British played a leading role in resolving one of the central impasses, thus helping to pave the way for the signing of the Final Act.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Architects of Cold War, Pioneers of Détente: Britain and the East-West Conflict, 1953-1963**

#### **Introduction**

This and the following chapter analyse the evolution of Britain's role in the international politics of détente prior to the CSCE, thus providing the setting to the following chapters about London's involvement in the Helsinki negotiations. This analysis is embedded in a largely chronological narrative; taken together, the two chapters span roughly two decades, from Winston Churchill's call for an East-West summit in 1953 until the end of Harold Wilson's premiership in 1970.<sup>1</sup> This chapter takes us through the 'thaw' of the post-Stalin era when Churchill intensified his campaign for détente and when the proposal of an 'all-European security conference' was first announced. It then covers the first tangible successes of British détente – the Geneva conferences of the mid-1950s – where London participated in a leading role and the more low-key yet still significant part it played during the negotiations of the Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1963. Chapter two examines Britain's East-West diplomacy during Harold Wilson's first government of 1964-1970. It depicts Wilson's support of Ostpolitik, his failure to mediate a settlement on Vietnam and the government's reactions to the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The narrative also covers how the proposal of a European security conference slowly gathered steam in the context of a drawn-out dialogue between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, an

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<sup>1</sup> Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill (1874-1965) served as Prime Minister from May 1940 until July 1945 and again from October 1951 until April 1955.

exchange that eventually led to the multilateralisation of European détente in the early 1970s.

The chapters develop two main themes, both of which are important to understanding London's role at the CSCE. The first theme is the rise and fall of British leadership in détente diplomacy. I argue that British statesmen were leaders of détente in the 1950s, but became increasingly marginalised in the 1960s. Throughout these two decades, foreign policymakers consistently balanced their primary emphasis on a policy of military deterrence with a policy of accommodation through conciliatory diplomacy. In that sense, their prominent role as pioneers and persistent supporters of détente in the 1950 and 1960s served as a supplement to their equally conspicuous role as architects of the Cold War and co-founders of NATO in the 1940s. London was not able to sustain a key role in East-West affairs, however. Its influence waned once the superpowers started to engage in an increasingly exclusive dialogue from 1959 onwards. In hindsight, the 1963 Test Ban Treaty appears as the last high point of London's prominence in East-West diplomacy on a global scale.

The second theme is the rise of détente as a European project – a 'European challenge to the excesses of bipolarity'.<sup>2</sup> I argue that the 1960s witnessed the formulation of independent European strategies, which saw détente as a means to revise the constructed peace.<sup>3</sup> Europeans attempted to stretch the strict confines imposed by the spheres-of-influence settlement and to moderate its humanitarian cost. The détente strategies that emerged in the second half of the 1960s, represented most prominently by Gaullism and Ostpolitik, were ambivalent ventures, however. They sought to escape the constraints of the constructed peace while retaining the stability

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<sup>2</sup> Hanhimäki, 'Détente in Europe, 1962-1975', p. 198. See last chapter.

<sup>3</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*. See last chapter.

resulting from this regime. Through *détente*, the architects of these strategies hoped to regain their freedom to manoeuvre without jeopardising their security.

As committed Atlanticists with a complicated relationship to Europe, the British attitude towards European *détente* became increasingly ambivalent during the course of the 1960s. Ever since Churchill's calls for East-West summitry, British policy had aimed to curb the 'excesses of bipolarity'. It had helped to prevent the escalation of conflict in various theatres and to re-legitimise the very idea of negotiations across the Iron Curtain. But Britain's conception of *détente* was devoid of an alternative grand design beyond the spheres-of-influence settlement guaranteed by the existence of the alliance system. London therefore rejected all pan-European schemes that threatened to undermine the fundamentals of the constructed peace, including Moscow's repeated proposals for an 'all-European security conference'.

This difference regarding the conception of *détente* in Europe, together with Britain's accelerating material decline, contributed to turning the erstwhile pioneer of East-West diplomacy into a bystander of European *détente*. This dynamic highlights the interrelatedness of the two main themes. In the early Cold War, Britain played a prominent role first in the creation of NATO and then in the initiation of *détente*. Both roles contributed to the tacit spheres-of-influence settlement – Trachtenberg's constructed peace – that eventually stabilised Europe. Britain's last tangible contribution to this peace was the Macmillan government's role in negotiations leading to the LTBT of 1963. The treaty's enormous significance goes beyond its role in paving the way for future arms control negotiations. By locking Germany into an inferior status as a non-nuclear power, the LTBT also served as the finishing stone for the web of understandings that led to the constructed peace. In that sense, the treaty

amounted to a tacit pledge: the US, aided by Britain, would guarantee Bonn's non-nuclear status, thus placating one of Moscow's principal fears.

The constructed peace transformed the East-West conflict on the divided continent. It moved states towards a Lockean culture of anarchy, relegating intense Cold War hostilities to extra-European theatres. While the East-West conflict escalated in Vietnam, European leaders, such as Charles de Gaulle and Willy Brandt, started exploring ways of stretching the confines imposed by the constructed peace. It is precisely in this period that the two main themes of this chapter intersect: after 1963, London neither played a key role in curbing the escalation of the Cold War outside Europe, nor in revising the constructed peace on the divided continent. As chapter two shows, Harold Wilson's unsuccessful attempt to mediate over Vietnam and the simultaneous failure of Britain's 'evolutionary' *détente* strategy in Europe exemplify this decline.

While the chapter is not rigidly structured according to these two main themes, the narrative it presents can be read against this backdrop. Given the complexities of *détente*, it is important to strike a balance between presenting an in-depth narrative that does justice to the intricacies of British diplomacy and at the same time making sure that it remains readable. By providing a 'big picture' framework, the themes serve as a heuristic to this end; they are not ends in themselves. In other words, in contrast to a case study methodology, the narrative of British *détente* policy presented here is not meant to be 'tested' against the claims inherent in the two main themes. The relationship between empirical evidence and analytical devices is less rigid. The themes will therefore punctuate the narrative occasionally, rather than forcing it into a tight corset. The same applies to theoretically-informed pieces of analysis. These, too,

are meant to illuminate certain aspects of Britain's détente, rather than reducing the narrative to an empirical 'sample' against which hypotheses can be tested.

### **An Ironic Role: Britain and the East-West Conflict, 1953-1963**

This section presents a general argument about the relationship between British foreign policy and détente. It is argued that the existing literature misconstrues this relationship in both directions: détente was more important to Whitehall than is commonly assumed, and London played a more important role in East-West diplomacy than it is usually given credit for. This section seeks to demonstrate Britain played a significant part in early détente diplomacy and that it did so based on a fairly consistent dual policy: a strategy of deterrence was coupled with a willingness to negotiate. There is a pattern – albeit an ironic one – of British foreign policymakers working hard to establish and maintain core institutions of the Cold War such as NATO while at the same time trying to keep diplomatic channels to the East open.<sup>4</sup> The British approach thus involved playing the dual roles of 'architects' of the Western structure of deterrence and of 'bridge-builders' between East and West. Earlier and more persistently than its core allies, the British pushed for a spheres-of-influence settlement in Europe not unlike the constructed peace, which eventually fell into place in the early 1960s.

There is, therefore, a 'détente pattern' in British foreign policy, which this section will explore. The subsequent sections will then move on to show how that pattern was interrupted in the lead-up to the CSCE. I will argue that the second half of the 1960s saw a transformation of the British role in East-West diplomacy. A multitude of factors combined to turn UK foreign policymakers into sceptics of

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<sup>4</sup> This is a minority view. The most far-ranging and persuasive exposition of this argument can be found in White's *Britain, Détente and the Changing Structure of East-West Relations*.

détente and to relegate Britain to the sidelines of the détente process. As we shall see, London's marginalisation reached its high – or low – point precisely when its allies and partners intensified their détente efforts. While their French, American, and West German counterparts were engaging in a 'bicycle race to Moscow', British foreign policymakers almost did the opposite.<sup>5</sup> With their enthusiasm for détente waning, ministers broke with their predecessors' pattern of active engagement in East-West diplomacy. Goaded by the leading mandarins in the Foreign Office, they retreated to what one key official, Julian Bullard, called 'our chosen role as a Cassandra to the Western alliance on the theme of the Soviet threat to Western Europe'.<sup>6</sup>

The onset of Western preparations for the CSCE in the early 1970s thus raised an important question: Would the conference deepen the new trend and confirm Britain's place as a bystander to détente? Or would the Helsinki talks witness a return to the activism and prominence of previous decades?

### **The Tradition of Accommodation in British Foreign Policy**

Efforts to initiate a European détente are commonly associated with the foreign policies of French President Charles de Gaulle and West German Chancellor Willy

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<sup>5</sup> Georges Pompidou probably coined this phrase. It was frequently and mostly pejoratively invoked in debates within the FCO. See, for example, British Diplomatic Oral History Project (BDOHP), Interview No. 69, Sir John Killick, p. 24. Georges Jean Raymond Pompidou (1911-1974) served as French Prime Minister from 1962 until 1968 and as President from 1969 until his death in April 1974.

<sup>6</sup> DBPO, III/III, No. 40, para 2. Julian Leonard Bullard (1928-2006) headed the Eastern European and Soviet Department from 1971 until 1975. He played a central role in the expulsion of 105 alleged Soviet spies in September 1971, an event that will be discussed in chapter three. Along with Thomas Brimelow, Bullard belonged to the group of key diplomats who were arguing for a hardline stance towards the Soviet Union and, consequently, took a negative attitude towards détente in general and the CSCE in particular. A former colleague charged Bullard and other leading officials with having 'sabotaged' the détente efforts of the more moderate elements within the FCO. See Michael D. Kandiah and Gillian Staerck (eds.), *The Helsinki Negotiations, The Accords and Their Impact*. Oral History Seminar (London: Centre for Contemporary British History, University of London, 2002), p. 17. (Henceforth, CCBH, *The Helsinki Negotiations*.) In an interview conducted for this study, another former colleague called Bullard 'a bit of a fanatic' when it came to dealings with the Soviet Union. Author's interview with Sir Rodric Braithwaite, London, 3 December 2010. Yet another fellow official, paints a more moderate picture, but also notes his central role in nudging his superiors towards the expulsion of the alleged spies. See Brian Fall, 'Obituary: Sir Julian Bullard', *The Guardian*, 2 June 2006.

Brandt. In contrast, London's endeavours are either overlooked or dismissed as ineffectual interventions, as desperate attempts by vain leaders of a former great power in irreversible decline.<sup>7</sup> I take issue with the absolutism of this depiction and argue instead that London's attempts to ease tensions, while certainly self-interested and at times inconsequential, are reflections of a persistent East-West policy based on a distinct diplomatic tradition.<sup>8</sup>

British leaders traditionally conceive of international relations as a mix of cooperation and conflict to be mediated by flexible diplomacy.<sup>9</sup> This pragmatic approach was not so much the function of particularly enlightened or humane statesmanship (as the self-congratulating memoirs of British leaders suggest) as it was a product of strategic calculation. Even at the height of its power, Britain was a hegemon on the cheap.<sup>10</sup> London's resources were stretched thin by global commitments and its wealth was contingent on open trade routes. Britain's superpower status thus hinged as much on co-opting rivals as it did on attacking its enemies. As Paul Kennedy points out, pragmatic diplomacy was therefore key to British power and (at least until the 1930s) accommodating enemies was considered as an important tool in managing adversarial relationships and, quite simply, as a commonsensical way of exercising statesmanship.<sup>11</sup>

This pragmatic tradition played a role during the early Cold War years when British leaders from Churchill onwards objected to the hardening American

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<sup>7</sup> For a critical evaluation of the UK role, see Shlaim, 'Britain's Quest for a World Role'.

<sup>8</sup> This is not to deny that electoral concerns and personal vanity play an important role. As one of the greatest champions of summitry once sarcastically remarked: 'how much more attractive a top-level meeting seems when one has reached the top'. Winston Churchill quoted in David Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), p. 168.

<sup>9</sup> White, *Britain, Détente and the Changing Structure of East-West Relations*, pp. 6-10.

<sup>10</sup> David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Harlow: Longman, 2000), pp. 17-18.

<sup>11</sup> The seminal article is Paul Kennedy, 'The Tradition of Appeasement in British Foreign Policy, 1865-1939', *British Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (October 1976), pp. 195-215.

conception of containment signalled by NSC-68.<sup>12</sup> Paul Nitze and Dean Acheson's approach to containment, while nominally aiming to achieve a 'position of strength' from which to negotiate with the Soviet Union, in effect ruled out meaningful high-level diplomacy for the foreseeable future.<sup>13</sup> The same can be said for West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's policy towards the Eastern half of the divided European continent.<sup>14</sup> This conflicted with Whitehall's understanding of Cold War diplomacy. British foreign policymakers saw little fundamental contradiction in keeping the lines of communication open while simultaneously re-arming to create a credible deterrent.<sup>15</sup> The approach of the Truman administration, especially after the 'loss' of China in 1949, was more intensely ideological, whereas British diplomacy had a more pragmatic bent.

A range of factors combined to produce this divergence. The tradition of accommodation – decried as 'appeasement' by critics – in British foreign policy is an important 'background influence', which helps account for the belief that one could (and should) 'do business' with one's adversaries.<sup>16</sup> It explains why, on an ideological

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<sup>12</sup> John L. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 89-126.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Henry Nitze (1907-2004) served as Director of Policy Planning in the US State Department between 1950-1953.

<sup>14</sup> Rüdiger Booz, *'Hallsteinzeit': Deutsche Außenpolitik, 1955-1972* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Coral Bell, *Negotiation from Strength: A Study in the Politics of Power* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962), p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> The term 'background influence' is taken from Paul Kennedy, *The Realities behind Diplomacy: Background Influences on British External Policy, 1865-1980* (London: Fontana Press, 1985). On background influences on British foreign policymaking more generally, see Wolfram Kaiser, 'Against Napoleon and Hitler: Background Influences on British Diplomacy', in Wolfram Kaiser and Gillian Staerck (eds.), *British Foreign Policy, 1955-64: Contracting Options* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2001), pp. 110-131. The business analogy is one of the most prominent phrases in British diplomatic parlance. This is hardly a coincidence given the fact that British wealth and power is predicated on maintaining a worldwide network of trade. From this perspective, the often-invoked pragmatism of British diplomacy can be explained by the need to strike bargains with potential adversaries in order to sustain that extensive network at reasonable costs.

basis, ‘the British could not wholly accept what had become a manichaeistic view of the world in Washington’.<sup>17</sup>

Another crucial factor is the resource differential between Britain and the US. In contrast to Washington, Britain had been severely weakened by the Second World War and British foreign policymakers dreaded the immense drain that a prolonged Cold War confrontation would inflict on scarce resources. The policy response to this problem was of momentous significance for London’s Cold War strategy and marks a fundamental juncture in British foreign policy as a whole. To deal with the perceived Soviet threat, Britain would bandwagon as closely as possible with the United States. Instead of constructing a European response – in the form of Ernest Bevin’s scheme of a ‘Third Force’, for example – London opted for a ‘special relationship’ embedded in a multilateral transatlantic framework.<sup>18</sup> British leaders played key roles in initiating the Cold War and in founding the institutions that cemented bipolarity. They were instrumental in creating ‘the West’ as a politico-military entity and an ideological construct, including the creation of a divided Germany, of NATO and the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC).<sup>19</sup>

To “piggyback” on American power’ appealed to Britain’s political elite as an attractive ‘quick fix’ solution. It would help the country recover from the strains of

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<sup>17</sup> White, *Britain, Détente and the Changing Structure of East-West Relations*, p. 37. See also Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, p. 172. However, the degree to which views differed should not be overrated, either. As Coral Bell points out, both Britain and the US were ‘obsessed’ with nuclear deterrence and agreed on numerous other essential issues of Cold War strategy. Bell, *Negotiation from Strength*, p. 66.

<sup>18</sup> On Bevin’s flirtation with a European bloc as a guarantor for a multipolar world order, see John Kent and John Young, ‘British Policy Overseas: The “Third Force” and the Origins of NATO: In Search of a New Perspective’, in Beatrice Heuser and Robert O’Neill (eds.), *Securing Peace in Europe, 1945-1962: Thoughts for the Post-Cold War Era* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 41-61.

<sup>19</sup> For a succinct analysis, see Anne Deighton, ‘Britain and the Cold War, 1945-1955’, in Melvyn P. Leffler and O. Arne Westad (eds.), *Origins, The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 112-132. The literature on Britain’s part in initiating the Cold War is enormous and opinions diverge roughly along ‘orthodox’ and ‘revisionist’ lines. For a helpful historiographical sketch of Britain’s role at the onset of the East-West conflict, see Peter Weiler, ‘Britain and the First Cold War: Revisionist Beginnings’, *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1998), pp. 127-138.

the war over the short term and enable it to then resume its role as a world power.<sup>20</sup> But the decision to bandwagon with a superior power led to a dilemma, which was to haunt British détente policy throughout the existence of the East-West conflict. By entering as the weaker partner into a ‘special relationship’ with the US and by co-founding NATO, the British in effect shackled themselves to America’s rigid containment policy – a policy they did not wholly share. David Reynolds succinctly summarises the dilemma created by London’s choice for a transatlantic structure of deterrence: ‘it provided an answer to Britain’s security problem but only at the cost of hardening the East-West conflict into the Cold War’.<sup>21</sup>

Much of Britain’s subsequent détente activism can be understood as the sometimes desperate attempt to moderate the unintended consequences of this dilemma. In that sense, Britain’s predicament was not unlike the tragic role of Goethe’s ‘sorcerer’s apprentice’ who frantically tries to subdue the spirits that he himself had called.<sup>22</sup> The British used détente as a counter-spell to the ‘evil spirits’ of East-West confrontation, but also to moderate and mask London’s growing dependence on American power. Prime Ministers including Churchill, Anthony Eden, and Macmillan subsequently worked hard to negotiate an East-West modus vivendi within the Cold War framework of their own making. The co-architects of the Cold War thus became pioneers of détente.

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<sup>20</sup> Peter Mangold, *Success and Failure in British Foreign Policy: Evaluating the Record, 1900-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 73.

<sup>21</sup> Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, p. 172.

<sup>22</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, ‘Der Zauberlehrling’, in Karl Eibl (ed.), *Johann Wolfgang Goethe: Sämtliche Werke, Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche*, Vol. 2 (Berlin: Deutscher Klassiker-Verlag, 1987), pp. 141-144.

## **Britain and the Cold War**

Before we examine some examples of Britain's early détente efforts, it is important to point out that the discussion in this chapter is not meant to diminish – let alone deny – the immense importance of the Cold War to the United Kingdom (and vice versa). In the British case, a simple argumentative strategy, which attempts to highlight the importance of détente by de-emphasising the importance of the Cold War, does not make sense. In fact, before delving into the details of London's East-West diplomacy, we should begin by re-emphasising how fundamentally the Cold War shaped British society and foreign policy.

As a European great power with global dependencies and interests, Britain was particularly sensitive to the changing balance of power heralded by the defeat of Nazi Germany. Weakened by two successive world wars, but ultimately victorious, Britain was both especially vulnerable and particularly prone to taking up new challenges. A Cold War mindset thus became influential in Whitehall thinking well before it took hold of foreign policy planning in other capitals, including in Washington. To give but two examples, military planners, Anne Deighton argues, devised 'a reasonably clear Cold War strategy' before the end of WWII, building on lingering Whitehall distrust going back to the Bolshevik Revolution, and Richard Aldrich maintains that an anti-'Russian' attitude had taken hold of the intelligence community by 1943.<sup>23</sup>

The Cold War also impacted greatly on British society where a tacit anti-Soviet alliance formed between the working and middle classes and the 'Oxbridge'

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<sup>23</sup> Deighton, 'Britain and the Cold War, 1945-1955', p. 114. Richard Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America, and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London: John Murray, 2001), pp. 43-63. Fear of Soviet power was exacerbated by cultural resentments against 'the Russians' and influenced by racial stereotypes about the 'semi-oriental' ethnic make-up of Soviet society. On the former aspect, see Oliver Bange, 'Preface', in Luca Ratti, *Britain, Ost- and Deutschlandpolitik, and the CSCE, 1955-1975* (Bern/Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008), p. 13; on the latter, see Deighton, 'Britain and the Cold War', pp. 115-116.

elite running Whitehall and ‘the City’.<sup>24</sup> Due to these and other factors, a close relationship between Britain and the Cold War was overdetermined – indeed, ‘the Cold War is a thread that has run through everything’, as Sir Michael Palliser put it.<sup>25</sup>

However, just as Cold War and détente should not be conceived of as a dichotomy, it would be a mistake to see British post-WWII foreign policy solely in terms of the former at the expense of the latter. From the early 1950s onwards, powerful incentives propelled successive prime ministers to try and complement the perceived axioms of Western defence with a renewed emphasis on diplomacy.

A prominent example is Churchill’s sustained effort to re-start East-West summitry with Moscow upon returning to 10 Downing Street in October 1951. Despite his credentials as an early Cold Warrior, he took these endeavours more seriously than most scholarly accounts suggest.<sup>26</sup> After Stalin’s death in March 1953, Churchill’s foreign policy priority – his ‘last campaign’ – was to re-start high-level negotiations across the Iron Curtain that he had, quite literally, helped to construct.<sup>27</sup> In May of that year, he declared in a lengthy, at times emotional speech in the House of Commons:

It would [...] be a mistake to assume that nothing can be settled with Soviet Russia unless or until everything is settled. A settlement of two or three of our difficulties would be an important gain to every peace-loving country. [...] [I]n spite of all the uncertainties and confusion in which world affairs are plunged, I believe that a conference on the highest level should take place between the leading Powers without long delay. [...] The conference should be confined to the smallest number of Powers and persons possible. [...] It might well be that no hard-faced agreements would be reached, but there might be a general feeling among those gathered together that they might do something better than tear the human race, including themselves, into bits.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 124-125.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 132. In his capacity as Permanent Under-Secretary of State (PUS), Arthur Michael Palliser (\*1922) served as Head of the Diplomatic Service from 1975-1982.

<sup>26</sup> Klaus Larres, *Churchill’s Cold War: The Politics of Personal Diplomacy* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. xix-xxii, 215-239.

<sup>27</sup> The phrase is taken from John W. Young, *Churchill’s Last Campaign: Britain and the Cold War, 1951-1956* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

<sup>28</sup> Prime Minister’s Speech on Foreign Affairs, 11 May 1953, Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 5<sup>th</sup> Series (London: The Stationery Office), Vol. 515, Cols. 883-902 (895, 897).

The heavy resistance Churchill's undertakings encountered, including from Konrad Adenauer but also from Dwight D. Eisenhower, are a good measure of the degree to which negotiating with the Communists had come to be seen as politically dangerous and defeatist.<sup>29</sup> Given this environment – one that can be likened to a Hobbesian culture of anarchy – Churchill's speech is all the more remarkable.<sup>30</sup> At a time when leading American politicians refused to even shake hands with their Communist counter-parts, Churchill's appeal is striking not only because of its conciliatory content, but also for its intensely personal tone. During the speech, Churchill read from a personal wartime telegram to Stalin, sent in April 1945, in which he referred to the Soviet dictator as 'my friend Stalin'.<sup>31</sup> It is inconceivable that any other major Western politician would have made such an appeal in the 1950s.

Given Churchill's stature, his passionate speech in the House of Commons represented an act of undeniable symbolic importance, contributing to re-legitimising the concept of negotiations across the East-West divide. It resembles a small, but significant step away from a Hobbesian culture of anarchy predominantly defined by enmity towards a Lockean culture of rivalry where conflicts can be mediated, at least potentially, by negotiations. In practical terms, it helped to pave the way for a new round of high-level talks, including the conferences in Geneva in 1954 and 1955.

Despite the impeccable Cold Warrior credentials of British leaders, it is not surprising that London should have been among the first advocates of a rapprochement. *Détente* promised several major advantages. It would 'normalise'

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<sup>29</sup> It should be noted that the PM's initiative was also controversial at home. That, as John Young maintains, 'Churchill's willingness almost brought his Government down' could be seen as evidence against my argument about a British disposition towards *détente*. However, most objections centred not on the concept of holding a summit, but on the leader's alleged physical and mental inability to undertake serious negotiations. Sean Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War, 1945-91* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000), p. 134. For the quote, see Young, *Churchill's Last Campaign*, p. 281.

<sup>30</sup> For a conceptualisation of the Cold War as a culture of anarchy, see introduction.

<sup>31</sup> Prime Minister's Speech on Foreign Affairs, 11 May 1953, in: Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 5<sup>th</sup> Series, Vol. 515, Col. 897.

relations with the East and render the Cold War less costly. Reopening communication channels, enabling traditional diplomacy to do its job, would help prevent crises that could easily spiral out of control and keep arms expenditures at a less excruciating level. Furthermore, easing tension would regain Britain's room for manoeuvre that had been constrained by the institutions of its own making. The latter point was especially important for a country that continued to see itself as a world power. From the British perspective, the NATO system successfully provided for Western security by committing American power to the continent; but it was also locking London into an alliance where its subservience in power-political terms was glaring – and thus had to be disguised by the status symbols of power, including nuclear weapons and the prestige of sitting at the top tables of international diplomacy. This point is a mainstay in the literature on post-WWII British foreign policy.<sup>32</sup> However, the inter-relationship between a core component of British identity – Britons' self-image as world leaders – and the Cold War is less often discussed explicitly. Anne Deighton's perceptive overview of British foreign policy from 1945-1955 is a notable exception. Deighton is very clear about both aspects. On the one hand, she maintains that

the defining trait of foreign policy was to maintain Britain's place as a major global and imperial power [...]. [...] The quest to sustain the image and the reality of great powerdom [...] was part of the mentalité of British planners, the military, and the politicians.<sup>33</sup>

On the other hand, Deighton makes the counterfactual argument that 'this priority would still have existed in Britain *even if the Soviet Union had withdrawn from active international politics immediately after the war*'.<sup>34</sup> I agree with both arguments, but

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<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Northedge, *Descent from Power*; Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*; Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*.

<sup>33</sup> Deighton, 'Britain and the Cold War', pp. 113-114.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

would add that there is nonetheless a complicated and ironical inter-relationship between said ‘mentalité’, the Cold War and détente. The ideological competition of the Cold War renewed the societal consensus behind an activist world power role, the pursuit of which subsequently drained Britain’s material resources.<sup>35</sup> It is precisely this friction between ‘Cold Warriordom’ and ‘great powerdom’ which became an increasingly potent incentive for pursuing détente. For British leaders from Churchill onwards, reinitiating East-West summitry would not only help curb the backbreaking defence cost, it would also demonstrate Britain’s world power status. Through NATO, Britain already played a prominent part in maintaining the Western structure of deterrence; through East-West summitry, it could do the same in the diplomacy of détente – these roles, though in many ways contradictory, would both reconfirm London’s ‘great powerdom’.

This dialectic is seldom spelled out explicitly, which is why the image of the British as archetypical Cold Warriors prevails. This picture rests on a one-sided take on this interplay between the ‘mentalité’ analysed by Deighton and London’s role in East-West diplomacy. To refine our understanding of British foreign policy in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we need to take both facets of the dialectic seriously: the quest for great powerdom pushed London both towards prominent roles in the Cold War as well as in détente diplomacy. While the former aspect is well documented, the latter remains under-researched, although leadership aspirations and the pursuit of a prominent place clearly fuelled British CSCE diplomacy. As the head of the UK delegation to the CSCE put it, if London failed to have a significant impact on the Helsinki talks, it could ‘hardly hope to be a Power anywhere’.<sup>36</sup> To formulate it

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<sup>35</sup> Deighton writes that anti-Communist fears, drummed up by Whitehall propaganda, ‘contributed to the creation in Britain of a remarkable elite and working class consensus about Britain’s place in the world’. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>36</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 37, para. 22. For the full quote, see introduction.

somewhat technically, this leadership aspiration in the pursuit of ‘great powerdom’ should be seen the ‘master’ or ‘independent’ variable among the cultural ‘background factors’. It is a particularly salient feature of British foreign policy culture and goes to the heart of British identity. It helps explain both British leaders’ persistent efforts to play prominent roles first as architects and managers of the Cold War system as well as pioneers of détente.

Furthermore, theoretically, we need to strike a better balance between material and ideational factors when it comes to explaining the nexus between the ‘hawkish’ Cold War edge and the ‘dovish’ détente strand in Britain’s East-West diplomacy. The immense burden associated with early Cold War rearmament, including the development of nuclear weapons, certainly hastened Britain’s relative decline, representing a most powerful material incentive to relax tensions. However, as Constructivist scholarship forcefully argues, there is no straightforward link between material factors and foreign policy outcomes; the nexus between material structure and individual agency is more complicated. Most notably, the cultural milieu – norms, values, self-images etc. – through which information is filtered, represents an important intervening variable. In our case, this variable is the long-standing tradition of accommodation. The salience of diplomatic engagement as a prescriptive norm made it easier for Whitehall to pursue détente than it would have been if British strategic culture had been more predisposed to adversarial modes of interaction with significant Others.

### **Pioneers: The British Vision of Détente and its Early Achievements**

To distinguish British endeavours to relax tension from those attempts subsequently undertaken by its allies, let us briefly examine the conception of détente underlying

these efforts and the strategy with which they were implemented. It has become a commonplace to argue that British foreign policy is strongly influenced by a Realpolitik vision of international relations, which holds that external policy, rather than adhering to abstract and absolute maxims, should be a rational and unsentimental response to the ever-shifting balance of power. This is essentially a status quo view of international politics, based on the axiom that the state system does not change; the agents in that system hold each other in check, thus stabilising and forever perpetuating the system. Admirers of British Realpolitik like Henry Kissinger trace this tradition back to the times of William of Orange.<sup>37</sup>

It is undeniable that Britain's early détente efforts were rooted in Realpolitik. As Churchill's 'percentages agreement' had already shown in 1944, London was interested in reaching a stable spheres-of-influence agreement in Europe, which would safeguard the interests of the allies and provide for the containment of Germany. In the postwar period, Britain's détente policy aimed to find a viable *modus vivendi* based on the territorial status quo. With the exception of Ernest Bevin's short-lived interest in the creation of a 'Third Force', British thinking took the division of postwar Europe for granted. Devoid of an alternative grand design beyond the geopolitical divide based on two opposing blocs, détente was the search for the most stable and least tension-laden *modus vivendi* within that system.

However, from the beginning, this Realpolitik approach was accompanied by essentially liberal visions of change. From the early 1950s onwards, British statesmen and their officials hoped that a stabilisation of East-West affairs in the short and medium term, would lay the foundation for transformations between the Communist states and within these authoritarian societies. As Geraint Hughes points out,

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<sup>37</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1994), pp. 71-72. William III of Orange ruled England from 1689 until 1702.

[B]oth Churchill and the Foreign Office placed their hopes on the long-term liberalisation of Communist doctrine. The prime minister argued that East-West contacts would eventually erode the ideological basis of the Soviet bloc, while Foreign Office thinking emphasised the long-term adoption of less dogmatic domestic and external policies by the USSR.<sup>38</sup>

Since opinions varied and hopes remained fairly diffuse, it would be a stretch to posit that détente policy was guided by one unified vision of change based on a clearly spelled out grand design. Yet these liberal leanings need to be taken seriously if the view of British foreign and détente policy as an exercise in Palmerstonian Realism is not to turn into a cliché. British foreign policymakers aimed first and foremost to achieve stability and accommodation through Realpolitik, but they did not see their endeavours as wholly divorced from Moralpolitik.

It is also important to emphasise *how* British leaders launched their efforts at détente. London generally tried to secure Western backing for its actions since only a united alliance could provide the necessary structure of deterrence to ‘negotiate from strength’.<sup>39</sup> As we will see below, these remained essential components of London’s strategy throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In other words, East-West ‘bridge-building’ was always backed by parallel attempts to maintain a credible defence posture – an approach encapsulated in Churchill’s often quoted phrase ‘We arm to parley’.<sup>40</sup> Given declining financial resources, the British were well aware that ‘to arm’ necessitated a united West and genuine burden-sharing between NATO partners. Therefore, UK

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<sup>38</sup> Geraint Hughes, *Harold Wilson’s Cold War: The Labour Government and East-West Politics, 1964-1970* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2009), p. 21.

<sup>39</sup> White, *Britain, Détente and the Changing Structure of East-West Relations*, p. 49.

<sup>40</sup> In the 1960s, John F. Kennedy frequently referred to this phrase to signal his intention to ease East-West tension. ‘JFK’s favourite phrase from the Churchillian treasure trove’, John Dumbrell argues, ‘[...] became something of a leitmotif for much of the Cold War’. John Dumbrell, ‘Winston Churchill and American Foreign Relations: John F. Kennedy to George W. Bush’, *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, Vol. 3, Supp. 1 (2005), pp. 31-42 (32).

efforts at 'bridge-building' across the Iron Curtain were always accompanied by parallel efforts of maintaining Western cohesion.<sup>41</sup>

This stands in marked contrast to de Gaulle's subsequent détente endeavours; the general's rapprochement with the East was directly linked to the loosening of France's Western attachment, exemplified by Paris' semi-withdrawal from NATO. As we will see in the next chapter, Willy Brandt's hugely successful Ostpolitik eschewed the French example; his mantra that détente was predicated on the continuation of Bonn's 'Westbindung' is reminiscent of the UK approach.<sup>42</sup>

How successful were London's early initiatives? British leaders did not produce the decisive breakthrough they had hoped for: in the 1950s, their diplomacy did not fundamentally transform the East-West conflict through lasting settlements in Europe or elsewhere. Indeed, Churchill did not even reach his goal of crowning his long career with a final summit of the 'Big Three'. However, British diplomacy produced important results, outcomes that are all the more noteworthy given the very real dangers of a wider war and the dominance of the Hobbesian culture of anarchy that delegitimised the idea of negotiating with the enemy. For example, as indirect results of Churchill's 'last campaign', two meetings at Foreign Minister level did take place in 1954 during which the British played significant roles in diffusing tension. The first was the Four Power conference on Berlin (January-February 1954), which broke a five-year deadlock during which hardly any significant attempt had been made to reach an agreement on one of the perennial hotspots of the Cold War.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> As chapter three will argue, London's growing ambivalence towards détente is directly related to heightened fears about the detrimental impact of the East-West rapprochement on Western unity and military preparedness.

<sup>42</sup> White argues that the FRG 'followed the British example by exploiting the potential of a quasi-independent high-profile East-West role', but he fails to provide convincing evidence that Bonn followed the UK model deliberately. See White, *Britain, Détente and the Changing Structure of East-West Relations*, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, p. 133.

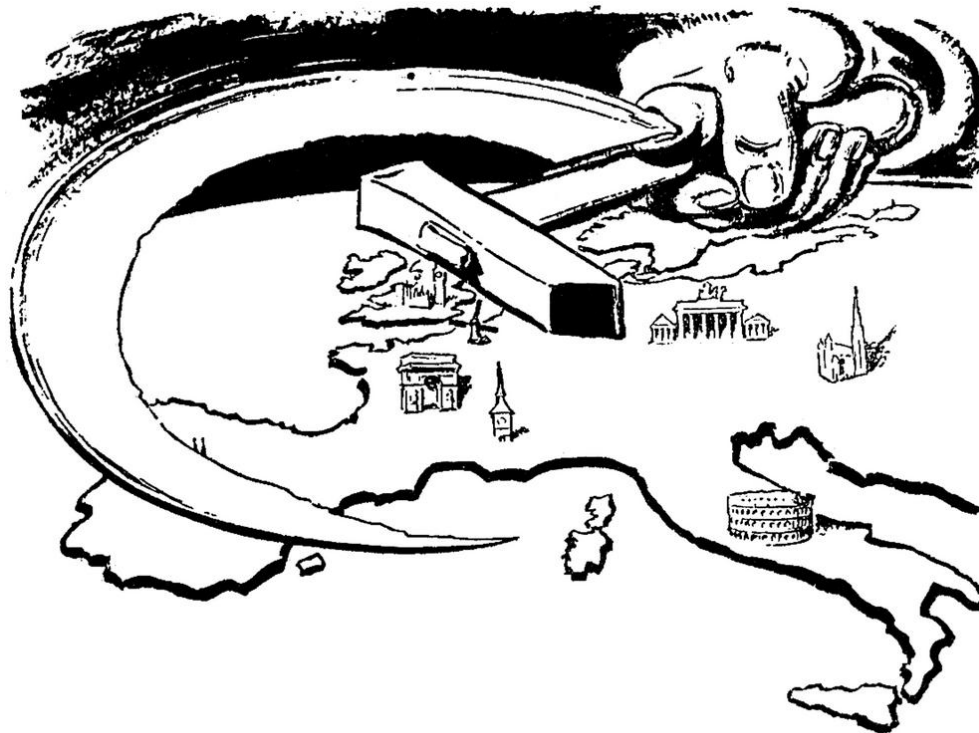
Indeed, it was during the first meeting that, on 10 February 1954, that Vyacheslav Molotov first aired the proposal to convene a conference to negotiate a ‘General European Treaty of Collective Security in Europe’, the first of Moscow’s repeated calls for a European security conference.<sup>44</sup> According to the Soviet Foreign Secretary, the treaty would be open to all European countries, including the FRG and the GDR. The proposal was rejected by the West as a last-minute attempt to prevent West German accession to NATO and as an indirect attempt to win recognition of the GDR.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, its exclusion of the United States and Canada was deemed unacceptable. While the roots of the CSCE can ultimately be traced back to the failure of the Four Powers to negotiate a peace settlement after the Second World War, the 1954 proposal was the first concrete diplomatic initiative towards the conference.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Foreign & Commonwealth Office, *Selected Documents Relating to Problems of Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1954-1977*, Command Paper (Cmnd.) 6932 (London: The Stationery Office), paras. 3-6. The historiography is somewhat hazy on this point. For example, Wilfried Loth incorrectly dates Molotov’s proposal back to the previous month, omits the British role in paving the way for the meeting, and overall fails to provide proper documentation. See Wilfried Loth, *Helsinki, 1. August 1975: Entspannung und Abrüstung* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), 9. Other studies, too, lack documentation and a discussion of London’s role. See, for example, Yamamoto, *The Road to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1969-1973*, p. 8 and Petri Hakkarainen, *Amplifying Ostpolitik: The Federal Republic of Germany and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1966-72* (Unpublished D.Phil. Thesis, University of Oxford, 2008), p. 12.

<sup>45</sup> Philip Williams, ‘Britain, Détente and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe’, in Kenneth H. F. Dyson, *European Détente: Case Studies of the Politics of East-West Relations* (London: Frances Pinter, 1986), pp. 221-236 (233).

<sup>46</sup> For a more detailed account of the diplomatic run-up to the CSCE, see Hanson, *The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, pp. 16-50.



„Europäische Sicherheit“ à la Molotow

*Graph: Caricature of Molotov's European Security Proposal<sup>47</sup>*

The second indirect result of Churchill's 'last campaign' was the Geneva conference on Korea and Indochina (April-July 1954), which ended the French war in Indochina and created Cambodia and Laos. It was co-chaired by Molotov and Anthony Eden. Since British documents (and scholarly works based on them) might be skewed by a self-congratulatory bias, let us turn to US documentation for evidence on the British role.

The so-called 'Pentagon Papers', released in full in June 2011, highlight the importance of the conference and the centrality of the British.<sup>48</sup> The Report reveals the

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<sup>47</sup> The caption reads "European security" à la Molotov'. This caricature was printed in the Austrian newspaper *Wiener Kurier* on 13 February 1955. Available at the website of the Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe, <http://www.cvce.eu/collections/object-content/-/object/d5906df5-4f83-4603-85f7-0cab24b9fe1/9bf3d16f-adce-4821-ac0d-cf7877c5321a/91f3677c-1a18-4880-8c2a-41c818cf7adf/fr> (last accessed 8 September 2011).

<sup>48</sup> The official title of the Pentagon Papers is 'Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force, 1945-1967'. It was commissioned by Secretary of Defense, Robert MacNamara in 1967. It is available at the website of the US National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), <http://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-papers> (last accessed 7 August 2011).

very mixed initial attitude of the American side towards the conference, but is unambiguous about its results: the document summarising the ‘outcome for the West’ features a telling headline – ‘UK Diplomacy is an Unqualified Success’ – and two equally clear sub-headings: ‘British Prestige is Heightened’; ‘Danger of a Wider War is Averted’.<sup>49</sup> The Papers elaborate on these themes, first by stressing the danger of imminent escalation:

Tensions at Geneva were high. [...] Convictions were strongly held by many that [...] the West [needed to] take some united military action [...] unless the diplomacy of Geneva brought unsuspected agreement. The danger of a wider war was very real. [...] London’s goal was to terminate the war and reduce international tension [...].<sup>50</sup>

The Pentagon Papers then go on to appraise the British role during the conference:

[...] Anthony Eden’s presence and leadership made a difference in the results of the conference and in Britain’s world image. Eden repeatedly acted as an intermediary not only between the Communists and the West, but also the U.S., France and the GVN as well. He aided Molotov in seeing compromise through to agreements, but he was also able to keep the Soviets convinced that the U.K. would be at the side of the U.S. if Communist intransigence led to a stalemate at Geneva. [...] In the end, Eden was able to help avert the risks of a wider war [...].<sup>51</sup>

I have quoted these assessments at length because the praise of a sceptical partner amounts to particularly good evidence for a British leadership role at a critical juncture in Cold War negotiations. Early successes of London’s détente diplomacy like Geneva also left a deep imprint in the collective memory of the British foreign policy elite. Eden’s pragmatic diplomacy – flexible towards the opponents’ positions yet loyal to the Western cause and ultimately serving British interests – became a role model. This role model of leadership through pragmatic détente diplomacy shaped the

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<sup>49</sup> ‘Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force, 1945-1967’, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Vietnam Task Force, Part III: The Geneva Accords, D-11.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., D-12, para. 1b.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., D-12, para. 1a. The sentence quoted last is taken from paragraph 1.b of the same document. (The acronym GVN stands for Government of the Republic of Vietnam.)

self-image of leading ministers and officials.<sup>52</sup> By the time the CSCE negotiations convened in 1972-1973, British negotiators had become more sceptical of the specific merits of détente agreements with the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, even when this scepticism was at its deepest, the tradition of accommodation and the remnants of the role model were still intact. They helped militate against the anti-Soviet mood in Number 10 and in the Foreign Office and pushed British diplomats towards a pragmatic role.

The following year saw another important result of Britain's early détente policy – the Geneva summit of July 1955.<sup>53</sup> While the summit produced little substantial agreement, it nonetheless marked 'a unique event in the history of the Cold War' with a critical symbolic function: it re-legitimised the idea of negotiations across the ideological divide.<sup>54</sup> Not least due to the massive media attention it attracted (around 1,500 journalists from all over the world covered the events on the spot), the 'spirit of Geneva' created the expectation that a continuous process of negotiation should follow the summit and thereby institutionalise and stabilise communication between East and West.<sup>55</sup> Given the West's reluctance to enter into high-level talks, as well as the specific preoccupations of individual NATO members, London is to be chiefly credited for the diplomatic spadework that shifted the balance of opinion in favour of negotiations. Brian White makes this point succinctly:

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<sup>52</sup> Among the specific gains were Britain's membership in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the exchange of chargé d'affaires with Communist China, thus ending a four-year period of non-communication between London and Beijing. Ibid., D-12.

<sup>53</sup> The seminal, archival-based work on the summit is Günter Bischof and Saki Dockrill (eds.), *Cold War Respite: The Geneva Summit of 1955* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000). For a useful analysis of the superpower perspective, see Richard W. Stevenson, *The Rise and Fall of Détente: Relaxations of Tension in US-Soviet Relations, 1953-84* (London: Macmillan, 1985).

<sup>54</sup> Günter Bischof and Saki Dockrill, 'Introduction', in Bischof/Dockrill, *Cold War Respite*, pp. 1-20 (2). White, *Britain, Détente and the Changing Structure of East-West Relations*, p. 57. On the failure of Britain's specific goals at Geneva due to the intransigence of the US and the USSR, see Antonio Varsori, 'British Policy Aims at Geneva', in Bischof/Dockrill, *Cold War Respite*, pp. 75-96 (94-96).

<sup>55</sup> Bischof/Dockrill, 'Introduction', p. 3.

While the Americans were doing everything possible to avoid East-West negotiations, the French were preoccupied with Indo-China and the EDC, and Adenauer with securing sovereignty for the Federal Republic, Churchill contributed his international stature and his anti-Communist credentials to the call for negotiations.<sup>56</sup>

After Eden had resigned in January 1957 following the debacle over Suez, Harold Macmillan became Prime Minister. Macmillan further deepened Britain's commitment to a 'mediator' role in East-West relations. In particular, he wanted to keep the 'spirit of Geneva' alive by fulfilling the public's expectation of a more continuous negotiation process. His vision was informed by classical conference diplomacy in the mould of the Congress of Vienna.<sup>57</sup> His trip to Moscow in February 1959, marking the first visit of a British Prime Minister since WWII, gave him an opportunity to put his plans for permanent summitry to Nikita Khrushchev.<sup>58</sup> It would be a stretch to suggest that Macmillan's plans foreshadowed the CSCE process, but there are definitely similarities between his vision and what eventually became the Helsinki process. According to his memoirs, the PM advocated the creation of

a more or less continuous or permanent Conference – adjourning for long periods and reassembling for new work, with Ministers attending from time to time, and officials (Ambassadors, etc.) working on committees and reporting to Ministers. Such a Conference, or Congress would in itself 'relieve tensions'.<sup>59</sup>

While little was achieved in Moscow in terms of concrete results, Macmillan's persistent calls for summitry did contribute to Eisenhower's invitation to meet his Soviet counterpart in September and to the Four Power summit in Paris the next

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<sup>56</sup> White, *Britain, Détente and the Changing Structure of East-West Relations*, p. 57.

<sup>57</sup> Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, p. 154.

<sup>58</sup> Although the visit, coming as it did during the second Berlin Crisis, was certainly a special occasion, Macmillan was not, as Greenwood asserts, the 'first Head of a Western Government to do so since the Cold War had begun'. See Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, p. 152. Adenauer had travelled to Moscow to establish diplomatic relations between the FRG and the USSR and to negotiate the release of the last German prisoners of war four years earlier.

<sup>59</sup> Harold Macmillan, *Riding the Storm, 1956-1959* (London: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 588-9.

year.<sup>60</sup> However, both of these small successes backfired, each in their own way. Camp David signalled the beginning of an ever more exclusive process of superpower détente, a development that was to gradually reduce Britain's opportunities to act as an East-West 'bridge'. And the much-anticipated summit in the French capital ended prematurely in the wake of the U-2 crisis in May 1960 – 'a personal disaster for Macmillan'.<sup>61</sup>

While sceptics of détente were gloating at Macmillan's misfortune, the Cold War reached one of its most dangerous phases with the twin crises of Berlin and Cuba, peaking in late October 1961 and 1962, respectively.<sup>62</sup> Throughout these crises, Macmillan and the British ambassador to Washington, Ormsby-Gore, used their intimate relationship with the Kennedy administration to stay in close touch with US decision-making. Ultimately, however, the British neither had a significant impact on the White House's crisis diplomacy, nor were they able to position London as a 'mediator' between the two superpowers.<sup>63</sup> Britain's declining role was thus thrown into sharp relief.

Despite these setbacks and – to an extent – as a result of them, Macmillan continued to push for détente.<sup>64</sup> In particular, he focused his efforts on arms control in the form of negotiations for a Limited Test Ban Treaty, an endeavour that seemed all the more urgent in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis. This would help freeze London's place in the nuclear hierarchy, thus bolstering Britain's battered image as a world power, placate public opinion, and curb the arms race. After roughly three

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<sup>60</sup> Loth, *Helsinki, 1. August 1975*, p. 72. Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, p. 154.

<sup>61</sup> Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, p. 155.

<sup>62</sup> On the connection between these crises, see Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. ???.

<sup>63</sup> Ormsby-Gore later remarked, 'I cannot honestly think of anything said from London that changed the US action – it was chiefly reassurance to JFK'. Quoted in Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, pp. 160-1.

<sup>64</sup> According to the memoir of Adenauer's Press Secretary, the Chancellor was relieved about the Four Power summit debacle, remarking in his trademark Rheinländer accent: 'Wir haben nochmals fies Jlück jehabt.' ('Once more, we've been darn lucky.'). Felix von Eckart quoted in Loth, *Helsinki, 1. August 1975*, p. 77.

years of negotiations, the treaty was signed in August 1963, little more than two months before Macmillan resigned on health grounds.

The contribution of Britain's détente diplomacy to the LTBT is not easy to assess given that the works discussing London's role in-depth are predominantly written by British authors whose accounts are suspiciously favourable. This has led to bold claims that draw a line from 1963 to 1989: 'Macmillan laid the foundations for the ending of the Cold War by the initiation of summit meetings and the achievement of the 1963 test ban treaty'.<sup>65</sup> To give a more dispassionate evaluation, let us again turn to US primary sources for evidence. Kennedy's biographer, Arthur Schlesinger pays tribute to David Ormsby-Gore for having 'steadily reinforced Kennedy's scepticism about the clichés of the Cold War'. This view is echoed by another American source, Nobel Laureate Glenn Seaborg. A long-time presidential adviser on nuclear policy and chairman of the US Atomic Energy Commission, Seaborg was closely involved with the LTBT and credits London with having

consistently endeavoured, often with success, to exercise a moderating influence on US policy. [...] Considering their relative unimportance as a military force, particularly in nuclear weapons, it is remarkable to consider how much influence the British had over US arms and arms control policies [...].<sup>66</sup>

These statements do not support the extravagant view that the British – let alone a single Prime Minister – engineered the LTBT. The evidence points towards a quieter part for the British as counsellors, persistently reinforcing already existing

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<sup>65</sup> R. Lowe quoted in Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, p. 165. This is a problematic claim, not least because of its extreme focus on the agency of single individuals. More specifically, it conveniently overlooks that Macmillan first stalled on arms control, only pushing for the LTBT *after* Britain had exploded its own thermonuclear device. Obviously, the quest for 'great powerdom' trumped the campaign for arms control. For a theoretical critique of the emphasis on leaders' agency, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Satz und Gegensatz: Über die Verantwortung des Intellektuellen* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1993), pp. 42-43.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in White, *Britain, Détente, and Changing East-West Relations*, pp. 81-82.

predispositions at the highest level. This was a more low-key role than London had previously played – at Geneva, for instance –, but it was nonetheless a significant one.

Therefore, it seems fair to credit London with a pioneering role in détente diplomacy. It is no coincidence, but a testament to that role, that John F. Kennedy frequently quoted Churchill's call to 'parley' in his attempt to convince the American people that negotiations were not to be feared. It is important to note, however, that this pioneering role was not synonymous with the originator of that quote. In line with the tradition of accommodation in British foreign policy, Churchill merely set the precedent, but it was his successors who continued and deepened London's commitment to a dual policy of deterrence and détente. Without Eden, Macmillan and, later, Harold Wilson, Churchill's early calls would have remained isolated episodes. Through their successes (and also through those initiatives that did not bear fruit), they first established and then sustained a détente pattern in British foreign policy.

Having provided some historical evidence, let us now examine this pattern in conceptual and theoretical terms. The détente pattern can be defined as the attempt on the part of British foreign policymakers to 'normalise' and 'relax' international tension, i.e. to transform the East-West conflict from its modus of Cold War into a less antagonistic type of interaction. This aim was not utopian; British leaders did not think that the fundamental conflict between East and West could be *resolved*. But they did believe that the Cold War could be transformed into a traditional, less ideologically overheated inter-state conflict, one that could be *managed* through the classical Realpolitik mix of military deterrence and great power diplomacy. In that sense, the British vision foreshadowed the constructed peace that fell into place in the early 1960s: a regime that was backed by military deterrence, but whose stability

flowed from political understandings among the great powers. Détente was the policy tool to achieve this transformation of the Cold War into a less volatile type of conflict.

Drawing on Constructivist theory and the English School, we can describe the détente pattern as the attempt to move from a Hobbesian to a Lockean culture of anarchy. British policy was based on the axiom that a Kantian culture was unattainable; East and West would never relate to each other as ‘friends’ who form a cooperative security community.<sup>67</sup> Yet British leaders did believe that the ideologically overheated Hobbesian enmity could be replaced by Lockean rivalry, i.e. by a more even-handed mix of adversarial and cooperative interaction. Hence Churchill’s warning, quoted at greater length above, about the ‘mistake to assume that nothing can be settled with Soviet Russia unless or until everything is settled’ and Macmillan’s proposal for a ‘permanent Conference’.

In English School terms, we can describe British endeavours as an effort to restore all the institutions of international society – including diplomacy – and to prevent international society from slipping back into a mere international system devoid of social norms.<sup>68</sup> To use one of Hedley Bull’s central analogies, the idea was to leave behind an image of international relations as a gladiatorial duel and to turn it into a less lethal struggle in which positive-sum interactions were possible.<sup>69</sup> Of course, there was a major irony in the way that London practised détente: having

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<sup>67</sup> The concept of ‘security communities’ harks back to the pioneering work of Karl Deutsch. I use the concept to operationalize Wendt’s somewhat fuzzy notion of ‘friendship’. The defining feature of a security community is that its members entertain ‘dependable expectations of peaceful change’, i.e. they have stopped fearing a violent attack from each other. In other words, they have escaped both Hobbesian enmity and Lockean rivalry. This, I argue, approximates ‘friendship’ in international life. For the quote, see Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, ‘Security Communities in Theoretical Perspective’, in Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (eds.), *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 3-26 (5).

<sup>68</sup> The central text of the International Society (or ‘English School’) approach remains Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

helped to build the coliseum, the British started preaching the détente gospel to their fellow gladiators in the midst of battle.

### **Victims of their Own Success, 1959-1963**

The relative success of Britain's early détente efforts points to another irony of London's role in East-West diplomacy. By contributing to the rehabilitation of diplomacy as a means of Cold War conflict management, Britain helped pave the way for bilateral negotiations between the superpowers, which in turn marginalised London. The US-Soviet Camp David summit of 1959 was an early indication of this trend.<sup>70</sup> As John Gaddis shows, the Eisenhower-Khrushchev meeting 'served to legitimise the idea that negotiations were an appropriate means of dealing with Moscow, and that they could be undertaken without risking the unravelling of alliances or the appearance of appeasement'.<sup>71</sup> Consequently, American leaders of the post-McCarthy era did not need a go-between anymore. Once Moscow and Washington started 'parleying' directly with each other, London's role as a 'bridge' between the two was increasingly being called into question.

This trend is perhaps most drastically reflected in the process of arms control negotiations which followed the Limited Test Ban Treaty. In contrast to the LTBT, the British played no significant role in the negotiations of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and were excluded from the bilateral superpower process leading to the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) in 1972.<sup>72</sup>

In principle, London welcomed the renewed emphasis on diplomacy. It fitted the British conception of détente as a process of 'normalising' international relations

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<sup>70</sup> White, *Britain, Détente and the Changing Structure of East-West Relations*, p. 108.

<sup>71</sup> Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, pp. 196-197.

<sup>72</sup> Hughes, *Harold Wilson's Cold War*, p. 98. Loth, *Helsinki, 1. August 1975*, pp. 114-115, 142-149.

through great power accommodation that Churchill, Eden, and Macmillan had called for. In practice, however, the British struggled with the unintended consequences produced by the rehabilitation of negotiations to which they had contributed. On the one hand, the success of London's early initiatives at East-West 'bridge-building' sustained Britain's role as a world power. On the other hand, these successes acted as a catalyst for a process of bilateral superpower détente, which in turn exposed Britain's status as a 'second-rate power', as Macmillan himself put it.<sup>73</sup> Ironically, a process intended not least to boost its power ended up marginalising London.

The LTBT reflects this irony nicely. The British were one of the three 'Original Parties' of the treaty. In that sense, the treaty helped retain their seat at the top 'table' of international diplomacy. But this nominal equality masked London's de facto inferior position in the nuclear hierarchy and Britain's on-going decline in the power political hierarchy of the international system. Northedge's assessment that the LTBT nurtured British leaders' 'hallucinations of world power no longer justified by realities' might be harsh.<sup>74</sup> But it is certainly true that, for all his talk of 'interdependence', during Macmillan's premiership London's nuclear force became wholly dependent on American technology. It is also clear that Britain's 'rapid and catastrophic economic decline' had by the 1960s undermined the material basis for the world role that foreign policymakers of both major parties continued to desire.<sup>75</sup>

With the benefit of hindsight, the conclusion of the LTBT in 1963 and the end of Macmillan's premiership in the same year mark a turning point in British détente policy. Until 1963, British leaders had advocated détente as a necessary complement to the pursuit of a position of strength. Although the material basis for Britain's great

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<sup>73</sup> Macmillan, *Pointing the Way, 1959-61*, p. 80.

<sup>74</sup> Northedge, *Descent from Power*, p. 292.

<sup>75</sup> Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, p. 190.

power diplomacy was waning, their attempts to ease tension had yielded several successes. They contributed to the settlement of international crises, managed to keep their country out of a major war, and contributed to the constructed peace in Europe. After 1963, foreign policymakers tried to stay that course, but had to do so under increasingly adverse conditions. Throughout the 1960s, the British economy was declining more visibly than before, the superpowers were engaging in an ever more exclusive dialogue and while Europeans started exploring ways of revising the constructed peace, London, barred from joining the EC, was increasingly sidelined in pan-European diplomacy.

## CHAPTER 2

### The Decline of London's Role and the Rise of European

#### Détente, 1964–1970

##### **Détente and Decline: Harold Wilson's East-West Diplomacy**

This chapter continues with process-tracing Britain's role in East-West diplomacy with a special focus on the relationship between détente and the constructed peace in Europe. The last chapter has argued that various factors – including, among others, a tradition of accommodation, the pursuit of 'great powerdom' in an era of material decline, and the attempt to moderate American containment policy – pushed UK leaders towards an active détente policy. This chapter carries the story forward, covering the years of the first Wilson government. I argue that these years saw Britain's prominence in East-West diplomacy decline markedly. London's role as an international 'bridge-builder' broke down over Vietnam while the rise of superpower détente and the formulation of independent European strategies of revising the constructed peace sidelined Britain.

Upon taking office in October 1964, Wilson was determined to reaffirm Britain's standing as a world power. Geraint Hughes, the author of the latest book on Wilson's Cold War policy, emphasises this point, thus confirming the assessment of previous historians: 'the Wilson government initially viewed all aspects of foreign policy – including relations with the USSR – through the prism of Britain's "world role"'.<sup>1</sup> However, during the course of his premiership, these grandiose ambitions frequently clashed with the reality of Britain's dwindling power and waning

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<sup>1</sup> Hughes, *Harold Wilson's Cold War*, p. 35.

influence. Thus, the analogy to Goethe's 'sorcerer's apprentice' seems even more appropriate for Wilson's than for his predecessors' attempts at détente. Under increasingly adverse international conditions, the Labour leader kept trying almost frantically to deal with the 'evil spirits' of East-West confrontation in traditional great power fashion.

Outside of Europe, Vietnam epitomises this failure most drastically.<sup>2</sup> The Prime Minister did manage to keep Britain out of that quagmire, but his trips to Washington, Moscow and even Hanoi failed in nudging the parties towards a settlement. That this highly visible failure roughly coincided with the breakdown of his economic policy – symbolised by the devaluation of the pound in late 1967 – threw Britain's decline from great power status into painfully sharp relief.

In Europe, conditions seemed more propitious. The Wilson government profited from the relative stability flowing from the constructed peace. In December 1964, two months after Wilson had moved into 10 Downing Street, the Foreign Office reassured the Prime Minister that the 'East-West conflict [was] stalemated in Europe'. It even went as far as to argue that NATO had 'won the battle for Europe' and that whatever disagreements it had were 'the problems of a military Alliance that hasn't really got a war to fight'. The Foreign Office painted an equally rosy picture of developments in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union, where economic imperatives were expected to propel Moscow towards détente and to relax its grip on its satellites.<sup>3</sup>

Wilson was determined to take advantage of these auspicious circumstances and he subsequently deepened his predecessors' emphasis on economic diplomacy as

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<sup>2</sup> John W. Young, 'Britain and "LBJ's War", 1964-68', *Cold War History*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (April 2002), pp. 63-92. John Dumbrell and Sylvia Ellis, 'British Involvement in Vietnam Peace Initiatives, 1966-1967: Marigolds, Sunflowers, and "Kosygin Week"', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (January 2003), pp. 113-149. Rhiannon Vickers, 'Harold Wilson, the British Labour Party, and the War in Vietnam', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Spring 2008), pp. 41-70.

<sup>3</sup> Hughes, *Harold Wilson's Cold War*, p. 46.

a means to advancing business interests and as a means to encourage ‘polycentrism’. Britain had played a pioneering role in East-West trade since the 1950s, often to the dismay of Washington and Bonn.<sup>4</sup> During its first year in office, the Wilson government negotiated a long-term credit agreement with Moscow, thus setting a precedent soon imitated by others. Throughout the remainder of the 1960s, Western European states, especially France, substantially increased their trade ties and surpassed Britain.

This loss in relative prominence in the economic realm was soon to be echoed in the political realm where continental European leaders formulated independent détente strategies whose vigour and ambition dwarfed London’s emphasis on quiet economic diplomacy.

### **A Pan-European Challenge to the ‘Constructed Peace’: The Gaullist Rebellion**

As noted previously, a decline in Britain’s influence in East-West affairs became noticeable in the context of the 1963 Test Ban Treaty. At around the same time, French détente policy and, by association, the idea of a European Security Conference (ESC) started gaining momentum.<sup>5</sup> Charles de Gaulle rejected the British conception of détente, which was predicated on Western Europe’s firm anchoring in the Euro-Atlantic alliance embodied by NATO. In contrast to British leaders to whom maintaining alliance cohesion was always more important than potential gains from rapprochement with the East, the Gaullists rebelled against the bipolar logic. They

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<sup>4</sup> For an account stressing Anglo-American disputes over ‘doing business’ with the Communist bloc, see Ian Jackson, *The Economic Cold War: America, Britain and East-West Trade, 1948-63* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001). Anglo-West German tensions over trade with East Germany are stressed in Klaus Larres, ‘Britain and the GDR in the 1960s: The Politics of Trade and Recognition by Stealth’, in Jeremy Noakes, Peter Wende and Jonathan Wright (eds.), *Britain and Germany in Europe, 1949-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 187-217.

<sup>5</sup> The acronyms used for what became the CSCE varied over time. I will follow contemporary usage and use ESC and CSCE interchangeably until the early 1970s when the latter abbreviation became dominant.

opposed the notion of the Cold War as a rigid bloc-to-bloc confrontation, challenging it with the counter-vision of Europe ‘from the Atlantic to the Urals’.<sup>6</sup> Whereas British foreign policymakers accepted the existence of the two blocs as inevitable and hence fully supported Western Europe’s anchoring in the US-dominated NATO system, the Gaullists implied that a pan-European solution to the continent’s problems might be possible. At least potentially, Gaullism was thus more open to the search for pan-European initiatives, such as the Rapacki Plan of 1957 – or Molotov’s proposal of an all-European Security Conference.

To the alarm of his allies, de Gaulle matched France’s departure from NATO’s integrated military command in March 1966 with parallel efforts to increase contact with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup> Three months later, the general became the first Western leader to lend hedged support to the Soviet proposal of a European security conference when he signed the Franco-Soviet declaration.<sup>8</sup> Whereas British leaders remained hostile to a proposal that was so obviously at odds with their Atlanticist orientation, the Gaullists seized on it as an opportunity to emphasise their independence and to advance a genuinely *European* détente, one that was based on a common cultural heritage and, conveniently, excluded the US. For de Gaulle and his followers, détente ‘depended to a large extent on the capacity of the West Europeans to engage in their own direct dialogue with the Soviet Union while maintaining strong political and military cohesion’.<sup>9</sup> London’s preferred recipe – acting as a ‘broker’ between Washington and Moscow while using close ties with the US to exert indirect influence on superpower relations – was firmly rejected in Paris, especially in public.

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<sup>6</sup> Bozo, ‘A French View’, p. 56.

<sup>7</sup> Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p. 124.

<sup>8</sup> Frédéric Bozo, *Two Strategies for Europe: De Gaulle, the United States, and the Atlantic Alliance* (Lanham and London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), p. 177.

<sup>9</sup> Bozo, ‘A French View’, p. 56.

The degree to which Gaullism in general and its pan-European vision in particular were merely rhetorical manoeuvres is certainly debatable. But whether half-empty posturing or not, Gaullism can be seen as a reflection of European nationalists' genuine discontent with how the Cold War played out on their continent. This, I argue, is the meaning of the Gaullist project as it relates to the subject of this thesis. Stripped of its anti-American tinges and chauvinist bluster, Gaullism can be seen as a rebellion against a Cold War system in which negotiations either did not take place at all or were conducted by the superpowers over the heads of the Europeans.

While de Gaulle simultaneously moved away from NATO and towards détente, Molotov's proposal for a European Security Conference started making a comeback in Communist circles. Long dormant, the idea was picked up at the highest level and proposed by Leonid Brezhnev in a speech to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Congress of the CPSU in late March 1966 and by Gromyko during his visit to Rome one month later.<sup>10</sup> In July, the Warsaw Pact adopted the 'Declaration for the Strengthening of Peace and Security in Europe' in which the Communist states called for the holding of an 'all-European' security conference.<sup>11</sup> The so-called 'Bucharest Declaration' marks the beginning of the 'dialogue through communiqué' between the Warsaw Pact and NATO, which, in the absence of direct negotiations between the two alliances, was to continue for six years until the convocation of the CSCE and MBFR.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Yamamoto, *The Road to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, p. 37. Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev (1906-1982) became the head of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in October 1964. He held this position until his death in November 1982. It took him until the late 1960s to consolidate his authority, however, and there is a conspicuous correlation between this process and the intensification of Moscow's campaign for a CSCE. See, for example, Marie-Pierre Rey, 'The USSR and the Helsinki Process, 1969-75', in Wenger/Mastny/Nuenlist (eds.), *Origins of the European Security System*, pp. 65-81 (66).

<sup>11</sup> An abbreviated version of the minutes of this summit, including discussions on the ESC proposal, is reprinted in Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne, *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005), Minutes of Summit of Warsaw Pact Leaders in Bucharest, 5-7 July, 1966, Document No. 41, pp. 225-236.

<sup>12</sup> The phrase is taken from Williams, 'Britain, Détente and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe', p. 233.

The communiqué's stress on an 'all-European' conference, implying the exclusion of the United States and Canada, along with other provocative elements that were known to be non-negotiable provided NATO states with a convenient excuse to reject the idea of a security conference out of hand. Other controversial proposals contained in the communiqué included the long-standing Warsaw Pact demands regarding the German question, such as the recognition of the GDR and West German renunciation of nuclear weapons. In other words, the Warsaw Pact demanded the deepening and the formalisation of the constructed peace. Given the Warsaw Pact's superiority in conventional arms, a formally divided Germany that had relinquished its claims to nuclear weapons would not be in a position to challenge the tacit spheres-of-influence settlement.

This formalisation of the status quo was widely known to be non-negotiable, which is why Britain, along with most of its NATO partners, dismissed the Bucharest Declaration as propaganda.<sup>13</sup> Hence, the Western alliance neither formally replied to the Bucharest Declaration, nor mentioned the conference proposal in its official pronouncements.<sup>14</sup>

It took NATO almost two years to issue a joint indirect response to the Soviet proposal – the so-called 'Reykjavik Signal' of June 1968. In the meantime, the alliance had been preoccupied with internal problems, most importantly France's semi-withdrawal and the ensuing Harmel review. The most significant aspect of the Signal was that, instead of directly addressing the ESC idea, it formally called for convening talks on conventional force reductions:

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<sup>13</sup> The only partial exception at this stage seems to have been Denmark, which argued already that NATO needed to take the conference proposal seriously. Yamamoto, *The Road to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, p. 40.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

Ministers recognized that the unresolved issues which still divide the European Continent must be settled by peaceful means, and are convinced that the ultimate goal of a lasting, peaceful order in Europe requires an atmosphere of trust and confidence and can only be reached by a step-by-step process. [...] Ministers expressed their belief that measures in this field including balanced and mutual force reductions can contribute significantly to the lessening of tension and to further reducing the danger of war.<sup>15</sup>

The Wilson government wholly supported this emphasis on disarmament, along with its implicit de-emphasis of the ESC project. In fact, the British had been among the most active supporters of the MBFR proposal during internal NATO discussions. Force reductions were an important goal of Wilson and his Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, for ideological and material reasons.<sup>16</sup> The Labour Party was officially committed to disarmament, a goal which, given Britain's economic weakness and balance-of-payment problems, was increasingly seen as a necessity in Whitehall as well. During Wilson's first six years in office, Britain experienced three massive sterling crises, which forced the Prime Minister's hand. Wilson initially reacted with small reductions in British troop commitments abroad, first in Germany where the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) was cut. This process climaxed in early 1968 when he announced Britain's withdrawal from 'East of Suez' – a decision that, along with the 1956 Suez fiasco, has entered Britons' collective psyche as one of the most dramatic admissions of the country's decline.

Given the dire economic situation, the Labour government saw MBFR as one way to supplement unilateral moves towards disarmament with a multilateral process. Not only was disarmament popular with the public, force reduction talks would also provide a convenient cover; British weakness would be masked and ameliorated

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<sup>15</sup> 'Declaration adopted by Foreign Ministers and Representatives of Countries participating in the NATO Defence Program', Reykjavik/Iceland, 25 June 1968. It is available at the NATO website, <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c680624b.htm> (last accessed 12 February 2011).

<sup>16</sup> Robert Michael Maitland Stewart (1906-1990) served as Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs from March 1968 until June 1970.

through a multilateral process. Therefore, Michael Stewart pushed for disarmament during the Harmel review of 1967 and its follow-up exercises.<sup>17</sup>

The Harmel process had been NATO's reaction to growing popular support for détente in Western societies and to the Gaullist rebellion.<sup>18</sup> Its most important outcome document, the report on 'The Future Tasks of the Alliance', committed NATO to a dual-track approach:

The Atlantic Alliance has two main functions. Its first function is to maintain adequate military strength and political solidarity to deter aggression and other forms of pressure and to defend the territory of member countries if aggression should occur. [...] [T]he Allies will maintain as necessary, a suitable military capability to assure the balance of forces, thereby creating a climate of stability, security and confidence. In this climate the Alliance can carry out its second function, to pursue the search for progress towards a more stable relationship in which the underlying political issues can be solved. Military security and a policy of détente are not contradictory but complementary. [...] The participation of the USSR and the USA will be necessary to achieve a settlement of the political problems in Europe.<sup>19</sup>

By arguing for the complementarity of military deterrence and political détente, the Harmel report echoed the traditional British approach to the East-West conflict analysed in chapter one. In adopting the dual-track approach, NATO was collectively saying 'we arm *and* parley'. Furthermore, by explicitly acknowledging the stakeholdership not only of the US, but also of the USSR, the Report mirrored the long-standing British view that Western Europe's anchoring in the transatlantic framework need not impinge on Moscow's legitimate security interests. In style, this was a far cry from early British overtures – such as Churchill's blatant courting of his 'friend' Stalin – but in substance NATO was collectively embracing a view on which British Cold War policy had been based all along.

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<sup>17</sup> Yamamoto, *The Road to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, pp. 50-53.

<sup>18</sup> Andreas Wenger, 'Crisis and Opportunity: NATO's Transformation and the Multilateralization of Détente, 1966-1968', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Winter 2004), pp. 22-74.

<sup>19</sup> 'The Future Tasks of the Alliance', Report of the North Atlantic Council, 13-14 December 1967. Available at the NATO website, <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c680624b.htm> (last accessed 12 February 2011).

The adoption of the dual-track approach enabled the alliance to enter the ‘dialogue through communiqué’ with renewed unity. This, in turn, paved the way for Western participation in the process of the multilateralisation of European détente, which culminated in MBFR and the CSCE.

### **The Crushing of the Prague Spring and the Persistence of Britain’s ‘Evolutionary’ Approach**

The conference proposal, having gained some momentum since 1966 and, indirectly, through the Reykjavik Signal, suffered a temporary setback when the Soviet Union crushed the Prague Spring in August 1968. Codenamed ‘Operation Danube’, this application of the Brezhnev Doctrine brutally demonstrated the moral downside to the constructed peace and the Kremlin’s narrow conception of détente.

As with every classical spheres-of-influence settlement, the constructed peace produced stability because the two sides adhered to the norm of non-interference. This normative structure governs the relationship between the two spheres, but leaves intra-bloc relations unaffected. For the Soviet sphere, the Kremlin defined a different set of norms, norms that were codified through the Brezhnev Doctrine and enforced via ‘Operation Danube’.<sup>20</sup> The invasion of Czechoslovakia drastically showed that the Kremlin’s conception of détente as ‘peaceful co-existence’ was based on the application of the norm of non-interference between the blocs – not within them. It also highlighted that Soviet leaders wanted negotiations on arms control and economic issues, but that they would draw a sharp line between the relaxation of tension between East and West and normative change within the Communist world. In the Kremlin’s view, détente neither meant loosening Soviet hegemony over Central

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<sup>20</sup> For an FCO analysis of the Brezhnev Doctrine and of potential ways to refute it in the context of the CSCE, see DBPO, III/I, No. 62.

and Eastern European states, nor liberalising state-society relations within the Communist states. I will refer to this restrictive conception of East-West rapprochement as ‘minimalist détente’, defined as the pursuit of core national interests – including military, political, and economic security – through the stabilisation and codification of the constructed peace. Through ‘minimalist détente’, the Soviet Union sought to achieve a whole variety of specific goals; Moscow wanted to prevent the military escalation of political crises, curb certain aspects of the costly arms race, increase economically and technologically beneficial exchanges etc. But the basic goal was to put the tacit spheres-of-influence that had fallen into place by 1963 on a more solid and explicit basis. Hence the Soviet push that West Germany sign the NPT and that the demarcation lines – the inner-German border, the Oder-Neisse line, the status of Berlin etc. – be codified through bilateral and multilateral agreements. The Soviet conception of détente was thus heavily status quo-oriented; the type of change it aspired to – such as winning diplomatic recognition of the German Democratic Republic and attaining Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status – was ultimately meant to strengthen the material and normative basis of that system. In sum, according to this ‘minimalist’ conception of détente, lowering tensions between East and West was a means to reinforcing the bloc-to-bloc system and the web of political understandings that had produced the constructed peace.

Western foreign policymakers were morally outraged by the Soviet invasion, but they understood that the Kremlin had acted in defence of the system on which the constructed peace was based. The British embassy’s interpretation of the invasion is representative in that regard: ‘This is not the action of strong “expansionist” leaders, but of frightened men reacting indecisively to a situation which they judged to be

crucially dangerous, but with which they did not know how to deal'.<sup>21</sup> Since Soviet leaders were apparently not contesting the constructed peace, their Western counterparts reacted with relative nonchalance.

Although agreement on this point was near universal in the Western camp, the Soviet-led crackdown in Czechoslovakia did put France on the spot by exposing the limited influence that Paris exerted on Moscow. The event effectively 'marked the end of de Gaulle's active détente policy, and indeed of France's leading role in East-West relations in Europe'.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the invasion of Czechoslovakia reinvigorated the determination of NATO states to prevent any move towards détente, including the CSCE proposal, from weakening Western unity.<sup>23</sup>

London welcomed both of these outcomes wholeheartedly. While policymakers publicly condemned the brutal display of Soviet hegemony, the archival record reveals a different sentiment. As one astute analyst notes, these documents show

a certain sense of satisfaction within Whitehall at the survival of the continental status quo, and the fact that the Czechoslovak crisis had undermined both the Gaullist challenge to NATO and political pressure on both sides of the Atlantic for unilateral troop cuts in Central Europe.<sup>24</sup>

In other words, the documents provide excellent evidence for the degree to which Britain's political elite had become invested in the constructed peace system. The British rejected the Gaullist rebellion and unilateral force reductions because these threatened to upset the structure of deterrence on which that system was based.

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<sup>21</sup> DBPO, III/I, No. 15, para. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Bozo, 'A French View', p. 62.

<sup>23</sup> Hartmut Mayer, *National Foreign Policy through Multilateral Means: The Federal Republic of Germany and European Political Cooperation* (Unpublished D.Phil. Thesis, University of Oxford, 2001), p. 81.

<sup>24</sup> Geraint Hughes, 'British Policy towards Eastern Europe and the Impact of the "Prague Spring", 1964-68', *Cold War History*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (January 2004), pp. 115-139 (133-134).

This investment in the status quo was reinforced by a long-standing tradition in British foreign policy of neglecting Eastern European affairs and of subjugating them to a narrow definition of self-interest. As R. Gerald Hughes powerfully argues, this tradition stretches back at least to the inter-war period and was a result of '[h]ardheaded political realism'.<sup>25</sup> Although I will later challenge Hughes' Realpolitik interpretation of how this tradition played out in the CSCE context, it is undeniable that London's policy was determined by the coordinates of self-interest and the given power political realities of the situation.

The British position regarding the borders of Europe after 1945 reflects this tradition nicely. As Harold Macmillan put it in 1969, it was 'illusory' to believe that a peace conference would impact significantly on the status quo 'since by the time any conference might meet, possession would have become nine tenths of the law'.<sup>26</sup> British foreign policymakers persistently subjugated legal and moral aspects of European frontier questions to changes in the balance of power on the continent and to their changing definition of the national interest. This gave London's role in European affairs a duplicitous quality, one that was often noted by its interlocutors, not least the West Germans who sensed that the British were ready to acknowledge the division of Germany and the Oder-Neisse line.<sup>27</sup> What held London back from doing so were not legal or moral considerations, but concerns for alliance unity and, increasingly, the need to elicit German support for Britain's turn towards the European Community. These motivations led the Wilson government to continue with

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<sup>25</sup> R. Gerald Hughes, "'Possession is Nine Tenths of the Law": Britain and the Boundaries of Eastern Europe since 1945', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (December 2005), pp. 723-747.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 727.

<sup>27</sup> For Bonn's concerns about British 'reliability' on the question of post-1945 frontiers, see Sabine Lee, 'Anglo-German Relations 1958-59: The Postwar Turning Point?', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (November 1995), pp. 787-808 (796).

their Conservative predecessor's policy of withholding recognition of the GDR and of rejecting Warsaw Pact proposals for pan-European negotiations.

This does not mean that British policy lacked any vision of change for Central and Eastern Europe. I merely argue that Whitehall essentially aimed at moderating the effects of the existing structure, rather than replacing the spheres-of-influence settlement that had brought a measure of stability to Europe. British foreign policymakers neither believed in Western 'rollback' of Communism in Eastern Europe nor in the 'convergence' of both systems over the long run.<sup>28</sup> By the mid-1950s, the Foreign Office had subscribed to the view that sustainable change in Eastern Europe could only be induced through incremental steps over a long period of time. In the words of a Planning Staff document, 'any weakening of the Soviet hold over the Satellites will come about through evolution rather than revolution'.<sup>29</sup>

This was a lesson of the 1950s when the 1953 uprising in East Germany and the Polish and Hungarian crises were quelled by force.<sup>30</sup> Not only did these events fail to trigger any kind of liberalisation behind the Iron Curtain, they also exposed Western 'rollback' rhetoric as hollow. Henceforth, the British focused on what they believed to be the only option left: Whitehall would try cautiously to expand economic, scientific, and cultural contacts with the Communist states in the hope of quietly promoting reforms from within.<sup>31</sup>

This approach was based on a long-term vision of top-down change: 'The Foreign Office was hoping for a gentler, more enlightened form of authoritarian rule

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<sup>28</sup> For a useful summary of the intellectual debate about 'convergence' in Britain, see Edwin A. Roberts, 'From the History of Science to the Science of History: Scientists and Historians in the Shaping of British Marxist Theory', *Science & Society*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (October 2005), pp. 529-558.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Hughes, 'British Policy towards Eastern Europe and the Impact of the "Prague Spring"', p. 119.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 118, 134.

<sup>31</sup> John W. Young, *The Labour Governments 1964-70: International Policy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 128. Hughes, 'British Policy towards Eastern Europe and the Impact of the "Prague Spring"', p. 118. Yamamoto, *The Road to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1969-1973*, p. 29.

in Eastern Europe, rather than uncontrolled change driven by popular pressure'.<sup>32</sup> To fulfil the material demands of their people, Communist leaders would turn to cooperation with the West and the resulting interaction would encourage a relaxation of the Soviet grip over Eastern Europe as well as prompt a slow and orderly process of internal liberalisation.

The FCO was, of course, well aware of the implications of pursuing a low-key policy aimed at long-term change. The 'evolutionary' approach might serve the overriding goal of fostering stability on the continent, but it did nothing to help the dissidents. Three months before Operation Danube, the Foreign Office noted that there was 'little the West could say or do to help the liberals in Eastern Europe'.<sup>33</sup>

Given these perceived constraints, the 'evolutionary' approach seemed a sensible foundation on which to base policy. It promised to reconcile London's overriding defensive interest in bolstering the stability resulting from the constructed peace with a positive vision of incremental change. At least in theory, Britain would be able to reap the fruits of stability as well as profit from increased business contacts across the Iron Curtain. Moreover, increased contacts across the East-West divide would plant the seeds of incremental change.

The trouble was that by the late 1960s the 'evolutionary' approach with its faith in top-down change had been discredited. At least two flaws of the British vision had become apparent, epitomised by Czechoslovakia and Romania, respectively. Romania, while arguably pursuing the most daring policy of semi-autonomy from Moscow, ranked among the most oppressive states on the continent. The regime of Nicolae Ceauşescu was happy to expand the type of contacts envisioned by the

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<sup>32</sup> Hughes, 'British Policy towards Eastern Europe and the Impact of the "Prague Spring"', p. 134.

<sup>33</sup> DBPO, III/I, No. 10, para. 17b.

‘evolutionary’ approach, but used Stalinist methods to ensure that its contacts with the West did not exert a liberalising effect on state-society relations.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia demonstrated that the Kremlin was prepared to use force, even though the changes in Prague had been guided from above. In that sense, nothing had changed since the 1950s when the Kremlin and its closest allies had used force against popular upheavals from below as well as elite-driven changes from above. The obvious lesson to be drawn was that even the encouragement of small changes might provoke another violent enforcement of the Brezhnev Doctrine, thus jeopardising continental stability.

Despite these apparent problems with the ‘evolutionary’ approach, the Wilson government did not review its policy, however. Despite some opposition from within Whitehall, the Prime Minister ruled out unilateral sanctions and was eager to return to his policy of actively promoting economic exchanges. Given the precarious state of the economy, Wilson felt that Britain could not afford to be left behind in the race to secure business deals with the Communist states. He thus prevailed over the hardliners who argued for a tougher response.

With coercive diplomacy in the form of sanctions ruled out, the Foreign Office quickly resumed business-as-usual. What this meant in practice was that London returned to a policy whose aim of promoting change had proven elusive. The continuity in British policy vis-à-vis the East thus masked the breakdown of the modest transformative ambitions that had previously accompanied them.

This inertia did not go unnoticed among contemporary analysts. Writing in the early 1970s, Josef Korbel observed the absence of ‘any display of active interest’ on London’s part. ‘Regrettably,’ Korbel opined, ‘Great Britain has neglected to capitalize

on the enormous reservoir of admiration and respect that the nations of Central and Eastern Europe had held for her because of her heroic stand during the war.’<sup>34</sup>

And yet, underneath the continuity in British policy towards Eastern Europe, certain internal rifts were starting to show. The mandarins in the Foreign Office increasingly disapproved of Wilson’s grandiose attempts to mediate between the superpowers, preferring the low-key policies associated with the ‘evolutionary’ approach instead.<sup>35</sup> They also took objection to what they saw as Wilson’s ‘soft’ stance towards the Soviet Union and eyed the growing international momentum for détente with suspicion. Leading officials such as Sir Denis Greenhill and Sir Thomas Brimelow saw the former as an undignified form of ‘running after the Russians’ and the latter as a danger to Western vigilance and unity.<sup>36</sup>

To understand the intensity of Foreign Office disapproval, it is important to understand that it was spring-fed from a combination of rational and emotional factors. On the one hand, threat perceptions changed as Whitehall monitored the continuous arms build-up of the Brezhnev era with growing alarm. On the other hand, officials were piqued that Wilson was relentlessly courting leaders who had ordered the crushing of the Prague Spring. The mandarins also resented that the Kremlin frequently spurned British advances at a time when the Soviet press reported Britain’s economic woes with undisguised glee.<sup>37</sup> These sentiments surfaced in several interviews conducted for this thesis. For example, George Walden, who was to play an important role as Britain’s Basket III negotiator, recalled that officials felt that

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<sup>34</sup> Korbelt, *Détente in Europe*, p. 62. London’s relative neglect of Eastern European states as opposed to, for example, its concern for Soviet encroachment on the European countries of the Mediterranean region is an often-noted feature of British foreign policy. This is a function of Whitehall’s concern for the Mediterranean as an access route vital for the maintenance of the British Empire and Commonwealth. See John Kent, ‘The British Empire and the Origins of the Cold War in Europe’, in Anne Deighton (ed.), *Britain and the First Cold War* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1990), p. 168.

<sup>35</sup> Hughes, *Harold Wilson’s Cold War*, p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> Author’s interviews with Sir Rodric Braithwaite, London, 3 December 2010 and with George Walden, London, 14 June 2010.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, DBPO, III/I, No. 1e.

Wilson's détente policy and Western Europe as a whole 'need[ed] a steady hand, a little more steel and guts'.<sup>38</sup>

In sum, what increasingly turned departmental opinion against an activist détente policy was a combination of rational concerns about the balance of power – the 'steel' – and more affective preoccupations with the 'balance of prestige' – proving that even a weakened Britain still had the 'guts' to challenge the Soviet Union.<sup>39</sup> Both types of concerns intersected and reinforced each other regarding a major bone of contention in Anglo-Soviet relations during the Wilson era: the festering issue of Soviet espionage in Britain. Officials in Whitehall were outraged by what they regarded as a mounting threat to British security as well as a blatant insult. As we will see in the next chapter, the hour of the hardliners was yet to come; once the détente-minded Wilson government was out of power, they would 'give the Russians a bloody nose'.<sup>40</sup>

### **Britain and Ostpolitik**

While Britain's power was declining and its détente policy stalling, a European statesman emerged whose leadership took détente on the divided continent to a new level and, in doing so, paved the way for the CSCE. Following his election in October

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<sup>38</sup> Author's interview with George Walden, London, 14 June 2010.

<sup>39</sup> This finding corroborates writings stressing the interplay between rationalist concern for power and security and considerations for 'prestige', 'honour', and 'reputation'. See Paul W. Schroeder, 'Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 97, No. 3 (June 1992), pp. 683-706 (699-700). The salience of prestige considerations as drivers of foreign policy is increasingly acknowledged – or rather, rediscovered – by International Relations theorists. For example, William Wohlforth has argued that Cold War competition can be explained by perceived shifts in the 'hierarchy of prestige and power'. William C. Wohlforth, 'Realism and the End of the Cold War', *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994-1995), pp. 91-129 (100).

Even neo-Realists have started incorporating prestige as a variable; see, for example, Randall Schweller, *Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 24. The phrase 'balance of prestige' is mine.

<sup>40</sup> The quote is taken from George Walden's memoir. See George Walden, *Lucky George: Memoirs of an Anti-Politician* (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 148. Cf. also Geraint Hughes, "'Giving the Russians a Bloody Nose": Operation Foot and Soviet Espionage in the United Kingdom, 1964-71', *Cold War History*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (May 2006), pp. 229-249.

1969, FRG chancellor Willy Brandt energetically took the lead in European détente. He jettisoned the Hallstein Doctrine and swiftly moved towards a hedged acceptance of the status quo, thus breaking with the legacy of Konrad Adenauer's policy towards the Communist world.<sup>41</sup> Adenauer's insistence that reunification was a precondition for normalising relations had effectively held European détente hostage to the solution of the German question. In the absence of direct negotiations between the two German states and with Bonn doing its utmost to prevent its allies from negotiating with the East, the constructed peace fell into place in Europe as tacit spheres of influence, based on a web of real yet unspoken understandings between East and West.

Brandt and his key advisor, Egon Bahr, clung to Adenauer's professed goal of reunification, but reversed the phrasing and switched methods. They saw reunification not as the starting point, but as the end result of a long-term process of European détente. The Hallstein Doctrine's strange mix of highly legalistic argumentation and coercive diplomacy was replaced with a sober reappraisal of political realities and a flexible negotiation stance. Brandt and Bahr were willing to start extensive talks and to make significant concessions in the process in order to achieve their goal of 'Wandel durch Annäherung' ('change through rapprochement'). The immediate recognition of certain 'realities' – i.e. of core pillars of the constructed peace – was to produce change later. Since these could not be altered unilaterally and immediately without risking the breakdown of the entire spheres-of-influence settlement, Brandt and Bahr knew that they needed to use subtler and more patient methods. They therefore reaffirmed Germany's status as a non-nuclear power by signing the NPT

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<sup>41</sup> Jonathan Wright stresses the reactive nature of Adenauer's policy: 'His reunification policy was simply to build up the strength and unity of the West and wait for the Soviet Union to concede German reunification as part of the liberation of Eastern Europe as a whole [...]'. See Jonathan Wright, 'Konrad Adenauer', in Stephen Casey and Jonathan Wright (eds.), *Mental Maps in the Early Cold War Era, 1945-68* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 90-109 (95).

and were prepared to make a whole series of concessions in order to attain the long-term goal of reunification.

The notion of change on which Ostpolitik was based is of utmost importance to this thesis in two ways. First, as noted in the introduction, one of the key academic debates about détente hinges on the question of change: did détente cement or challenge the status quo? A sophisticated interpretation of Ostpolitik, I argue, shows that the dichotomy underlying this question is misleading. Ostpolitik resolved the tension between stabilising vs. transforming the constructed peace dialectically: the hedged acceptance of the status quo was intended to bring about long-term change. Brandt and Bahr wanted to bolster the stability resulting from the constructed peace, but refused to accept that stable relations in Europe necessitated the permanent division of the German people and of the continent.

As seasoned strategists, they understood the immense difficulty associated with the quest to square this circle. Brandt and Bahr proceeded from the assumption that Bonn needed to assume moral responsibility for the German past and to acknowledge certain aspects of the status quo – including the existence of the GDR, the Oder-Neisse line – in order to increase West Germany's room to manoeuvre. Once key aspects were recognised, however, Bonn could start working towards reunification of Germany and of the European continent. For the time being, Germans lived in two states (but they remained one people) and Europeans were separated by the alliance system (yet they remained united by one civilization). In the long run, however, the peaceful reunification of Germany and the construction of a 'European peace order' ('europäische Friedensordnung') would be possible.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Whether Ostpolitik was a status quo policy or an agenda for change remains a politically charged and academically disputed subject. Among leading historians, the poles of the debate are occupied by Jeremi Suri and Oliver Bange, with Jussi Hanhimäki occupying a middle position. To the American historian, détente is a reactionary policy and he sees no essential difference between the strategies of

Like the Gaullists, then, proponents of Ostpolitik had an alternative vision for Europe, one in which the Cold War divide would be transformed by the Europeans themselves. Like the General, Brandt and Bahr formulated an ‘independent European strategy of détente’.<sup>43</sup> Their vision of a ‘europäische Friedensordnung’ echoed de Gaulle’s call for ‘l’Europe européenne’.

Ostpolitik’s notion of change is highly significant to this thesis for a second reason: its multi-dimensional nature, spanning both relations between states and between societies. Proponents of Ostpolitik believed that increasing changes on all levels – between governments, business elites, and individuals – would supplement and, in the long-term, subvert the Cold War order.<sup>44</sup> This emphasis on transnational contacts as motors of change added a new dimension to the formulation of a European response to superpower détente. Whereas the former rested on a Realpolitik conception of détente in which states are the primary actors, the latter incorporated a societal dimension and a bottom-up vision of change. Mary Sarotte has argued that these two conceptions represent ‘alternate models [...] for reducing and restructuring tensions’ and that comparing them ‘provides highly relevant information about the profound challenge of reconciling Realpolitik with idealism’.<sup>45</sup> While Sarotte focuses exclusively on the bilateral dimension, this thesis contributes to our understanding of

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key Western proponents like Kissinger and Brandt. Bange vigorously objects, arguing that Brandt and Bahr did have a grand design for change. The German historian maintains that they deliberately used Ostpolitik to both undermine Communism and to construct an all-European security system that would replace the bipolar alliance system. See Bange, ‘Ostpolitik as a Source of Intra-Bloc Tensions’. I would argue that these analyses are skewed by a national bias, with both historians interpreting the détente policy through the lens of their national discourses. In the US, détente is predominantly seen as a failed status quo policy that benefited the Soviet Union and gave the Communist world a second lease on life through loans, diplomatic recognition etc. – this is essentially Suri’s view. In Germany, Ostpolitik is self-servingly hailed as having paved the way not only for reunification, but also for the peaceful ending of the Cold War. It might be no coincidence that a historian from a neutral country offers a middle position, which acknowledges both détente’s ‘conservative goals’ as well as its ‘revolutionary outcomes’. See Jussi Hanhimäki, ‘Conservative Goals, Revolutionary Outcomes: The Paradox of Détente’, *Cold War History*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (November 2008), pp. 503-512.

<sup>43</sup> Sarotte, ‘The Frailties of Grand Strategies’, p. 147.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150. See Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p. 555; Hamilton, *The Last Cold Warriors*, p. 23.

<sup>45</sup> Sarotte, ‘The Frailties of Grand Strategies’, pp. 147, 157.

these two models by examining how they played out in the multilateral context. If a bilateral analysis ‘holds lessons relevant to more than just our understanding of the Cold War’, then, the same applies to an examination in the CSCE framework. We will examine these two models and the transatlantic tension created by the differences between them in the following chapters.

Bonn’s ‘Neue Ostpolitik’ rightfully takes centre stage in the historiography of European détente. Among its momentous achievements is a notable double feat, which saw Brandt succeed where Adenauer and de Gaulle had failed. Unlike his predecessor, Brandt supplemented Bonn’s Westbindung with a pro-active détente policy; unlike the general, he engaged the Soviets without antagonising the Americans. Ostpolitik thus went some way towards reconciling the complexities of European and superpower détente. However, as future developments were to demonstrate, this process of reconciliation was a tricky one that needed constant nurturing.

As the following chapters on the CSCE negotiations will demonstrate in great detail, détente hinged on a complex set of multi-level, cross-issue bargains both between East and West as well as within the blocs. Oliver Bange’s succinct summary of Ostpolitik illustrates this nicely: ‘Ostpolitik caused friction on a number of different levels – it sparked tensions within Willy Brand’s party [...], parliament, the coalition cabinet, tensions with the Western allies, and even within the Eastern bloc’.<sup>46</sup> The ‘three-level game’ model can help clarify this point and provide an analytical opening for the contribution of the British role. Brandt’s Ostpolitik faced significant obstacles on each plane. A ‘win set’ had to be created across the three

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<sup>46</sup> Oliver Bange, ‘Ostpolitik as a Source of Intra-Bloc Tension’, undated working paper, p. 1. Available at the website of the University of Mannheim’s research project *Ostpolitik and Détente*, <http://www.ostpolitik.net/ostpolitik/publications/download/article11.pdf> (last accessed 13 October 2010).

levels: agreements like the Eastern Treaties had to be acceptable to the FRG and its respective negotiating partners in the East (international table), they required ratification by the German parliament (the domestic table), and they also needed to satisfy West Germany's NATO partners (the alliance table). Each level poses an obstacle on its own, but they also interact in complex ways, making the negotiation of a cross-level win set even more complex. The failure of Adenauer and de Gaulle's policies and the tempestuous fortunes of the détente process as a whole can be explained with reference to this three-tier model.<sup>47</sup>

At this point, let us revisit the relationship between Ostpolitik and transatlantic relations with this model in mind. If we take the notion of three interacting planes seriously, then it would be simplistic to attribute the success of this policy solely to any one level. Certainly, Brandt's domestic popularity and Bahr's consummate negotiation skills were vital; but so was allied support. As we now know, the Brandt-Scheel government and the Auswärtiges Amt were highly sensitive to how their East-West initiatives resonated with their European partners and NATO allies.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, recent scholarship has documented the deep scepticism that Ostpolitik encountered in some capitals, including in Washington. That US scepticism did not degenerate into alienation and hostility is in part due to the widespread support that Brandt's policy received in Western Europe, including in Britain.

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<sup>47</sup> Adenauer managed to forge agreement at the domestic and alliance tables, but failed at the international table. For much of his chancellorship, the West German public and NATO backed the Hallstein Doctrine and other aspects of his uncompromising stance towards the Communist world. De Gaulle's détente foundered mostly on the alliance table, while the relative success on the international table produced little in terms of actual substance. France neither played a significant role in forging Trachtenberg's constructed peace, nor in subsequently codifying this tacit settlement. Credit for the former must go primarily to the Kennedy administration, while the latter was achieved under Brandt with the various Eastern Treaties and, as we shall see in the following chapters, the Helsinki Final Act.

<sup>48</sup> For an excellent, in-depth treatment of this aspect of Ostpolitik in the CSCE context, see Hakkarainen, *Amplifying Ostpolitik*. German sensitivity to intra-Western dynamics, including Western concerns about Ostpolitik as a new Rapallo, is a key theme of his excellent thesis. See *ibid.*, pp. 67-68 et passim.

The Labour governments under Harold Wilson, although increasingly sidelined in East-West affairs, played an active role in backing Brandt's Ostpolitik within the transatlantic framework. London not only approved of Ostpolitik, but actively lobbied the initially sceptical Nixon administration on Bonn's behalf.<sup>49</sup> Kissinger recalls in his memoirs how Wilson tried to sell 'the benefits of Brandt's policy as if no other approach was conceivable'.<sup>50</sup> In contrast to the Prime Minister's largely ineffectual mediation efforts over Vietnam, the Labour government successfully contributed to the creation of a 'stable base' for Ostpolitik within the West.<sup>51</sup>

Although German Ostpolitik understandably takes precedence in accounts of European détente, the importance of British and West European support should not be overlooked. Brandt's efforts at 'dealing with the devil' were highly contentious at home and abroad.<sup>52</sup> He needed allied support to counter fierce domestic opposition from the Christian Democrats and allay American concerns that Ostpolitik might turn into 'selective détente'.<sup>53</sup> In these circumstances, British support contributed to Western cohesion in a period of strained transatlantic relations and rapidly changing East-West relations. While it is unquestionable that Ostpolitik 'opened the door for the CSCE process', as Hans-Dietrich Genscher later put it, it is highly unlikely that

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<sup>49</sup> Addressing a concern that was often voiced behind closed doors, Wilson reassured Nixon: 'There will be no Rapallo from Brandt; but the USSR is looking for a new Rapallo'. Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, Washington, 28 January 1970, printed in FRUS, XXIX, No. 19, p. 48. In a meeting the day before, Nixon had asked the PM head-on whether Brandt's Ostpolitik would gradually undermine West Germany's loyalty to NATO. UKNA, Minute from Waterfield to Bendall, 2 February 1970.

<sup>50</sup> Kissinger, *The White House Years*, p. 416.

<sup>51</sup> Barker, *The British between the Superpowers*, p. 261. See also White, *Britain, Détente and the Changing Structure of East-West Relations*, p. 121. For a contrary view, cf. Bange, 'Ostpolitik as a Source of Intra-Bloc Tension', p. 12.

<sup>52</sup> This is the title of Sarotte's (2001) fine work on East German détente policy. Marie Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil: East Germany, Détente, and Ostpolitik, 1969-1973* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

<sup>53</sup> Kissinger, *The White House Years*, p. 412. Willy Brandt, *Erinnerungen* (Zürich: Propyläen, 2002), p. 314. Holger Klitzing, 'To Grin and Bear It: The Nixon Administration and Ostpolitik', in Carole Fink and Bernd Schaefer (eds.), *Ostpolitik, 1969-1974: European and Global Responses* (Washington, D.C. and New York: German Historical Institute and Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 80-110 (88).

the outcome would have been as favourable to the West had the alliance not walked through that door in a fairly united manner.<sup>54</sup> While London's overall influence in East-West affairs was declining markedly, British support still proved valuable when it came to fostering Western unity behind Ostpolitik and its multilateralisation through the CSCE.

The connection between Ostpolitik and the CSCE was theoretically straightforward. In Brandt and Bahr's vision there seems to have been a clear though indirect link. As Foreign Minister under the 'Grand Coalition', Brandt had commissioned a study on the subject, which had concluded that a security conference could help bring about a 'European security system'.<sup>55</sup> This seems to have been Brandt and Bahr's view throughout their time in power.<sup>56</sup>

British foreign policymakers were sceptical of the CSCE proposal, but nonetheless backed Ostpolitik. As with the continuity of Whitehall's détente policy after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Britain's unwavering public support for West Germany's détente was the result of a complicated mix of motives and constraints. Neither the Labour government of Harold Wilson, nor its successor, the Conservative government of Edward Heath, supported Ostpolitik purely based on the substantive merit of the policy itself. Undoubtedly, leading foreign policymakers from both major parties and the mandarins in the Foreign Office had long favoured a less rigid and legalistic stance on Bonn's part.<sup>57</sup> The British were convinced that Ostpolitik was a move in the right direction. They welcomed Brandt's policy primarily because of its

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<sup>54</sup> Hans-Dietrich Genscher, *Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Siedler, 1995), p. 300. Genscher served as the (West) German Foreign Minister from 1974 until 1992.

<sup>55</sup> AAPD 1969, No. 301.

<sup>56</sup> See Tetsuji Senoo, *Die Bedeutung der Konferenz über Sicherheit und Zusammenarbeit in Europa für die Ostpolitik Willy Brandts unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der gesamteuropäischen Konzeptionen Egon Bahrs und der Koordination des Vorgehens mit den westlichen Partnern 1969-1975* (PhD Thesis, Bonn: Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, 2008).

<sup>57</sup> Hughes, "Possession is Nine Tenths of the Law", p. 735.

pragmatic appreciation of territorial and political realities, expecting it to further stabilise the continent.

Furthermore, Ostpolitik's emphasis on the gradual extension of contacts fitted the 'evolutionary' approach of the Wilson government discussed above. Small-scale measures such as the lifting of travel restrictions and the reunification of families would ease the humanitarian burden of the 'Yalta division' while extending economic contacts would open new markets to Western European businesses. This promised to strike the right balance between promoting stability while easing the humanitarian burden resulting from the division of Germany on which the constructed peace rested. The British viewed and supported Ostpolitik first and foremost as a policy of stability, not as an agenda for change. They by and large trusted that the West Germans would continue to respect Britain's rights as one of the four occupying powers and that Bonn was working towards a more 'human' status quo.

However, it would be wrong to assume that British support was devoid of 'ulterior motives'.<sup>58</sup> Regardless of the intrinsic virtues of Brandt's policy, the pro-European faction among Britain's political elite deemed supporting the West Germans a political necessity. They clearly understood that backing Ostpolitik was essential to securing Bonn's support for British EC membership. This was all the more important given the frosty state of Anglo-French relations, a point noted by a Kissinger memo in the run-up to Wilson's third (and final) meeting with the American president: 'The British remain deeply suspicious of the French whom they have sought to isolate in various ways, including by close cooperation with the Germans and strong support for Brandt's Eastern policy'.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Korb, *Détente in Europe*, p. 61.

<sup>59</sup> Memorandum from Kissinger to the President, 26 January 1970, USNARA, Nixon Presidential Materials Project (NPMP), National Security Council (NSC) Files, VIP Visits, Box 941. (The Nixon

This again shows how closely the international and alliance ‘tables’ were linked and that British détente policy, although nominally aimed towards the East, was at least as much directed towards the West. While these points have been made throughout this chapter, they reach a particular salience during the last years of the Wilson government. With Wilson’s EC policy shattered into pieces following de Gaulle’s second ‘non’, British détente policy was increasingly determined by other factors. The next chapter will show how the attempt to negotiate the differing requirements of the various tables gave London’s early CSCE policy an erratic, perhaps even inconsistent quality.

While it can be argued that Wilson’s support in the early stages of Ostpolitik was important in winning acceptance for West Germany’s controversial policy, it is hard to not see London’s supporting role as hard evidence for the decline of Britain’s role in East-West affairs. Little more than five years earlier, Macmillan had also played a supporting role, reinforcing Kennedy’s predisposition towards détente and nudging the LTBT negotiations forward. But the LTBT had been of global significance both in terms of arms control and as a finishing stone for the constructed peace and, by freezing the nuclear hierarchy in place, secured Britain’s place at the top ‘table’ of international diplomacy. By the end of the 1960s, London was playing a subservient role not to the Western hegemon but to the Western half of a divided country in continental Europe. Britain’s remit and influence had shrunk markedly.

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materials were consulted in their old location at NARA II in College Park, Maryland. They are currently being relocated to the Nixon Presidential Library in Yorba Linda, California.)

## CHAPTER 3

### THE MULTILATERALISATION OF EUROPEAN

### DÉTENTE, 1970–1972

#### **A Puzzle in the Literature**

This chapter moves the analysis of British détente policy forward into the 1970s. It focuses on the years between 1970 and 1972 when détente in Europe became a multilateral project, embodied by the CSCE and MBFR. During the period under consideration, Britain and its NATO partners committed themselves to these grand conferences, embarked on a laborious coordination process within the alliance, and in late 1972 started multilateral preparatory talks for the CSCE.

This was a complicated undertaking for at least two reasons. First, the multilateralisation of détente was, from the very beginning, de facto intertwined with on-going bilateral negotiations – most notably, West German Ostpolitik – and the ‘minilateral’ talks on the status of Berlin.<sup>1</sup> Second, these complex diplomatic processes unfolded against the backdrop of growing social unrest, including protest against the Cold War system. These socio-cultural changes jeopardised the cohesion of Western societies and threatened to undermine the ideological foundation on which the West’s structure of deterrence rested. These changes produced an ambivalent policy response. On the one hand, policymakers intensified their détente efforts in order to placate public opinion. On the other hand, political elites tried to curb the

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term ‘minilateral’ loosely to denote negotiations with a restricted number of participants of more than two but – roughly – less than five or six participants. For example, a meeting of the permanent member of the UN Security Council would qualify as ‘minilateral’ while a gathering of all 15 members counts as multilateral. This is meant to denote the differences in negotiation dynamics, secrecy etc. that distinguish larger from more intimate settings.

atmospheric effects of negotiations, fearing a potential 'détente euphoria' that would further erode public support for Western defence efforts.

How does Britain fit into this complicated picture? As noted in the introduction, scholarship on London's role in this period is scarce and archival-based studies almost non-existent. Most existing accounts paint the picture of Britain as both a sceptical, inactive and sidelined actor. Commenting on the first aspect, Sean Greenwood contends that the 1970s were a paradox:

Though they had often been the first to draw lines and to give shape to the Cold War, [...] the predominant British inclination was to parley. (Something of the exception to this being, perversely, during the period of détente in the 1970s when most others seemed willing to do so.)<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the level of activity and influence, most analysts agree that Britain was a marginal actor in the 1960s and 1970s. For example, Geraint Hughes and Oliver Bange agree that, as the latter puts it, 'the British remained fairly isolated in the continually-intensifying exchanges between East and West in the late 1960s and early 1970s'.<sup>3</sup>

Among the small number of historians interested in the UK role, Bange probably makes the boldest and most critical claims. He stresses London's negative attitude and rejects out of hand the idea that the Foreign Office might have had any transformative ambitions for the Helsinki talks: 'It was only in 1975, as a by-product of the CSCE process, that the first British diplomats realised that "exposure to Western values (could have) a long-term impact upon Eastern Europe"'.<sup>4</sup> This assessment leads him to conclude that Britain's participation in multilateral détente as

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<sup>2</sup> Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War, 1945-91*, p. 192.

<sup>3</sup> Bange, 'Ostpolitik as a Source of Intra-Bloc Tensions', p. 12. Hughes, *Harold Wilson's Cold War*.

<sup>4</sup> Bange, 'Ostpolitik as a Source of Intra-Bloc Tensions', p. 12. The quote within Bange's quote is from Deighton, 'Ostpolitik or Westpolitik?', p. 899.

exemplified by the CSCE should be seen not as a contribution to détente, but as ‘a declaration of insolvency’.<sup>5</sup>

These negative appraisals echo to varying degrees the perhaps most famous contemporary assessment. In his memoirs, Henry Kissinger characterised British leaders in the 1970s as follows:

With every passing year they acted less as if their decisions mattered. They offered advice, usually sage; they rarely sought to embody it in a policy of their own. British statesmen were content to act as honored consultants in our deliberations.<sup>6</sup>

Interestingly, several current authors mix various shades of grey into the bleak picture of the British as exponents of a negative, inactive, marginalised, and overall bankrupt policy. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the official FCO historian, Gill Bennett, cautions that Britain’s role ‘*appears* that of an outsider’ and argues instead that London was more active behind the scenes.<sup>7</sup> In a more recent contribution, Sarah Snyder flags up a puzzle: NSC documents from the late 1960s portray Britain as mildly *favouring* a CSCE whereas scholars like Bange and others argue the opposite.<sup>8</sup> The only in-depth study to date of London’s pre-CSCE diplomacy goes a bold step further. Takeshi Yamamoto, who has examined British, French, and West German policy between 1969 and 1972, comes to a markedly different conclusion than any of the scholars mentioned. In Yamamoto’s view, London played ‘a prominent leadership role within NATO’ in the run-up to the CSCE.<sup>9</sup> He even argues that ‘British leadership was vital’ in getting the alliance to commit to the security conference.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 421.

<sup>7</sup> Bennett, ‘Introduction’, DBPO, III/II, p. x (my emphasis).

<sup>8</sup> Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>9</sup> Yamamoto, *The Road to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, p. 119.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

This poses an intriguing puzzle. Britain could not have been both an outsider as well as a leader, simultaneously refusing to engage with détente as well as pushing its partners towards the CSCE. London's policy may or may not have been 'insolvent' in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but it certainly remains under-researched forty years later. What, then, was Britain's role? This chapter attempts to find an answer to this question for the period leading up to the start of the preparatory talks.

In essence, this chapter argues that we can resolve many of the differences in the literature by drawing a sharp distinction between the bilateral and the multilateral dimension of British foreign policy. It shows how London's bilateral détente policy ground to a halt and how the Labour government responded to this impasse by intensifying its efforts in NATO. In doing so, it helped to nudge NATO down the path of multilateral European détente in the form of CSCE and MBFR. Locked into the multilateral commitment of its predecessor, the Conservative government felt compelled to follow that path, but vented its scepticism of Soviet détente by adopting a hard-headed approach to the Helsinki talks. In other words, Yamamoto's assertion of an active and influential role is accurate for the multilateral dimension of UK policy, while the other authors cited above capture important facets of the bilateral context.

This chapter continues with the historical and thematic approach adopted in chapters one and two. The two main themes already introduced – the ascent and decline of Britain's prominence in East-West diplomacy and the rise of independent European strategies aimed at the partial revision of the constructed peace – continue to serve as the 'big picture' backdrop as we move into the 1970s. But a third theme became increasingly central to UK policy in these years: British foreign policymakers attempted to reconcile the rising momentum for détente across all three 'tables' with

their growing concern about the negative impact of détente on the Western structure of deterrence. This, I argue, became the ‘key dilemma’ of British détente policy from the late 1960s onwards; it is thus central to an understanding of London’s approach to the CSCE.

I contend that British foreign policymakers used multilateralism as a strategy with which to deal with that dilemma. Accordingly, their approach to MBFR and CSCE was thus primarily instrumental and tactical. Policymakers saw these multilateral projects not as means to achieving substantial changes to the status quo, but as tools to deal with the key dilemma. This imperative led, as we will see, to an erratic policy towards multilateral European détente: in wrestling with their key dilemma, the British switched course in 1971 and, having previously tried to avoid a conference, suddenly embraced the CSCE idea for tactical reasons.

The first section of this chapter analyses how London tried to deal with the dilemma against the backdrop of the multilateralisation of détente and the sharp decline in Anglo-Soviet relations over the issue of espionage. It starts out with a thematic analysis of British concerns about détente. These concerns had a political, military, but also a socio-cultural component. The remainder of the first section is dedicated to analysing the policy response these multi-faceted concerns elicited. It focuses on British activism in the run-up to the important NATO ministerial of May 1970 and the detailed CSCE preparation process that started in 1972. In between, two key events took place, which impacted on London’s approach to the Helsinki talks. In January 1971, the Heath government reversed existing priorities and decided to support the unloved idea of a security conference for tactical reasons. In September of that year, London took the unprecedented decision to expel 105 alleged Soviet spies from London, causing the biggest crisis in Anglo-Soviet relations since the invasion

of Czechoslovakia. As a result, British CSCE preparation took place against an unpropitious background, forcing officials to negotiate their scepticism of the conference idea and their deep resentment of Soviet behaviour with indubitable public support for détente.

The second section of this chapter focuses on the two years when the major bilateral and minilateral obstacles were cleared away, thus paving the way for the CSCE. In these years, the contours of the conference agenda took shape.

The final section concentrates on the year 1972 when the Foreign Office had to deal with the key dilemma in concrete terms. Which issues could be usefully discussed at a large-scale meeting? Should Britain adopt an active or a passive posture? And, most important, could London participate in this Soviet-sponsored scheme while at the same time pre-empting détente ‘euphoria’? If so, how could it do so without being ‘classed as leading the Cold Warrior brigade’?<sup>11</sup> I argue that human rights played an important though frequently misunderstood part in the FCO’s attempts to wrestle with that dilemma.

### **The ‘Key Dilemma’ of British Détente Policy, 1969-1972**

#### *British Concerns about Détente: The Political and Military Dimension*

British foreign policymakers were deeply ambivalent about détente in Europe. They genuinely embraced a ‘conservatory’ or ‘defensive’ policy of détente, defined as the attempt to stabilise the constructed peace at lower levels of tension. But they were deeply worried about the possible unintended consequences an East-West rapprochement would have. One core concern was that an easing of tension would

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<sup>11</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 3, para. 6.

undermine the West's ability to maintain its political unity and military preparedness. For example, the rapprochement, London feared, could easily undermine Western unity. Soviet leaders might succeed in 'wedge-driving', i.e. dividing NATO by fostering 'special relationships' with key states.<sup>12</sup> For example, they might tempt Bonn to move towards neutrality through the promise of reunification.

These were long-standing concerns that had played a role in British thinking since the start of the Cold War, but they achieved a new level of saliency during the course of the 1960s for at least three reasons. First, NATO's nuclear deterrent had been seriously weakened. As the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) Report of 1972 stated: 'the attainment of nuclear parity and United States introversion and retrenchment have eroded the credibility of the United States nuclear guarantee for Western Europe'.<sup>13</sup> This, of course, had been a core pillar of the constructed peace: the US security guarantee had been key to containing both the USSR and West Germany. By deterring Moscow and moderating Bonn's nuclear ambition it had created the military equilibrium on which the constructed peace was based.

Second, the effects of détente, London feared, threatened to undercut NATO unity. After the constructed peace had stabilised relations in Europe by 1963, European states – initially with the British in the lead, but soon overtaken by de Gaulle – had started to extend their contacts to Eastern Europe and to cultivate Soviet leaders. Once Brandt and Nixon launched their détente initiatives, that process reached a new quality and the British, now increasingly marginalised, watched from the sidelines what they saw as a dangerous and undignified 'bicycle race' to Moscow.

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<sup>12</sup> Summary Report by Joint Intelligence Committee (A) on the Soviet Threat, 14 September 1972, para. 2, DBPO, III/I, Appendix, pp. 513-516 (513).

<sup>13</sup> Main Report by Joint Intelligence Committee (A) on the Soviet Threat, 14 September 1972, para. 2, printed in DBPO, III/I, Appendix, pp. 517-530 (527). The Foreign Office shared this assessment; see DBPO, III/II, No. 2, para. 3.

In British minds, there was a fine line between fostering contacts with Moscow to relax tension and pandering to Soviet wishes to foster a ‘special relationship’. De Gaulle had crossed that line, London thought, and others might follow.<sup>14</sup> In terms of hard security, the danger was that individual states might decide to semi-withdraw from NATO like France or, more likely, to cut troops unilaterally. This could easily spiral out of control and undermine agreed NATO strategy for the protection of Western Europe.<sup>15</sup> This threat assessment was shared and reinforced by a series of reports by the JIC in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which defined Western Europe as the main zone of danger for the foreseeable future.

### *The ‘Key Dilemma’*

These twin concerns about the US nuclear shield and alliance cohesion were important factors in predisposing British foreign policymakers towards a deeply sceptical view of détente. Their key dilemma of reconciling deterrence with détente ran deeper, however, and extended beyond the military and political realm. To adequately depict and explain the dilemma as it appeared at the time, it is important to sketch briefly the socio-cultural roots of British détente scepticism.

In recent years, the US historian Jeremi Suri has contributed much to a sociological and cultural understanding of détente. Although I take issue with his specific interpretation of détente, the thrust of his writings provides a much-needed corrective to the overly narrow narrative of the East-West rapprochement as a reaction to changes in the balance of power. In Suri’s interpretation, détente should be seen as a deeply conservative response to the rise of ‘counter-cultures’. These counter-cultures, including the transnational student protest movement, challenged

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 520. For a FCO view, see DBPO, III/I, No. 36, para. 15.

<sup>15</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 2, para. 3.

traditional Cold War thinking and established authorities across societies, culminating in ‘the global disruption of 1968’.<sup>16</sup> One of the most important expressions of these counter-cultures was the student movement whose protests disconcerted political elites. While this thesis focuses on Britain’s role in the international politics of détente more narrowly defined, it is nonetheless important to emphasise the broader context in which the ‘excesses of bipolarity’ were being contested and the constructed peace was being called into question. These transformations in the socio-cultural fabric of the West, I argue, had an indirect though tangible impact on how the British viewed the East-West rapprochement and how they responded to it.

There is good evidence to substantiate these claims. For example, it is no coincidence that one of Suri’s favourite quotes comes from the handwritten diary of a leading UK foreign policymaker – Michael Stewart. In April 1968, three months after Wilson had announced Britain’s withdrawal from ‘East of Suez’ and while student protests were sweeping across Western states, Stewart wrote despairingly into his diary: ‘The 10:pm television news presents a depressing picture. The great difficulty of the world is the moral deficiencies of what should be the free world...Germany distracted, France selfish, ourselves aimless, U.S.A. in torment’.<sup>17</sup>

This gloomy view was not confined to ministers. It was shared by the intelligence communities on both sides of the Atlantic and also permeated Whitehall thinking.<sup>18</sup> Instead of citing the same example over and over again, Suri could have

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<sup>16</sup> This is the title of a chapter of Suri’s book *Power and Protest*, pp. 164-213. See also Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert and Detlef Junker (eds.), *1968: The World Transformed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>17</sup> Michael Stewart’s diary entry of 17 April 1968 is quoted in Suri’s article ‘The Rise and Fall of an International Counterculture, 1960-1975’, *American Historical Review*, Vol. 114, No. 1 (February 2009), pp. 45-68 (59) as well as in his 2010 contribution to the Cambridge History of the Cold War, ‘Counter-Cultures: The Rebellions against the Cold War Order, 1965-1975’, pp. 460-481 (471), and in his book *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 197.

<sup>18</sup> The JIC argued that ‘the stresses of what has been called post-industrial society’ put the West at a competitive disadvantage given that the Soviet system was ‘much more [...] resistant to change’. Main

further strengthened his argument by probing deeper down into the Foreign Office hierarchy.<sup>19</sup> It is telling that the official, who was put in charge of the CSCE and MBFR, Crispin Tickell, started his new job as head of Western Organisations Department by writing the brooding minute already quoted in the introduction. Nominally, the minute was about how Tickell, '[a]s a newcomer to the Department', viewed the problems of Western defence as they pertained to the European Security Conference.<sup>20</sup> In reality, the core of his paper ran much deeper as the final paragraph showed: 'The heart of the problem is one of mood, and the present mood in the West arises from fundamental doubts about the nature and purposes of industrial society'.<sup>21</sup> Tickell lamented the feeling of 'hopelessness' and the 'widespread cynicism in the West about [...] the meaning of defence', how 'the Vietnam fiasco had caused the profound revulsion and the virtual alienation of a generation' in the US, and the 'sapping of the national will' throughout Western societies.<sup>22</sup>

Tickell defined this 'mood' as the crucial 'internal factor' undermining '[t]he defence policies we have pursued since the war' and warned that it predisposed Western publics towards a fundamental revision of the foundations on which the

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Report by Joint Intelligence Committee, para. 32, DBPO, III/I, Appendix, p. 528. The CIA was more outspoken in its 'Restless Youth' of September 1968. The painted a bleak picture of the state of Western societies, predicted that '[t]he social and political malaise that underlies much of present-day dissidence will not be speedily cured; there are, in fact, striking parallels between the situation today and the conditions of cynicism, despair, and disposition toward violence which existed after World War I and which later helped produce Fascism and National Socialism on the Continent'. Quoted in Suri, 'The Rise and Fall of an International Counterculture, 1960-1975', p. 59. As we know since the full disclosure of the CIA's 'Family Jewels' in the summer of 2007, the report was deemed so sensitive that only three people, including the President, Lyndon B. Johnson, received the full version. Henry Kissinger, who was working as an adviser to the administration, was sent a censored version. It should be emphasised that, as the CIA pointed out itself, the sensitivity of the report went beyond the fact that the agency had 'exceeded its charter' by spying on domestic dissidents. 'The paper "Restless Youth" is sensitive', the CIA stressed, 'because of its subject matter [...]'. Memorandum for D[irector of] C[entral] I[n]telligence Agency, 17 September 1973. Available at the website of the National Security Archive, [http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB222/family\\_jewels\\_full\\_ocr.pdf](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB222/family_jewels_full_ocr.pdf) (last accessed 28 August 2011).

<sup>19</sup> This might have also rendered his interpretation of West European diplomacy in Helsinki more accurate, a subject I will return to in the conclusion.

<sup>20</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 2, para. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., para. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., para. 5.

constructed peace rested.<sup>23</sup> 'What people want to hear is', Tickell wrote, ' [...] that the twenty five years of the cold war are coming to an end'.<sup>24</sup> He feared that Western publics had come to expect that détente would 'produce a more rational and stable system in Europe [...]'.<sup>25</sup>

How did the British react to these challenges to the Western structure of deterrence that underpinned the constructed peace? As a response to the military and political challenge, London pursued a two-pronged approach. First, the British placed supreme emphasis on maintaining close links to the US, both in a bilateral and in the multilateral, transatlantic context of NATO. To pre-empt Soviet 'wedge-driving' tactics, London tried to act as a 'bridge' and moderate transatlantic differences. Second, the British started to undertake first steps towards constructing a European defence identity. With the US nuclear shield in jeopardy and the conventional balance heavily tilted towards the Soviet Union, Western Europe needed to strengthen its military capabilities. Broadly speaking, both the Wilson and the Heath government followed these paths, although the former government focused more on the first line and the latter stressed the second approach.

To mitigate the effects of the deep-seated, socio-cultural challenge, British foreign policymakers played a double game of sorts. To placate the public and the détente enthusiasts among their allies, they endorsed détente in public and took care to be perceived as working earnestly towards a rapprochement. Yet in reality their initiatives were designed to dampen public enthusiasm for détente and to avoid any measures that would significantly revise Western defence policy.

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<sup>23</sup> Like the JIC, Tickell thought that the changing status of the US nuclear guarantee was the key 'external factor'. Ibid., para. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., para. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. For a fuller quotation from this minute, see the introduction.

*Labour's Response to the 'Key Dilemma': Multilateralising Détente through MBFR, 1969-1970*

This cleft was most pronounced in the last months of the Wilson government when the Prime Minister and, particularly, his Foreign Secretary vigorously pushed NATO towards multilateral negotiations with the Warsaw Pact. Let us examine how the Labour government dealt with the key dilemma in their last year in office before analysing how their Conservative successors fared from June 1970 onwards.

With a general election upcoming in mid-June 1970, the Labour leadership was adamant that NATO needed to demonstrate its commitment to détente in the first half of the year. Ever since the start of the 'dialogue through communiqué' in 1966, NATO had assumed a negative posture towards Warsaw Pact calls for a European security conference. As noted in the previous chapter, NATO had ignored the conference proposal in its public pronouncements and had instead suggested negotiations on mutual and balanced force reductions in the 'Reykjavik Signal' of June 1968. In turn, the Warsaw Pact had disregarded the MBFR proposition and reiterated its CSCE proposal in the 'Budapest Appeal' of March 1969.<sup>26</sup> The 'Appeal' had repeated long-standing Communist claims: European security could only be strengthened if the German problem was solved through diplomatic recognition of the GDR and the international recognition of the 'inviolability of frontiers'. In essence, the Warsaw Pact framed European security as hinging on the multilateral codification of a core pillar of the constructed peace: the division of the continent into two mutually recognised spheres of influence. In contrast to the substance of the proposals, the Warsaw Pact had softened the propagandistic tone of earlier communiqués, thus exacerbating the public relations problem that Labour's détente

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<sup>26</sup> Yamamoto, *The Road to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, pp. 64-69.

policy grappled with. Given the deep division of the party and widespread discontent with the Cold War system throughout Western societies, Wilson and Stewart felt that the impasse in the ‘dialogue’ needed to be overcome.<sup>27</sup> NATO could not afford to keep insisting on its pet project for multilateral détente – MBFR – while simply ignoring Warsaw Pact proposals.

The Wilson government was therefore adamant that the NATO ministerial in Rome, scheduled for 26-27 May, needed to produce concrete results. The alliance could not afford to keep rejecting their opponents’ frequent calls for negotiations. In particular, Michael Stewart wanted NATO to commit to talks on force reductions in Europe and to have them start as soon as possible. He therefore urged his reluctant officials in Whitehall and his partners in Europe, the US and Canada to intensify their work on substantive and procedural proposals for multilateral negotiations on European security.<sup>28</sup> Taken together, these efforts played a very significant role in nudging NATO towards a public commitment to both MBFR and a security conference at the Rome meeting of May 1970.<sup>29</sup>

To move the alliance forward, the Foreign Secretary pursued two projects in particular.<sup>30</sup> On the one hand, from spring 1969 onwards, Stewart urged the FCO and NATO to draft a list with specific issues that promised to be negotiable in a multilateral context.<sup>31</sup> This was a reaction to yet another Warsaw Pact utterance in the ‘dialogue through communiqué’, the ‘Budapest Appeal’ of March 1969. It was in the context of the ensuing list-making process within NATO that the now-famous Basket

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<sup>27</sup> Minute from Wiggin to Brimelow, 15 March 1971, UKNA, FCO 41/883.

<sup>28</sup> For a Canadian view, see Memorandum on East-West Relations: European Security and the Possibility of a Conference, 19 January 1970, National Archives of Canada (CAN), Ottawa, Ontario, RG-25, Vol. 9054, File 20-4-CSCE, Vol. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Yamamoto, *The Road to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, pp. 69, 90-91.

<sup>30</sup> The following summary of Stewart’s actions largely follows Takeshi Yamamoto’s pioneering work on Western pre-CSCE diplomacy. See *ibid.*, pp. 69-119. Although I partially disagree with his assessment of Stewart’s role, Yamamoto’s work is the authoritative study of the complicated discussion process that led to NATO’s decision to enter the CSCE and MBFR negotiations.

<sup>31</sup> White, *Britain, Détente and the Changing Structure of East-West Relations*, p. 123.

III has its origins. At the beginning of this process, the Foreign Office had prepared a paper with a list of potential proposals. In their counter-draft of November 1969, the American NATO delegation introduced the provision ‘freer movement of people and information between East and West’.<sup>32</sup> As we will see, this was to become one of the core Western desiderata at the CSCE and one of the key means through which Western states contested and reframed the narrow agenda put forward by the Warsaw Pact states.

Stewart’s second initiative was procedural in nature. He proposed to his allies that NATO should publicly suggest the founding of a ‘Standing Committee on East-West Relations’ (SCEWR). According to the British plan, SCEWR would be a low-key institution, composed of delegations from the two alliances and the neutral states and staffed with experts from the respective foreign ministries. The initial proposal originated with the UK delegation to NATO in November 1969.<sup>33</sup> It was the delegation’s answer to the problem that ‘[t]he lack of a procedural alternative to the Warsaw Pact proposal for an early Conference was leading an increasing number of members of the Alliance to accept implicitly that we would have to have a conference sooner rather than later’.<sup>34</sup>

Michael Stewart immediately embraced this idea and put it to Parliament on 9 December as an issue ‘which NATO should now carefully consider’.<sup>35</sup> Both Wilson and Stewart were attracted to SCEWR because it promised a way out of their key dilemma of placating public opinion while at the same time avoiding ambitious

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<sup>32</sup> Yamamoto, *The Road to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, pp. 69, 90-91. See also FRUS XXIX, No. 48, fn. 8.

<sup>33</sup> From around mid-1969 onwards, the Canadians tentatively toyed with the idea of a standing committee-type arrangement as well. There seems to have been no connection between the two, however, and Ottawa did not seem to have acted in its idea. See the various documents compiled in CANA, RG-25, Vol. 9054, File 20-4-CSCE, Vols 1-2.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Yamamoto, *The Road to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, p. 93.

<sup>35</sup> Speech by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 9 December 1969, Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 5<sup>th</sup> Series, Vol. 793, Cols. 260-283 (265). The DBPO volume misquotes Stewart; cp. DBPO, III/I, No. 39, fn. 9.

schemes that might inspire 'euphoria'. It would demonstrate to the electorate that NATO was not refusing to talk to its opponents. At the same time, SCEWR could help to avert the grand conference the Soviets wanted. The Standing Committee could serve as a place for exploratory talks on MBFR and as a substitute for a security conference. This would kill two birds with one stone: it would kick-start negotiations on force reductions, which were of electoral and of party political appeal while avoiding the unloved CSCE project.

During their trip to Washington in January 1970, Wilson and Stewart tried to persuade their opposite numbers that an East-West committee would be an attractive institutional solution to the West's public relations problem. During a meeting with the American President and the National Security Council, Stewart voiced his deep concern about the younger generation. 'I am worried about the opposition to the Alliance', Stewart confessed, pleading with his interlocutors, 'We must try to avoid growth on that strand of opinion which attacks NATO as a waste'.<sup>36</sup> The Prime Minister argued that the West should steer a moderate course regarding multilateral talks, insisting that '[t]he right way to respond is not just to say no [...]'. At the same time, Wilson averred that the West '[...] must avoid any big buildup [sic] about a European Security Conference'.<sup>37</sup> A low-level committee dealing with 'a heavy dose of safe subjects, such as cultural exchange and trade' was therefore a good counter-proposal.<sup>38</sup> Wilson must have known that these two issue areas were already exhaustively covered in bilateral and multilateral contexts.<sup>39</sup> This strongly suggests

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<sup>36</sup> Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, Washington, 28 January 1970, FRUS, XXIX, No. 19, pp. 46-47.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>39</sup> Trade across the divided continent was handled by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). This was often used as an argument against discussing trade in the context of a pan-European conference. See, for example, DBPO, III/II, No. 1, paras. 7, 28. As a former economics professor and self-proclaimed expert on East-West trade, it is highly unlikely that Wilson was unaware

that the British leaders were primarily interested in appearances, not in meaningful results on pressing issues.

The Nixon administration, however, was opposed to any device that might increase momentum towards discussion on European security other than MBFR.<sup>40</sup> The Committee was unpopular in NATO as well. SCEWR was ultimately rejected precisely because it represented a halfway house between total rejection and full endorsement of the CSCE project. In 1970, the majority of NATO states were conference sceptics of varying degrees and only a minority wanted a full-fledged conference (Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Norway). Hence SCEWR was only fully supported by Luxembourg and Iceland.<sup>41</sup>

Stewart also failed in his effort to win NATO support for an immediate commitment to a multilateral East-West dialogue. Several states, most importantly Germany, objected in view of their current bilateral negotiations.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, Western officials had not finished their work on disarmament plans for a potential MBFR while differences of opinion persisted regarding a CSCE. The Rome communiqué struck a compromise between the various factions. On the one hand, it

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of the strictly limited nature that trade discussions in a Standing Committee would have. Likewise, it was widely felt within Whitehall that East-West cultural exchanges, whether bilateral or multilateral, were a dreary cul-de-sac. The tight governmental control exerted by the Communist states rendered them unlikely vehicles to promote Western values by stealth and also the demand on both sides was limited. Indeed, the hollowness of Anglo-Soviet relations reached almost farcical proportions. For instance, in December 1968, the State Department asked the FCO about British plans for 'high visibility cultural exchanges'. There were almost none. Apart from a trip of the Bolshoi Ballet, the only other item the FCO could come up with for 1969 was this: 'the only major event in the cultural field is that we intend to carry out a regular renegotiation of the Anglo-Soviet Cultural Agreement'. DBPO, III/I, No. 22, fn. 9. Prospects for multilateral negotiations on the subject were not much better. The results, experts warned, 'could be embarrassingly thin'. DBPO, III/II, No. 31, para. 3. In sum, then, Wilson's 'safe subjects' were in reality empty ones and SCEWR was meant to conduct meaningless discussions. As with the Cultural Agreement, bureaucrats would go through empty motions and achieve next-to-nothing.

<sup>40</sup> During the meeting, Nixon stated categorically: '[...] I have one fundamental understanding concerning any conference. A conference in and of itself helps them; a conference in and of itself does not help us'. Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, Washington, 28 January 1970, FRUS, XXIX, No. 19, p. 46.

<sup>41</sup> Yamamoto, *The Road to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, p. 98.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

appeared positive towards the notion of multilateral negotiations. Ministers were critical that the Reykjavik Signal on MBFR had not elicited a response yet, but nonetheless 'stated that they were ready to multiply exploratory conversations with all interested parties on all questions affecting peace'.<sup>43</sup> They further specified that '[o]ne of the main purposes of such contacts would be to explore when it will be possible to convene a conference, or a series of conferences on European security and cooperation'. Ministers imposed preconditions, however. NATO would only be ready if 'progress' were achieved in the bilateral inner-German talks, the 'minilateral' negotiations on Berlin as well as the aforementioned, multilateral 'exploratory conversations'.<sup>44</sup> The alliance had thus committed itself in principle to the notion of negotiations on European security, but had woven the CSCE into a whole web of talks on various 'tables'. This meant that the multilateral dialogue was in effect postponed. The Labour government had thus failed in achieving its specific goals, but NATO still managed to appear more positive than it had been in the past. Michael Stewart's tenure as Foreign Secretary thus ended on a mildly positive note.

In sum, the – admittedly often rather complicated – developments covered in this section so far are important to this thesis in two ways. First, we have seen how a core pillar of the constructed peace – the Western structure of deterrence – had come under increasing strain in the late 1960s. This was a function of material factors, such as the effects of nuclear parity, as well as of socio-cultural factors, both of which worried ministers and officials deeply. These changes presented a dilemma for British foreign policy. On the one hand, rough parity between the superpowers with its detrimental effect on the US nuclear guarantee provided one more incentive for

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<sup>43</sup> North Atlantic Council, Ministerial Communiqué, Rome, 26-27 May 1970, para. 14. Available at the NATO website, <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c700526a.htm> (last accessed 23 February 2011).

<sup>44</sup> North Atlantic Council, Ministerial Communiqué, Rome, 26-27 May 1970, para. 15.

Europeans to negotiate with a view to reducing tension. In an age of parity, the US could not be counted on in case a crisis on the divided continent got out of hand. Although the British did not expect the Soviet Union to exploit this situation militarily, they did fear that Moscow's conventional superiority would make Europeans vulnerable to Soviet political pressure in the future.<sup>45</sup> The head of the Eastern European and Soviet Department, Julian Bullard, voiced these concerns bluntly:

[...] [T]he Russians envisage a Western Europe from which US protection has been largely withdrawn; which exists under the shadow of Soviet power and which is obliged to adjust its policies accordingly. The word 'Finlandisation' is not too strong for Brezhnev's European vision.<sup>46</sup>

On the other hand, the British worried that the pursuit of détente would eventually lead to troop cuts and other disarmament measures that would tilt the military balance of power in favour of the Soviet Union, thus further weakening Western security. It would also further undermine the willingness of Western publics to support the defence burden that NATO's strategy for the defence of Europe necessitated. High-level summits and large-scale conferences would create the false impression that the East-West antagonism had been resolved, giving rise to détente euphoria. In short, officials feared the 'CSCE syndrome'.<sup>47</sup>

As the above analysis of Michael Stewart's NATO diplomacy has shown, there was no easy way out of this dilemma. The Foreign Secretary was torn between party political and electoral incentives and concerns for the strategic balance. His

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<sup>45</sup> This concern was widespread in the diplomatic and intelligence community. For the latter's view, see Summary Report by Joint Intelligence Committee, DBPO, III/I, Appendix, para. 12, p. 515.

<sup>46</sup> DBPO, III/III, Enclosure in No. 49, para. 11.

<sup>47</sup> The term was coined by Philip Farley, the deputy director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, but it reflects Whitehall thinking perfectly. It is also noteworthy that Farley voiced this concern almost nine months *before* the opening of the preparatory talks in Helsinki. This shows how pervasive these fears were even though they were based purely on speculation. Farley to Sonnenfeldt, 31 March 1972, NARA, NPMS, NSC Institutional Files, Box H-061.

strategy for moderating the dilemma was to create the appearance of an activist détente policy. Stewart's push for multilateral negotiations provides good evidence for this claim. It was chiefly tactical in nature, as his vigorous pursuit of the idea of a Standing Committee shows. Just as the British supported MBFR in order to *prevent* a substantial reduction in Western troop levels, they saw in SCEWR not the opening salvo to a grand conference, but a device to *avoid* multilateral dialogue on core issues of European security. London's efforts at dealing with its key dilemma thus had a charade-like quality.

Yet even charades can produce real effects. As Takeshi Yamamoto argues, Britain's various initiatives in the NATO context played a key role in nudging the reluctant alliance towards the CSCE and MBFR. This ironic role, he maintains, along with Western publics' growing support for détente led NATO to commit itself to a security conference at the Rome ministerial meeting.

Given the marked reluctance of the Americans, the French and the West Germans to move to a multilateral phase of East-West negotiations, Britain, and in particular Stewart, had had to play a prominent leadership role within NATO. However unpopular the idea of a Standing Commission was, the British Foreign Secretary tenaciously led the Atlantic Alliance towards a positive stance towards multilateral European détente. In a sense, the British unintentionally contributed to pushing the West towards the CSCE, because they had disliked the idea of a European security conference and had invented the concept of a SCEWR as an alternative to a conference.<sup>48</sup>

Yamamoto's assessment of Stewart's ironic role lends strong support to the basic argument developed throughout this section: the British approach to the multilateral dialogue on European security was largely an attempt to mollify public opinion. At times, this entailed feigning strong support for meaningful negotiations.<sup>49</sup> The British

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<sup>48</sup> Yamamoto, *The Road to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, p. 98.

<sup>49</sup> This is where the analysis developed here parts ways with Yamamoto's evaluation of Stewart's role. The latter presents, I argue, an unsatisfactory picture of the Labour leader's part in the developments covered here. As the quote clearly indicates, Yamamoto acknowledges that the British had 'disliked'

were certainly actively pushing for a multilateralisation of détente – a fact often overlooked in the literature –, but there is no evidence to suggest that London genuinely believed that pan-European negotiations could contribute to solving the core problems of European security. Neither is there evidence that they wanted fundamental change in the sense of transforming the Western deterrence structure. In that sense, London’s policy of European détente was a fake.

Certainly, ministers were genuinely interested in lowering tension, but their primary concern pertained to the maintenance of Western defence readiness, which public support for détente and the malaise of Western societies threatened to undercut. In other words, the British lent true support to détente as a means of stabilising the constructed peace, but feigned it when détente seemed to jeopardise the material and socio-political basis on which the West’s structure of deterrence rested. Britain’s approach to negotiations across the East-West divide during the period of the East-West conflict under consideration in this chapter was a function of these larger dynamics. The intrinsic value or potential merit of a CSCE or MBFR played a secondary role. The charade-like strategy failed, however. This is reflected in the way their policies backfired, increasing rather than moderating the momentum of the security conference idea. Ironically, Wilson and Stewart were voted out of office only weeks after NATO’s public embrace of the CSCE proposal.

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the CSCE and had devised SCEWR instead. On the other hand, he argues that ‘[...] Stewart gradually saw the concept of a security conference in Europe in a positive light’ and tries to show – unconvincingly, in my view – how that transformation took place between July and September 1969. However, according to Yamamoto’s timeline this alleged change took place months *before* the original SCEWR idea had even been invented by the UK delegation to NATO. If Stewart’s views towards the conference had shifted, why did he later emphatically embrace SCEWR and promote it as an *alternative* to a CSCE? This contradiction in the timeline apart, there is simply no evidence to suggest that Stewart was ever genuinely committed to a conference. In contrast, my argument that Stewart’s détente manoeuvres were of a tactical nature is both consistent and corroborated by evidence. In addition to the evidence already cited, see DBPO, III/II, No. 12, para. 2.

*The Conservative Response to the 'Key Dilemma': Multilateralising Détente through CSCE, 1970-1971*

The new government of Prime Minister Edward Heath was instinctively and ideologically less predisposed towards détente. The Conservative Party was less divided than Labour over Vietnam and more sceptical of Soviet intentions. The new Foreign Secretary, Alec Douglas-Home, was therefore less inclined than Stewart to overrule the détente sceptics in the Foreign Office.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, the chasm between public endorsement of détente and private concern about its impact narrowed, but the fundamental dilemma persisted: how could East-West tensions be reduced without undermining the strength and unity of the West?

After six years of working under Labour, the mandarins in the Foreign Office were eager to try out their own answer. In essence, they wanted to change public perceptions rather than satisfy them with a pro-détente posture. Most leading officials – including the Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Denis Greenhill, and his deputy, Sir Thomas Brimelow – felt that their ministers had made a mistake by indulging in détente rhetoric.<sup>51</sup> They had thus failed to define the ‘real’ problems jeopardising European security – the continuous Soviet arms build-up, for example – and given the

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<sup>50</sup> Alexander Frederick Douglas-Home (1903-1995) served as Foreign Secretary from July 1960 until October 1963, as Prime Minister from October 1963 until October 1964, and then again as Foreign Secretary from June 1970 until March 1974.

<sup>51</sup> For their negative views on SCEWR, see, for example, Brimelow’s typed commentary (20 November 1969) on a minute from Waterfield to Bendall (20 November 1969) and Greenhill’s handwritten comments on the same document (21 November 1969), UKNA, FCO 41/558. It is noteworthy that Brimelow refers to the possible formal introduction of the SCEWR proposal into NATO discussions as a ‘radical alteration’. Ibid. This nicely illustrates the degree to which the PUS opposed even a low-key institutional proposal. The perhaps best evidence for Greenhill and especially Brimelow’s highly sceptical view of détente are their increasingly brusque replies to Sir Duncan Wilson’s (HMG’s ambassador to Moscow, 1968-1971) modest proposals for a slightly more active policy of diplomatic engagement with the USSR. For Greenhill’s opinion, see DBPO III/I, No. 41, fn. 11; for Brimelow’s assessment, see *ibid.*, No. 36. Brimelow’s view that Wilson had gone native became increasingly apparent when the ambassador would not budge. In reference to yet another letter from Wilson, Brimelow wrote to a colleague: ‘I think the FCO make full allowance for the localitis now so prevalent among [Her Majesty’s Representatives; KH] in Eastern Europe’. Handwritten comment (20 November 1969) on a submission from Pemberton-Pigott to Davidson, 14 November 1969, UKNA, FO 1116/15.

impression that the constructed peace could easily be overcome. Now, officials thought, was the time for some 'plain speaking'.<sup>52</sup> This line of thinking was almost universally shared among leading FCO officials. Crispin Tickell, the man in charge of CSCE and MBFR, was definitely one of them. His submissions exemplified the type of plain speaking he advocated. In a minute of 6 March 1972, Tickell formulated the following criticism:

In many ways we are accomplices in promoting the illusions which bedevil popular thinking on this subject. Governments do not, for example, say that détente is [...] a product of particular and ephemeral international circumstances. They do not admit that a European security conference would probably turn out to be a jamboree of propaganda, whose result could strengthen the Russian grip on Eastern Europe while weakening the cohesion of Western Europe. They do not say that every model of an MBFR agreement so far constructed works to the military disadvantage of the Alliance.<sup>53</sup>

It would be simplistic to portray this emphasis on plain speaking as a U-turn. In dealing with the public relations dilemma, Michael Stewart had tried to find a balance between supporting an East-West rapprochement and explaining to the younger generation that NATO was not 'just an armed camp; its existence does, in fact, relax tension'.<sup>54</sup> But the Heath government and leading officials believed that Labour had gotten the balance wrong. The new Foreign Secretary, spurred on by Greenhill and Brimelow, were determined to rectify this. The problem for the hardliners was two-fold. On the one hand, they rejected the idea that the CSCE could be a useful platform from which to tackle the key dilemma: 'Europe is not a debating society', Brimelow categorically stated.<sup>55</sup> They were also concerned that a more proactive policy towards the East could interfere with London's priority of integrating into Western Europe, for

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<sup>52</sup> DBPO III/II, No. 1, para. 16.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., No. 2, para. 7.

<sup>54</sup> Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, Washington, 28 January 1970, FRUS, XXIX, No. 19, p. 47.

<sup>55</sup> DBPO, III/I, No. 35, para. 5.

example by getting ahead of Bonn's Ostpolitik: 'we [...] so badly need German support for our European policy', Brimelow cautioned, that I am doubtful whether we should try to take positive decisions in the European security field [...].<sup>56</sup> There were, then, good arguments for a passive stance. As argued in the last chapter, rational factors were reinforced by emotional ones, however, and it seems to have been this combination that militated against the unilateral adoption of a more proactive stance. As one interviewee observed of Brimelow and Bullard, they were stuck in an 'ideological straightjacket'.<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand, however, passivity – the hardliners' preferred choice – seemed no longer an option. After NATO had committed itself to a multilateral dialogue at the Rome meeting, the CSCE and MBFR seemed almost inevitable. Even the hardliners grudgingly acknowledged that, once the inner-German talks and Berlin negotiations were concluded, the West would need to attend both talks.

Thus, in a sense, the new government faced the same key dilemma of British détente under different circumstances. While the Conservatives were less ideologically devoted to détente than their predecessors, the Heath government was more firmly committed to multilateral détente as a result of the Rome summit and the increasing momentum to which Stewart had inadvertently contributed. Since the chances of escaping this multilateral lock-in at acceptable political cost were slim, the crucial question for the new government became: What could London usefully do in talks that were inherently dangerous?

Before we examine the answer that the Conservative government devised, it is important to emphasise that the question of multilateralising détente was embedded in a complex web of bilateral and minilateral dynamics, all of which had at least some

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., para. 14.

<sup>57</sup> Author's interview with Sir Rodric Braithwaite, London, 3 December 2010.

bearing on how London viewed the CSCE. The most important bilateral dynamic in the first two years of the Heath government was the decline in Anglo-Soviet relations as a result of the festering issue of espionage. This had been an issue already during the last year of the Wilson government, when Whitehall had grudgingly advocated exchanging Gerald Brooke, a British teacher incarcerated in a Soviet labour camp on dubious claims, in exchange for the convicted spies Helen and Peter Kroger.<sup>58</sup> According to British officials, Moscow had shamelessly exploited the public pressure that the Wilson government was under to secure the release of Brooke. The exchange took place in October 1969; while it prevented a further deterioration in the bilateral relationship, officials felt that London had been blackmailed.<sup>59</sup> The problem of Soviet intelligence activities in the UK became increasingly acute over the following two years, thus overshadowing precisely the time period where the decisive steps towards the multilateralisation of European détente took place. The British were thus asked to attend multilateral détente conferences right at the time when they were emotionally least inclined to pretend that the Cold War was over. While there is no straightforward link between the downturn in the Anglo-Soviet bilateral relationship and Britain's sceptical stance on CSCE and MBFR, the atmosphere of contempt for what was perceived as Soviet double-dealing seems to have been an important background factor.<sup>60</sup> As we will see below, things were soon to turn from bad to worse.

Let us return to the multilateral plane. While the bilateral relationship declined, Whitehall was grappling with the old dilemma posed by multilateral talks on European security. Was it possible to pursue multilateral engagement without stoking détente 'euphoria'? As we have seen, the Labour government's answer had been to

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<sup>58</sup> DBPO, III/I, Nos. 30, 34.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 34.

<sup>60</sup> This was a recurring theme in the interviews conducted with British civil servants, especially in author's interviews with George Walden, London, 14 June 2010 and with Sir Brian Fall, London, 15 March 2010.

push for MBFR at the expense of the CSCE. In contrast to the latter, the former would have several tangible positive effects, in party political and electoral terms as well as on the transatlantic 'table'.<sup>61</sup> Six months into the Conservative government, the Foreign Office reversed this preference order, however. In late January 1971, the UK delegation to NATO was instructed to henceforth put the brakes on MBFR and to display a mildly positive attitude towards CSCE.<sup>62</sup> In response to requests for clarification by their surprised subordinates, leading officials acknowledged that this represented a 'volte-face', but justified the policy reversal with reference to the outcomes of preliminary studies for MBFR.<sup>63</sup> These had concluded that a substantial number of troop cuts would undermine current NATO strategy; it was therefore harder than originally imagined to come up with concrete proposals for MBFR. This is why leading mandarins now felt that talks on troop cuts needed to be delayed.

It should be underlined that this major reversal was of a purely tactical nature. The FCO's view of the security conference idea had not changed significantly. As the instructions to NATO made clear, most officials still maintained that an CSCE was 'unlikely to do any good'.<sup>64</sup> They merely felt that the conference would probably not do much damage, provided that it was 'properly managed'.<sup>65</sup> The policy switch under Douglas-Home's watch thus provides another piece of evidence for the core argument of this section. Similar to its predecessor, the Conservative government's approach to multilateralism was a function of its strategy of coping with the key dilemma haunting British détente policy. London consistently looked for ways of reconciling its

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<sup>61</sup> By its very existence, talks on troop reductions would help the Nixon administration fight domestic pressure for unilateral troop cuts, thus bolstering the transatlantic security tie.

<sup>62</sup> Peck to Cable, 25 January 1971, quoted in DBPO, III/I, editorial commentary, p. 315.

<sup>63</sup> Cable to Laskey, 23 March 1971, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 316. The policy shift was immediately noticed by Berlin as well. See the handwritten comments 'Sowjetische Demarchen zur Vorbereitung einer KSE', 24 March 1971, PAAA, B-150, Vol. 226, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> Peck to Cable, 25 January 1971, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 315.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

scepticism of détente with the perceived need to publicly demonstrate a pro-détente outlook. Labour's preferred tool of managing this balancing act had been MBFR; once force reductions had turned out to be trickier than expected, the Conservatives leaned towards the CSCE. The fact that this was a tactical switch towards an otherwise unloved idea had major implications for the specific planning phase that the FCO entered from late 1971 onwards. As we will see in the next section, officials viewed the security conference in predominantly (though not exclusively) negative terms. The British thus readied themselves to enter into an era of multilateral negotiations which they viewed 'primarily as an exercise in damage limitation'.<sup>66</sup>

Meanwhile, Anglo-Soviet relations were declining rapidly. Alec Douglas-Home had taken up the issue of espionage with his opposite number, but when Gromyko had failed to respond to a written request, concerns for Britain's national security coupled with lingering 'resentment' led to 'Operation Foot'.<sup>67</sup> On 24 September 1971, the Heath government gave the green light to this extraordinary measure, which expelled 105 alleged Soviet spies from London.<sup>68</sup> Apart from the invasion of Czechoslovakia, 'Operation Foot' caused the most severe crisis in Anglo-Soviet relations in the détente era.

Interestingly, 'Foot' originated not with the intelligence or military community, but was hatched in the Foreign Office, with George Walden of EESD playing an important role.<sup>69</sup> This can be seen not just as a good indicator of the level of Soviet intelligence activity in the UK, but also of the deep resentment felt by officials. Whitehall detested the way the Soviet Union was behaving. On the one

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<sup>66</sup> DBPO, III/III, No. 9, para. 2b. The quote refers to MBFR specifically, but captures the approach to CSCE at least as well.

<sup>67</sup> DBPO, III/I, No. 34. Author's interview with Mr George Walden, London, 14 June 2010.

<sup>68</sup> Geraint Hughes, "'Giving the Russians a Bloody Nose": Operation Foot and Soviet Espionage in the United Kingdom, 1964-71', *Cold War History*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (May 2006), pp. 229-249 (229).

<sup>69</sup> Author's interview with George Walden, London, 14 June 2010.

hand, Moscow was blatantly violating commonly agreed diplomatic rules and social norms of international society; on the other hand, it was stepping up its détente rhetoric, portraying itself as the force for international peace and reconciliation.

‘Foot’ might have given the Soviets ‘a bloody nose’, thus boosting British self-respect, but its magnitude and timing cemented London’s reputation as a bystander to détente. It happened three weeks after the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin was signed – the only significant negotiation on European security in which London had participated, albeit largely as a marginal player – and, as it turned out, only weeks before President Nixon announced his historic trip to Moscow where he was to sign the SALT and ABM agreements in May 1972. All the while, the French and especially the West Germans had pursued their own bilateral détente vigorously.

While they applauded the British action in private, none of London’s key allies imitated ‘Foot’.<sup>70</sup> It is therefore tempting to see Britain’s part in East-West diplomacy in the early 1970s as a complete reversal of its pioneering role twenty years earlier. In the early 1950s, London had tried, not without success, to edge out a role for itself as advocates of negotiations with the enemy. In the autumn of 1971, with all their key allies engaged in an intensifying ‘bicycle race’ to Moscow, London appeared to ostentatiously pedal in the opposite direction. At least in appearance, the British had turned from pioneers of the East-West rapprochement into détente’s ‘European leper’.<sup>71</sup>

In sum, this section has demonstrated that Britain’s political elite was deeply worried about the possibility that détente would undermine the military, political, and ideological basis on which the Western structure of deterrence had been based since

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid. Author’s interview with Sir Brian Fall, London, 15 March 2010.

<sup>71</sup> DBPO, III/I, No. 46, para. 4. In a memorandum of 29 February 1972, the Foreign Secretary expressed Britain’s place in European détente less drastically, but made essentially the same point: ‘[...] [B]y comparison with our continental partners, the British relationship with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as a whole seems cool and politically negative’. Ibid., No. 89, para. 1.

the onset of the Cold War. The ‘key dilemma’ was that they felt compelled by public opinion to endorse détente, despite the potential damage they feared it could do. Both the Labour and the Conservative government tried to use the prospect of a multilateral dialogue on European security as a tool to placate public opinion, but they employed different tactics. Whereas Labour had emphasised MBFR, the Conservatives grudgingly switched to a policy of hedged support for CSCE. The policy reversal of the Heath government of 1971 took place against the backdrop of sharply declining bilateral relations with Moscow.

Consequently, much of the detailed preparatory work for the CSCE was undertaken in an atmosphere of deep resentment of Moscow’s behaviour, intense suspicion of its East-West diplomacy, and profound concern for the impact of détente on Western resolve. It is to this preparation process that the next two sections of this chapter now turn. They will provide an overview of the contours of the CSCE agenda and examine how the Foreign Office tackled the ‘key dilemma’ of British détente policy in the CSCE context.

### **The ‘Dialogue through Communiqué’ Ends and the Contours of the CSCE Agenda Take Shape, 1970-1972**

While successive British governments struggled with the ‘key dilemma’ and tried out different multilateral tactics of moderating it, movement in bilateral and minilateral negotiations cleared away three major obstacles. This was largely due to the successes of Ostpolitik and superpower détente. Between NATO’s commitment to the CSCE at the Rome ministerial of May 1970 and the start of multilateral preparatory talks in November 1972, the Brandt government successfully concluded a range of epochal

bilateral treaties (a package collectively known as the ‘Ostverträge’).<sup>72</sup> Bonn’s hedged acceptance of the political and territorial status removed a central barrier to the multilateralisation of European détente. Second, the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin was signed in September 1971. Third, at the Moscow summit of May 1972, during which the SALT and the ABM treaty were signed, the superpowers agreed on a linked timetable for the CSCE and the MBFR.<sup>73</sup> Thus, Western acceptance of the long-standing Soviet proposal was traded for Eastern agreement to participate in the MBFR talks.<sup>74</sup> Less than a week after the Moscow summit, Washington agreed to participate in Multilateral Preparatory Talks (MPT); these were to hammer out the organisational framework and other details before the official start of the CSCE proper.

Britain remained on the sidelines during these bilateral and unilateral milestones in East-West diplomacy. The Berlin negotiations threw London’s marginalisation into particularly sharp relief.<sup>75</sup> Its legal rights as one of the four occupying powers secured HMG’s government a seat at the negotiation table and given the centrality of the German and Berlin question for the constructed peace, this

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<sup>72</sup> The Moscow Treaty was signed in August 1970 and the Warsaw Treaty in December of that year; both were ratified after an epic battle in the Bundestag in August 1972. The only exception was the FRG-GDR Basic Treaty; negotiations began in August 1972, but only concluded in late December, one month into the CSCE preparation meeting.

<sup>73</sup> The schedule foresaw the start of exploratory talks for the CSCE and MBFR in November 1972 and January 1973, respectively. As it turned out, the timetable was kept. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p. 534, fn. 19.

<sup>74</sup> Brezhnev had signalled his willingness to participate in MBFR in two speeches, one in late March and one in May 1971. Whereas Kissinger claims in his memoirs that the US’ ‘willingness to discuss détente had lured Brezhnev’ into MBFR, Garthoff argues that the Soviet leader made that move deliberately. Garthoff contends that Brezhnev wanted to help undercut the upcoming Congressional vote on the Mansfield resolution, which took place just five days after Brezhnev’s second speech. This is a question that only research based on Soviet sources can hope to answer conclusively. In the meantime, Garthoff’s explanation appears more persuasive because it explains both the substance and the timing of the Soviet turn to MBFR. (As noted in the previous chapter, NATO had proposed talks on force reductions in the Reykjavik Signal of 1968, but had received no response.) Assuming Garthoff’s explanation is correct, this further strengthens my argument that MBFR, despite its nominal aim, was primarily a device to placate public opinion and to *prevent*, rather than to produce significant changes to the constructed peace. For Kissinger’s version, see *White House Years*, pp. 947-949 (949); for the alternative explanation, cf. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, pp. 132-134.

<sup>75</sup> For a concise summary of the negotiations, see Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, pp. 135-139.

was surely a major potential asset. In fact, when the Labour Cabinet had contemplated in December 1969 whether Britain was being left behind in the ‘bicycle race’, one of the few reassuring aspects had been its presumed ‘major part’ in the preliminary talks on Berlin.<sup>76</sup> When these talks concluded in September 1971, London had de facto been reduced to a bit player. The core issues had been hammered out in the respective backchannels between Bonn and the superpowers, with Egon Bahr playing a central role.

Following the conclusion of various overlapping sets of negotiations, the ‘dialogue through communiqué’ between the two alliances, which had stalled and sputtered between 1966 and 1970, came to a fairly quick end in the early 1970s. This indirect form of communication was certainly cumbersome and time-consuming, but the slow-moving nature of the dialogue did have a positive side. Over the years, the alliances formulated their core desiderata more clearly, so that by 1972 the substantive contours of the erstwhile nebulous Soviet initiative had become more clearly visible. The remainder of this section analyses the main issue areas that had emerged during the ‘dialogue through communiqué’.

The exchanges between the alliances had made it clear that NATO and the Warsaw Pact shared a commitment to ‘minimalist’ détente in the sense that they wanted a stabilisation of the constructed peace at a lowered level of tension. This would prevent crises and military showdowns and create opportunities to increase mutually beneficial exchanges in the political and economic realm. The ‘dialogue’ had also shown, however, that both sides diverged over how to accomplish this. The Warsaw Pact states placed supreme emphasis on gaining multilateral recognition of Europe’s post-war borders. The key Foreign Office document from the pre-CSCE

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<sup>76</sup> DBPO, III/I, No. 39, para. 3.

planning stage expected that the Warsaw Pact states would use the conference ‘to formalise the “results of the Second World War”; i.e. the status quo in that part of Europe which is controlled by the Warsaw Pact Governments, with particular emphasis on frontiers (possibly as a substitute for a formal peace settlement)’.<sup>77</sup> In the eyes of the Foreign Office, this was one, perhaps *the* main prize for the Warsaw Pact states.<sup>78</sup>

Beneath the apparent unity of Warsaw Pact goals, the Soviet Union pursued a number of individual aims at the CSCE. At a time when Sino-Soviet relations were becoming increasingly hostile, the leaders in the Kremlin wanted to secure their Western border.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, the overall symbolic effect of having the entire continent plus the US and Canada attend a grandiose, Soviet-sponsored conference would amount to a validation of Soviet hegemony over Central and Eastern Europe as laid down in the Brezhnev Doctrine.<sup>80</sup>

In Warsaw Pact communiqués these goals manifested themselves in the call to adopt a ‘declaration of political principles’ at the CSCE, an item which was eventually incorporated into Basket I. The declaration was to list principles – most notably, ‘the inviolability of frontiers’ – whose observance the Communist states

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<sup>77</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 1, para. 8a. This document will be discussed in more detail below.

<sup>78</sup> DBPO, III/I, No. 37, para. 7. See also Main Report by Joint Intelligence Committee, 14 September 1972, *ibid.*, Appendix, para. 2, p. 527. To this date, there is very little archival-based research on Warsaw Pact and Soviet motives regarding the CSCE negotiations. Therefore, assumptions about the motives of the Communist states have to be taken with a grain of salt. The perhaps best overview is Svetlana Savranskaya’s chapter titled ‘Unintended Consequences: Soviet Interests, Expectations, and Reactions to the Helsinki Final Act’ in the conference volume *Helsinki 1975 and the Transformation of Europe*, edited by Gottfried Niedhart and Oliver Bange (Oxford/New York: Berghahn Books, 2008). One reason for this lacuna seems to be the restricted access to Soviet archives, which apparently has led scholarship on Moscow’s role to stall. A good indication for this lack of progress is that even the prestigious Cambridge History of the Cold War features a chapter on ‘Soviet Foreign Policy, 1962-1975’, which does not use any Soviet archival materials. The chapter, co-authored by Savranskaya and William Taubman, touches on Soviet détente and CSCE policy, but for evidence turns to classic works by Ulam and Garthoff and others from the 1980s and 1990s.

<sup>79</sup> DBPO, III/I, No. 37, para. 7. This argument was heavily used by Bahr to sell Ostpolitik to Bonn’s allies. See Sarotte, ‘The Frailties of Grand Strategies’, p. 154.

<sup>80</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 5, paras. 7-8.

deemed fundamental to strengthening peace and security in Europe.<sup>81</sup> The implications were clear: the adoption of the declaration would be tantamount to recognising the political and territorial status quo on the divided continent.

Drawing on Trachtenberg's work, I interpret the declaration of principles initiative as a Soviet attempt to codify the constructed peace. This tacit 'peace' had stabilised the Cold War in Europe in the early 1960s and the CSCE could contribute to turning this unstated, spheres-of-influence settlement into an explicit accord. From the Warsaw Pact perspective, the Helsinki talks were a logical extension of the process begun in the bilateral sphere by Ostpolitik. The CSCE would lock-in the concessions made by the West Germans in an international setting and further buttress the status quo, thus making peaceful co-existence 'irreversible', to use a popular Communist phrase.<sup>82</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Western goals for Helsinki were different. Western states showed a high degree of unity regarding defensive aims. The most important ones were to pre-empt Soviet attempts at 'wedge-driving' and to avoid the multilateral codification of the constructed peace.<sup>83</sup> The West Germans were adamant that the CSCE must not re-negotiate the 'Ostverträge' because this would jeopardise the fine line that Bonn was treading between acknowledging 'realities' and keeping the option of reunification open. London's allies, including Britain, fully supported this position. As argued in the previous chapter, British foreign policymakers did, in classical Realpolitik fashion, accept the borders of the divided continent as a function of the balance of power and hence an insuperable fact of life. But the private acceptance that

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<sup>81</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 5, para. 9.

<sup>82</sup> Making détente 'irreversible' became a leitmotiv of Soviet foreign policy in the early 1970s. It was formally adopted as USSR policy in a resolution of April 1973 passed by the Central Committee plenum of the CPSU. See Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p. 388.

<sup>83</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 1, paras. 9a, 12.

‘possession was nine tenths of the law’ did not mean that they were inclined to concede the remaining 10%, however symbolic that act might have been.

A more general defensive aim of Western states was to reframe the discourse on European security. This was a somewhat diffuse yet significant aim. The key Foreign Office document from the pre-CSCE planning stage states unequivocally: ‘NATO cannot afford to ignore the propaganda aspects of the Conference. It is important that we do not leave it to the Russians and their allies to define the obstacles to European security and cooperation which it is the assumed object of the Conference to reduce or remove’.<sup>84</sup> Whitehall’s insistence on this point is directly connected to London’s strategy of dealing with the ‘key dilemma’. After the Conservatives’ decision to de-emphasise MBFR, the CSCE was the only tool to tackle the dilemma. But, as a long-standing Soviet proposal and propaganda tool, the CSCE carried ideological connotations that the British found unpalatable.<sup>85</sup> As we will see below, much of London’s pre-planning was therefore focused on how to use the preparatory talks to reframe the public debate on European security. As a result of these concerns, Western states were resolved to stress the indivisibility of the political and military dimension of détente at the CSCE and, more specifically, to put military items in the form of confidence-building measures on the agenda.

The fields of economic, scientific, and technical cooperation – issues that were eventually grouped together in ‘Basket II’ during the MPT – proved less divisive in the run-up to the conference. In contrast to their status quo-centric stance on other agenda items, the Warsaw Pact states were keen to overcome the economic dimension

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., para. 14.

<sup>85</sup> For much of the 1950s and 1960s the mere phrase ‘European security’ was so inseparably tied to Warsaw Pact propaganda that it represented little more than a ‘code word’ for the subjugation of German power. Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, pp. 131-132.

of the ‘Yalta division’ of Europe.<sup>86</sup> This was, of course, a central element of the doctrine of ‘peaceful co-existence’, which foresaw that economic barriers should be lowered while the politico-ideological ones should remain intact. The Communist approach to Basket II followed along these lines.

Reflecting their relative economic weakness, the Warsaw Pact states were more enthusiastic about discussing trade and technology, but both sides broadly agreed that a major détente conference was needed to discuss these areas of cooperation. The Foreign Office, while not openly challenging this point, was not keen to negotiate on these subjects. Given the weak state of the UK economy and the need to cut public expenditure, the Foreign Office had no additional funds at its disposal for promoting East-West cooperation.<sup>87</sup> Whatever the Helsinki talks would decide, Whitehall would pay its share of the costs of the conference, but was unwilling to commit additional resources to fostering détente. Furthermore, the experts in the Foreign Office, who had been discussing these issues year in and year out in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), were sceptical about the intrinsic merits of (re-)negotiating the complicated details of East-West trade in this unwieldy gathering of thirty-odd states.<sup>88</sup>

Western states reluctantly agreed to discuss Warsaw Pact desiderata, including the declaration of principles and economic cooperation, but, in return, they insisted on a broader agenda. They maintained that the concepts of ‘cooperation’ and ‘security’ must not be restricted to the items that the Warsaw Pact states were proposing. NATO accomplished this aim incrementally. The first opening towards a widening of the Warsaw Pact conception of détente was achieved when the Communist states gave in

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<sup>86</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (New York: Random House, 1993), p. 261.

<sup>87</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 11, para. 4e.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 1, para. 7.

to Western pressure and conceded the inclusion of ‘cultural’ aspects as a topic on the CSCE agenda.<sup>89</sup> The implication was, however, that cooperation in the cultural sphere was to be limited to intergovernmental exchanges. This was to become a major subject of debate at the preparatory talks, as the following two chapters will demonstrate.

In sum, the substantive debates surrounding the ‘dialogue through communiqué’ largely validate Timothy Garton Ash’s summary of how opposing conceptions of détente clashed in the CSCE context: ‘Helsinki was susceptible to very different interpretations. From the outset, there was not one but many ideas of Helsinki. There was Helsinki as the confirmation of Yalta and Helsinki as the negation of Yalta’.<sup>90</sup> In other words, the CSCE served as a microcosm in which different ways of revisiting the constructed peace clashed with each other. We now turn to how the Foreign Office prepared itself for this argumentative battle.

### **Between ‘Hard-Headed’ Allies and the ‘Wet Front’: The Foreign Office Defines Britain’s Role for the MPT/CSCE, 1972**

Different approaches to the CSCE not only divided East and West; they also constituted a source of tension within the West. The remainder of this chapter discusses how the Foreign Office defined Britain’s approach to the CSCE and how it planned to position itself among its key allies.

In early 1972, the Foreign Office embarked on an extensive and detailed pre-planning exercise for the CSCE. It was driven by three main concerns: how to tackle

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<sup>89</sup> Angela Romano, *From Détente in Europe to European Détente: How the West Shaped the Helsinki CSCE* (Bruxelles/Oxford: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2009), pp. 114-119.

<sup>90</sup> Garton Ash, *In Europe’s Name*, p. 259. While there is plenty of evidence that the West wanted to avoid rubberstamping the status quo, there is little to suggest that Britain or any of its allies thought that the CSCE could be turned into a ‘negation of Yalta’. The Foreign Office assumed that Ostpolitik had gone a long way towards de facto recognising the division of Europe and did not expect that this concession could be reversed at Helsinki.

the key dilemma, how to frustrate Soviet designs, and how to maintain Western unity. The planning exercise coincided with and was reinforced by a momentous development in British foreign policy: on 23 January 1972, Prime Minister Edward Heath signed the Treaty of Accession to the European Community, an act that has rightly been described as a ‘revolution in British foreign policy’. Consequently, from February onwards, Britain participated as a candidate country in the ‘Davignon machinery’ of European Political Cooperation (EPC), the forerunner of the still on-going efforts at establishing a Common Foreign and Security Policy.<sup>91</sup> This had a direct and important impact on how Whitehall prepared for the Helsinki talks given that EC states had decided to coordinate their CSCE policies through the Davignon mechanism. The Foreign Office, which had supported EC membership since the 1960s, welcomed the new opportunities that EPC represented. Britain would now be able to influence the formulation of Western détente policy from within the two primary institutions of the West: the EC and NATO. But it also worried about the potential problems associated with dividing Western preparations for a major international conference between two fora. Due to the timing of Britain’s accession, however, the major decision had been taken well before London was allowed into the EC.

The foreign ministers of the six EC member states had launched EPC in October 1970.<sup>92</sup> They had charged the political directors from their foreign ministries

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<sup>91</sup> The standard reference works on EPC remain Panayiotis Ifestos, *European Political Cooperation: Towards a Framework of Supranational Diplomacy?* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1987) and Simon Nuttall, *European Political Co-operation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). For theory-driven account, see Alfred E. Pijpers, *The Vicissitudes of European Political Cooperation: Towards a Realist Interpretation of the EC’s Collective Diplomacy* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1990).

<sup>92</sup> The creation of the Davignon committee goes back to the EC summit at The Hague of December 1969 when the six heads of state had instructed their foreign ministers to produce a plan for widening and deepening political integration, including proposals for coordinating external policy. The final communiqué declared that the aim was to create a ‘united Europe capable of assuming its responsibilities in the world of tomorrow and of making a contribution commensurate with its tradition and mission’. The heads of state specified this ‘tradition and mission’ as ‘a common heritage of respect

who sat on this new body with the daunting task of identifying common positions for the Helsinki talks. The choice of the CSCE as a focal point of EPC consultations was, as Daniel Möckli notes, 'both obvious and surprising'.<sup>93</sup> It was obvious because the pan-European conference would directly affect the interests of each EC member state and because the Soviet Union was expected to use the pan-European conference to impair West European integration.<sup>94</sup> In early 1971, the political directors of the EPC had decided to found a working group on the CSCE, thus paralleling the on-going preparatory work conducted in NATO.<sup>95</sup>

As a latecomer to West European integration, London had not been involved in EPC decision-making. As discussed above, while London's relations with Moscow deteriorated sharply in the late 1960s and early 1970s, its involvement in Western discussions was confined to NATO. Throughout this period, Britain's number one priority had been to gain EC membership. At the time, a minority in the Foreign Office had criticised the degree to which British enthusiasm for Western Europe contrasted with London's lack of an Ostpolitik. For example, in late 1969, Sir Duncan Wilson, the tireless advocate of a more proactive détente policy, had urged his colleagues in London

to overcome any remaining tendency [...] to handle the two main aspects of our European policy (integration with the West and 'co-existence' with the East) in

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for the liberty and rights of man' and the ambition 'to bring together democratic States with freely elected parliaments'. Brandt's Hague speech argued the visionary case for turning the EC into 'an exemplary scheme' that would become an element of a pan-European structure of peace. Interestingly, the German chancellor justified his call for a more assertive, joint policy not only with reference to European values, but pointed to the instrumental need of holding Europe's own against the superpowers and to preserve its identity amidst the Cold War struggle. An excerpt of the communiqué is reprinted in Christopher Hill and Karen E. Smith, *European Foreign Policy: Key Documents* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 72-74 (72). On the significance of the Hague summit, see Möckli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War*, p. 26.

<sup>93</sup> Möckli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War*, p. 40.

<sup>94</sup> Angela Roman, *The Main Task of the European Political Cooperation: Fostering Détente in Europe*, in Pauland Villaume and O. Arne Westad (eds.), *Perforating the Iron Curtain: European Détente, Transatlantic Relations, and the Cold War, 1965-1985* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2010), pp. 123-142.

<sup>95</sup> Möckli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War*, p. 40.

separate watertight compartments. Whether we like it or not, there is going to be an important interaction between the two, and it is important that they should be kept in line so far as possible.<sup>96</sup>

As ever so often with Wilson's ideas, he was brusquely rebuked by the hardliners and flatly told that the problem he described simply did not exist. But as we have seen, in the two years following the ambassador's despatch, the asymmetry grew drastically and while London negotiated its EC accession feverishly, its policy towards the East ground to a halt. However, in February 1972, as candidate members and newcomers to EPC, Britain had the opportunity for a fresh start. EPC's deliberations on the CSCE offered London the chance of reducing the disparity between its Eastern and Western policy.

Yet this is not how most civil servants in the Foreign Office saw it, at least not initially. In early 1972 when the preparation process for the CSCE started in earnest, officials worried about the potential impact of EPC on transatlantic cohesion. The Foreign Office did not think that Western pre-planning should be conducted in two parallel caucuses. Officials were concerned about duplication of work and suspicious of the French-led initiative, which, they feared, could create transatlantic friction and encourage Soviet wedge-driving.<sup>97</sup> But as latecomers to European integration, the British had missed the opportunity to influence these institutional decisions, and thus had to make the most of this *fait accompli*. Their concern about the interplay between this new institution and NATO further deepened FCO scepticism towards the Helsinki talks.

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<sup>96</sup> Sir Duncan Wilson (Moscow) to Brimelow (London), 6 November 1969, UKNA, FO 1116/15.

<sup>97</sup> For FCO concerns, see DBPO, III/II, No. 29, para. 2c, No. 46, paras. 25-26. For British analyses of American concerns about the EPC role in regard to the Conference, see *ibid.*, No. 7, fn. 10, No. 15, para. 8, No. 21, fn. 3.

By 1972, the Heath government and the Foreign Office were opposed to the Helsinki talks, but, given their marginalisation in East-West diplomacy, had come to accept that it would be next to impossible to try and boycott the conference. The prevailing mood is well expressed in a minute by Charles Wiggin, the Assistant Under-Secretary, who wrote in March 1972: ‘The conference is (probably) inevitable rather than desirable, and our primary aim defensive’.<sup>98</sup>

The most important defensive goal was to maintain the unity of the West. Therefore, London intended to contribute to the Western preparation process by, on the one hand, acting as NATO’s ‘Cassandra’, but, on the other hand, mediating between détente enthusiasts and Cold Warriors. In a sense, UK officials’ concern for Western unity overrode their détente scepticism; instead of adopting a hardline stance, they almost did the opposite. Once they deemed the CSCE inevitable, officials were convinced that London needed to position itself as a moderating force.

The British were by no means the only CSCE sceptics, however. In fact, there was a wide range of opinion in the West about Helsinki, with states disagreeing markedly about the risks and opportunities associated with the conference. It is therefore no exaggeration to argue, as Petri Hakkarainen has done, that some of the most ‘decisive battles’ regarding the CSCE have been fought *within* the West.<sup>99</sup>

In these battles, London consciously tried to seize ‘the middle ground in NATO and the Nine, leaning if anything slightly to the right of the centre’, as the UK delegation to the preparatory talks was to put it later.<sup>100</sup> The FCO wanted to curb the enthusiasm of the NATO ‘left’, but accepted that, in the name of Western cohesion, the British would need to help build bridges between the détente devotees and the true

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<sup>98</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 3, para. 19.

<sup>99</sup> Hakkarainen, *Amplifying Ostpolitik*, p. 87.

<sup>100</sup> Draft Report of UK Delegation to the MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter VI, para. 9.

Cold Warriors. The British genuinely sympathised with the views of its most sceptical allies, such as the Netherlands and Italy, but they chose not to act upon them. Conversely, UK officials ridiculed what they saw as unjustified ‘euphoria’ on the part of its more optimistic partners, who apparently believed that détente and the CSCE could contribute to overcoming the division of Europe. Thus, labelling the British as Cold Warriors is simplistic. Whitehall was deeply sceptical of certain aspects and unintended consequences of détente, and, by extension, disliked the CSCE. But, as we shall see in the following chapters, the British fairly consistently embraced a pragmatic approach. As a result, the hardliners’ opposition to flexible diplomacy and compromise solutions became a constant source of irritation in Whitehall. In an interview, Sir Brian Fall, the acting head of the UK delegation to the preparatory talks, recalled that the hardliners ‘were so good at saying “no” that you could not persuade them that it had stopped raining, so they were still there with their umbrellas, immobile under the tree’.<sup>101</sup>

### *A Tour of NATO*

To substantiate these points and advance the argument, a brief tour d’horizon of the Western alliance is required, to allow us to look more closely at how Britain’s key allies approached the CSCE. The United States belonged to the group of NATO states that saw the least intrinsic value in the conference. Whereas the State Department saw some potential merit in the CSCE idea per se, the White House conceived of the CSCE exclusively in instrumental terms. For Henry Kissinger, the conference was but one ‘element in the more important game of US/Soviet relations’.<sup>102</sup> The CSCE thus

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<sup>101</sup> Author’s interview with Sir Brian Fall, London, 15 March 2010.

<sup>102</sup> This is how Helmut Sonnenfeldt, one of Kissinger’s closest aides, paraphrased the Secretary of State’s take on the CSCE in a conversation with a FCO diplomat in March 1974. DBPO, III/II, No. 69, fn. 4. The quote reflects Kissinger’s tendency to view major foreign policy issues through the lens of

reflects Kissinger's view of European détente in general; its significance lay almost entirely in its value (or lack thereof) to superpower détente.

By mid-1972, the linkage strategy seemed to have outlived its usefulness to the White House. The Nixon administration had exploited Soviet interest in the CSCE as a bargaining chip to extract concessions regarding Berlin and MBFR. By the time NATO readied itself for the MPT, the Kremlin had agreed to enter into force reduction talks (May 1972) and the Quadripartite Agreement had come into force (June 1972).<sup>103</sup> The White House had secured some mileage out of the CSCE and moved on, pre-occupied with the 'important game' of superpower détente and a host of other problems: Vietnam, a declining economy, growing domestic unrest etc. From that point onwards, Nixon and Kissinger considered the Helsinki talks primarily in terms of a potential irritant in US-Soviet and transatlantic relations. For example, if America's allies pressed Moscow too hard, the White House would be put in the awkward position of having to decide between its commitment to superpower détente and transatlantic solidarity. These and other concerns led the White House to adopt what came to be known within the FCO as the 'low profile'.<sup>104</sup> For much of the CSCE negotiations, the US delegation did not even have instructions and thus, much to the chagrin of some of its more ambitious members, did not contribute significantly to the talks.<sup>105</sup>

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superpower relations. Hanhimäki has identified the resulting inability to judge seemingly 'peripheral' issues on their own terms as one major 'flaw' of the Realist 'architect'. The failure to see the CSCE's intrinsic potential is a case in point. See Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>103</sup> For the US, the CSCE was perhaps part of an even more extensive bargaining package. In his memoirs, Kissinger claims that he sought to exploit Soviet interest in European détente to enhance the American bargaining position regarding SALT. Kissinger, *The White House Years*, pp. 412-416, 424. Later on, he and Nixon tried to barter progress in the CSCE and MBFR for Moscow's support on a Vietnam settlement. *Ibid.*, pp. 1128, 1249-1250.

<sup>104</sup> DBPO, III/II, Nos. 25, 107, para. 3.

<sup>105</sup> Maresca 1985. Author's interview with Sir Brian Fall, London, 15 March 2010.

During the Anglo-American bilaterals and Western consultations that took place both before and during the CSCE, Kissinger rarely missed an opportunity to stress ‘the unimportance of the CSCE in the overall scheme of things’ and to imprint on his allies that he shared the Soviet view that the conference should be as brief as possible.<sup>106</sup> As early as February 1973, the Secretary of State argued that the West needed to accept that little progress at the CSCE was possible and that NATO ‘should let the Russians, as sponsors, have what they wanted, a short snappy Conference with little substance’.<sup>107</sup>

The Americans also entertained doubts about Western cohesion at the CSCE. The six EC states had decided to coordinate their CSCE policies not only within NATO, but also within the new ‘Davignon’ framework.<sup>108</sup> Anticipating transatlantic discord as well as duplication of work and information leaks, the British delegation to NATO prepared a comprehensive memorandum on NATO-EPC relations for Alec Douglas-Home. According to the memo, Washington worried that

it will be impossible to persuade the eight to budge in NATO once they have agreed their line in Davignon. [...] This fear is coloured by the impression that the actual effect of the Davignon consultations will be to bring all the eight into line with the French, whose position on many issues is the furthest removed from that of the Americans.<sup>109</sup>

An examination of recently declassified State Department documents of the period shows that the British assessment was valid. The US did worry about West European foreign policy co-ordination, France’s potential dominance of the EC and

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<sup>106</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 25, para. 4.

<sup>107</sup> This was reported to the FCO by a leading Luxembourgian diplomat. See *ibid.*, fn. 6.

<sup>108</sup> Romano, *From Détente in Europe to European Détente*, pp. 157-160.

<sup>109</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 15, para. 8. The spectre of information leaks stemmed from the fact that not all members of NATO were members of the European Community and vice versa. Also, prior to Britain’s entry, EPC members had agreed to keep important aspects of their internal deliberations secret and had resisted repeated American demands for greater transparency. On the American side, the issue was exacerbated by Kissinger’s obsession with secrecy, which caused a good deal of irritation in the Foreign Office. On the secrecy agreement and its consequences for transatlantic relations, see Möckli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War*.

deteriorating UK-US relations. For example, a memorandum of January 1974 evaluates the impact of EC coordination on British foreign policy and the Anglo-American 'special relationship'. Reviewing the first year of Britain's accession, the document asserts that the

falling into line of the British with the rest of the Nine has been very noticeable in some areas [...]. The result has been to leave the US in isolation. [...] Sometimes the British have done this reluctantly. [...] [This is] a British trend which is probably irreversible. This is not to say that nothing is left of the special [sic] US/UK relationship, but the pattern now is for the UK to consult with [the] US only after they have positioned themselves with respect to the rest of the Nine.<sup>110</sup>

The memorandum reported that the French were increasingly 'pulling the rest of the EC in their direction', concluding that the American 'ability to play off one member of the EC-9 against another has become minimal'.<sup>111</sup> That same month, similar views were expressed at the highest level, when Lord Cromer, the UK ambassador in Washington, made his farewell visit to the White House. President Nixon complained that the French were 'hopelessly self-interested', the Germans 'schizophrenic in their foreign policy', and urged the British to take over a leadership role in Europe.<sup>112</sup>

The White House was not alone in its negative view of the Helsinki talks. Alongside the US, the FCO classified the Netherlands, Greece, Turkey, and especially Italy as hardliners prone to 'very sinister' views of Soviet intentions and 'hard-headed' views of the prospects of the CSCE.<sup>113</sup>

In contrast, Whitehall thought that France's position was more moderate and hence more compatible with the British approach. This is surprising given that

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<sup>110</sup> Hoffmann to US Mission Geneva, 4 January 1974, US State Department, Central Foreign Policy Files. (Henceforth, CFPF.)

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> DBPO, III/IV, No. 37, para. 3.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., No. 8, paras. 9-10. For an excellent discussion of Italian CSCE policy, see Dassù, 'An Italian View'. For a first-hand account of one of Rome's diplomats, see Ferraris, 'On the Backstage of the Negotiations in View of a European Security Conference', pp. 139-159.

previous accounts tend to contrast British and French CSCE policy, portraying France as a uniquely ‘dedicated’ CSCE enthusiast.<sup>114</sup> However, Quai d’Orsay officials were considerably more sceptical than their government’s pro-détente rhetoric suggested.<sup>115</sup>

Certainly, de Gaulle had tried hard to cultivate a ‘special relationship’ with the Soviet Union, based on the grandiose-sounding yet ill-defined triptych of ‘détente, entente, and collaboration’. He had supported the CSCE idea ever since his trip to Moscow in 1966. The general can thus be credited with kick-starting a process of ‘Europeanising’ détente at a time when his key partners were still reluctant to make significant steps towards a rapprochement.<sup>116</sup> Yet behind the Gaullist façade, sober views prevailed as French proposals regarding the structure of the conference indicate. These reflect a keen awareness that the negotiations were likely to be long and strenuous. For example, the Quai d’Orsay suggested that the CSCE should be held in three consecutive stages, with each part being dependent on the success of the other. By withholding consent to enter the next stage of the conference, Western states would be able to turn the staged approach into leverage. They could draw out the negotiations at each stage or even threaten to withdraw from the Helsinki process altogether. As we shall see in the following chapters, the former tactic was to become a key Western trick throughout both the MPT and the formal negotiation stages.

Whereas British officials supported much of the substance of French CSCE policy, the opposite was true for the French government’s stance on intra-Western co-ordination. After its departure from NATO’s military wing, Paris refused to participate in alliance consultations on the CSCE.<sup>117</sup> British officials criticised this as

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<sup>114</sup> Mayer, *National Foreign Policy through Multilateral Means*, p. 104.

<sup>115</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 8, para. 7.

<sup>116</sup> Bozo, ‘A French View’, pp. 67-69.

<sup>117</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 19, para. 2i.

an unnecessary complication of Western co-ordination.<sup>118</sup> They were particularly concerned that differences over the formalities of consultations could easily aggravate the already strained relationship between Washington and Paris, undermining Western unity. The Foreign Office sensed the need to mediate and instructed the UK delegation to ‘maintain the closest contact’ possible with their French colleagues. As with their relationship to the Americans, the British deemed ‘maintain[ing] the closest contact’ with the French essential ‘if Western coordination is to be a reality’.<sup>119</sup>

The West Germans held a ‘guardedly optimistic’ view of the conference, the FCO thought.<sup>120</sup> Like the French, they were essentially moderates who in all likelihood would play a constructive role during the upcoming MPT. The FCO assessed – correctly, as we now know – that Bonn’s view was less sceptical than the British outlook.<sup>121</sup> Over the years of Ostpolitik negotiations, a small circle of dedicated officials in the Auswärtiges Amt had developed a degree of genuine enthusiasm for the CSCE. Equipped with formidable experience and expertise in negotiating détente agreements, these officials looked forward to the start of the MPT with an eagerness that was entirely lacking in the Foreign Office. The enthusiasm of individual diplomats, like Götz von Groll (who was to head the FRG delegation), was an important factor influencing the West German policy formulation process already well before the MPT.<sup>122</sup> As we will see in the next chapter, a comparable degree of fervour on the British side only emerged during the course of the pre-talks, when it

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., No. 17, para. 17.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., No. 8, para. 2.

<sup>121</sup> The authoritative study is Hakkarainen, *Amplifying Ostpolitik*. See also Mayer, *National Foreign Policy through Multilateral Means*, pp. 109-114, 124-149 and Kristina Spohr Readman, ‘National interests and the power of “language”: West German diplomacy and the conference on security and cooperation in Europe, 1972-1975’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 6, pp. 1077-1120.

<sup>122</sup> Hakkarainen, *Amplifying Ostpolitik*, p. 162.

became clear that the hardliners' worst-case thinking was not borne out by the reality of the MPT.<sup>123</sup>

The FCO recognised, however, that the Germans, as a divided nation, had the most to lose from a conference where thirty-odd states would negotiate highly sensitive issues, such as the inviolability of post-war borders.<sup>124</sup> The British respected Bonn's special interests on these issues and were determined to continue with the supportive stance that had marked London's policy towards Ostpolitik over the preceding years.<sup>125</sup>

The Foreign Office was not as accommodating to the views of the more enthusiastic and optimistic members of NATO, a group of states including Canada, Norway, Denmark, and Belgium. While sympathising with the anti-CSCE hardliners, UK officials ridiculed this pro-détente camp in NATO as the 'wet front'.<sup>126</sup> The British assumed that these states naïvely believed in the CSCE as a way of negotiating a 'genuine' rapprochement and that they simply wished away the danger of stoking a public 'euphoria' about détente. As we have seen, the Foreign Office prioritised countering public détente sentiment and deemed strengthening the West's defences – one of the pillars on which the constructed peace rested – much more important than risking a 'euphoria'.<sup>127</sup> To bring about the 'more rational and stable system' mentioned in the Tickell minute, the Warsaw Pact states would need to move beyond vague declarations and make tangible concessions on a wide range of topics, including the abandonment of the Brezhnev Doctrine, disarmament, intelligence, and humanitarian issues. As of 1972, mainstream opinion within the FCO deemed it

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<sup>123</sup> This was a recurring theme in the interviews with former UK officials conducted for this study.

<sup>124</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 8, para. 2.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 3.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 11.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 8.

highly unlikely that the conference would play a significant role in bringing about change along these lines.<sup>128</sup>

*Human Rights and Détente: The British 'Lemon Strategy'*

As a result of this fundamental disagreement, London also disagreed with the 'wet front' on the related point of tactics. The more optimistic states feared that raising controversial topics, for example human rights issues, would antagonise the Warsaw Pact and wreck the conference. The FCO, too, saw that risk, and instructed the delegation to abstain from unnecessarily provoking the Communist camp.<sup>129</sup> Yet London was nevertheless determined to raise human rights issues at the beginning of the MPT and to secure a separate agenda item devoted to this subject. This resolve was motivated in large part by the perceived imperatives of the Cold War propaganda battle: human rights could be instrumentalised to score points domestically and to put the Warsaw Pact states on the defensive internationally.

This line of thinking is clearly reflected in British documents. For example, EESD official George Walden, one of the masterminds behind Operation FOOT, advocated a tough stance on the human contacts provisions in Basket III: 'We must squeeze the Russian lemon very hard to demonstrate to public opinion how little juice there is in détente à la russe'.<sup>130</sup> Walden, Tickell and their colleagues were concerned

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<sup>128</sup> The British assessment of Canadian CSCE diplomacy was probably off the mark. Primary research conducted for this study has found no evidence of naïveté on Ottawa's part, which suggests that at least some sceptics in the FCO were out of touch not only with Western public opinion, but also with the thinking on détente of their allies. In fact, Ottawa perceived itself as quite tough and, at least in regard to Basket III, this self-assessment seems more accurate than the FCO's 'wet front' label. Evidence for toughness can be found in US-Canadian exchanges, during which Washington inquired about the reasons behind Ottawa's hard-headed stance on Basket III. An internal seminar on the outcome of the Helsinki talks reveals that domestic identity-building played an important role. As one Canadian official put it: 'The conference had provided a theatre of activity with which Canadians could identify themselves – as such, the results of Canada's involvement should have a unifying aspect'. See 'Summary: Seminar on CSCE', 2 June 1975, CANA, RG-25, Vol. 9093, vol. 54.

<sup>129</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 17.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., No. 31, para. 3.

with what they perceived as a growing détente ‘euphoria’ in Western societies. They hoped that highlighting the illiberal nature of Communist societies would help offset the effects of Brezhnev’s peace propaganda.<sup>131</sup>

Additionally, the FCO wanted to manoeuvre the Warsaw Pact countries to an awkward negotiating position so they would either be forced to make concessions in this sensitive area or expose the hollowness of their détente rhetoric at a large-scale international conference.<sup>132</sup> In the former case, some small-scale improvements for those living behind the Iron Curtain might actually ensue. In the latter case, the Communist countries would need to come out openly in favour of repressive measures. The FCO predicted that the ‘lemon strategy’ stood a very good chance of ‘drawing the Russians and others into making ham-fisted statements in favour of censorship’.<sup>133</sup> Either way, the ‘lemon strategy’ could work in the favour of Western states.

It is tempting to infer from statements like these that the Foreign Office was solely concerned with the defensive aims of maintaining alliance cohesion, and stiffening up Western public opinion through propaganda politics. And, indeed, this is the view that prevails to this day in the handful of existing accounts of Whitehall’s CSCE policy. As noted above, Bange claims that the FCO discovered the transformative potential of the CSCE only towards the end of the conference; without using a theoretical framework or terminology, he essentially attempts to explain UK officials’ stance on human rights as the effect of socialisation. This is compatible with Hughes’ contention that the FCO was only interested in human rights issues in order to ‘discredit Soviet propaganda rhetoric on “peaceful co-existence”’.<sup>134</sup> ‘[T]he UK’s

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<sup>131</sup> Author’s interview with George Walden, London, 14 June 2010.

<sup>132</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 1, para. 16.

<sup>133</sup> The term ‘lemon strategy’ is mine. The quote is from Walden’s minute, *ibid.*, No. 11, para. 9.

<sup>134</sup> See Hughes, ‘British Policy towards Eastern Europe and the Impact of the “Prague Spring”’, p. 134.

intention’, Hughes maintains, was to embarrass the USSR rather than to actively [...] challenge the status quo in Eastern Europe’.<sup>135</sup>

In contrast, I argue that British policy was not entirely instrumental and cynical. Policymakers and officials sincerely believed that their demands were justified and that their requests could ameliorate the Cold War status quo – if only the Soviet Union wanted this. This normative dimension of UK foreign policy is clearly reflected in internal documents, which defined demands for strengthening civil liberties as ‘a *fair* test of the sincerity of the Russians in pursuing a policy of *détente as we understand it*’.<sup>136</sup> This hints at the fact that the Foreign Office’s interest in human rights went beyond the realm of propaganda politics; its advocacy of liberal values reflected genuinely held beliefs and was seen as a legitimate and necessary challenge to the Soviet Union’s overly narrow conception of *détente*. As the following quote from a minute by Crispin Tickell indicates, in FCO thinking a *Realpolitik* concern for security blended seamlessly into *Moralpolitik* with transformative ambitions:

[I]f greater security and cooperation in Europe are to mean anything, we must get more than a declaration of principles to justify the status quo. Such an outcome could lessen our security by creating a misleading impression of euphoria and deprive us of our first real chance since the War of achieving the conditions for [a] *more civilised* relationship between *the peoples as well as governments of East and West*.<sup>137</sup>

Thus, to do British CSCE policy justice, it is essential to appreciate that this challenge was motivated both by instrumental propaganda concerns as well as by authentically idealistic intentions. To acknowledge the ‘peaceful co-existence’ of these two core goals goes a long way towards rectifying the inaccurate picture of UK policy that dominates the literature. The British were not simply unreconstructed Cold Warriors,

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., No. 46, para. 21 (my emphasis).

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., No. 89, fn. 7 (my emphasis).

and cynical defenders of the status quo. A careful reading of the documents clearly reveals that, alongside defensive aims and instrumental motivations, UK diplomats did see the CSCE as a potential way of actually improving and partially transforming the status quo. Let us return to George Walden's minute to substantiate this point. To Walden, pursuing the 'lemon strategy' and achieving small-scale improvements were not mutually exclusive. It is thus no coincidence that the same paragraph that recommended using topics such as freer dissemination of information to lure the Soviets 'into making ham-fisted statements in favour of censorship' goes on to say the following:

But it is also in the information field, we think, that *our most significant and tangible gains* might be secured, and we should work hard at establishing a series of *practical proposals which stand a good chance of being accepted*. There is clearly no question of the Russians or East Europeans agreeing to unrestricted circulation of Western Books and newspapers in their countries. But the following proposals may be difficult for them to turn down out of hand: a) the mutual establishment of reading rooms and libraries in each other's capitals' [...]. b) The establishment of an East/West magazine, which could grow out of the publication of the CSCE minutes [...]. This would have a joint, and perhaps rotating membership (one East, one West, one neutral) and cover 'cooperation' subjects, e.g. economic collaboration, pollution, etc. [...] c) A mutual commitment to publish in full in one or two national newspapers a statement of agreed length provided by each country on its [sic] National Day. d) Improved exchanges in the field of films, radio and television. [...]<sup>138</sup>

If British CSCE policy had been as single-mindedly driven by propaganda politics as the literature suggests, there would simply have been no need for careful, detail-oriented pre-planning of this kind. Yet the Foreign Office did work intensively on concrete proposals that were likely to be *accepted* by the Warsaw Pact states. The fact that UK officials did so well *before* the start of the MPT further lends support to my claim that British policy was underpinned by genuinely idealistic elements. These normative concerns were present at the creation of London's CSCE policy; they

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., No. 11, para. 9 (my emphasis).

neither emerged belatedly after the negotiations had started (as a socialisation argument would expect), nor are they results of retrospective rationalisation, i.e. of officials putting a liberal gloss on cynical propaganda politics after the event (as a Realpolitik perspective would suppose).

This overview made a contribution to the existing literature by demonstrating that the British, contrary to popular belief, were not ‘the last Cold Warriors’. Attitudes and approaches within the West varied markedly and London did not position itself among the hardliners. They certainly did not expect much progress towards lowering the barriers between East and West and, in contrast to the ‘wet front’, categorically rejected the hope that détente could help overcome the Cold War divide. But scepticism about the CSCE was widespread in the West and the ‘lemon strategy’ distinguished the UK approach not just from the détente enthusiasts, but also from the hardliners.

Like the hardliners, the FCO saw détente as supplementing rather than replacing the Cold War. Hence the British view of the CSCE as an occasion for ‘*judicious* political warfare’.<sup>139</sup> However, contrary to the Cold Warriors, the FCO wanted to stand firm on core desiderata without unnecessarily antagonising the East. Provided that the West remained united and that the Soviet Union showed some flexibility, the British were determined to ensure a ‘business-like’ conference resulting in small, but tangible improvements in East-West relations.<sup>140</sup> In other words, the ‘lemon strategy’ worked both ways: British officials wanted to ‘squeeze’ their opponents hard, but they also wanted to make the most of whatever ‘juice’ the Helsinki talks might be able to extract. This dual goal necessitated the adoption of a pragmatic and flexible approach to the Helsinki talks. This explains why British

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., No. 8, para. 2 (my emphasis).

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., No. 1, para. 10.

officials, while sympathising with the hardliners, positioned themselves in the moderate middle in NATO and EPC. They wanted to play the role of ‘Cassandra’ to the ‘wet front’ and to convince the hardliners of the need to assume a constructive posture. The next two chapters will trace Britain’s role in the Multilateral Preparatory Talks.

## CHAPTER 4

### 199 Days in the ‘Sexy Bar’: The Multilateral Preparatory

#### Talks, Part 1, 1972–1973

##### **Introduction**

This chapter and the subsequent one trace Britain’s role during the CSCE’s Multilateral Preparatory Talks, which were held from 22 November 1972 until 8 June 1973. The official goal of the MPT was to settle the formalities of the CSCE, most importantly the content and wording of the agenda, the organizational structure and rules of procedure of the conference proper. The 34 delegations from East, West, and the neutral groupings were tasked with discussing these aspects, formulating and assembling them in one outcome document. This text – the ‘Helsinki Recommendations’, also known as the ‘Blue Book’ – was then to serve as a ‘manual’ on whose basis the conference proper was to be held. Each government, by formally announcing its participation, would agree to adhere to the provisions of the Helsinki Recommendations. However, what could have been a brief exercise in diplomatic formalities quickly turned into a de facto full-fledged international conference. Over the course of 199 days, participants reached important agreements, which were to condition key aspects of the CSCE.

Western diplomacy at the meeting, which took place in the facilities of the Student Union of Helsinki University of Technology in Dipoli, a conference centre just outside of the Finnish capital, has not yet received a thorough academic analysis.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A brief narrative, written by one or several participants who preferred to stay anonymous, can be found in Ferraris (ed.), *Report on a Negotiation*, pp. 9-40. Due to the uncertain authorship, this thesis

This is partly due to its ambiguous status as an integral yet unofficial part of the conference proper. Consequently, scholars of the early period of the CSCE process differ over whether to include Dipoli into their work. This can be illustrated using two of the best works on the pre-history of the Helsinki Final Act. Petri Hakkarainen meticulously researched the role of the CSCE in West German foreign policy from 1966-1972, but left the MPT unexamined.<sup>2</sup> This delineation of the scope of enquiry forced him to take a big leap from the pre-history of the conference directly to the adoption of the Helsinki Accords:

Many of the substantive initiatives the Federal Republic made in the Western conference preparations remained unresolved by the time the CSCE participants convened in Finland in November 1972. Over time, however, all of the essential German ideas found their way into the Helsinki Final Act.<sup>3</sup>

Whereas Hakkarainen can be understood as implying that we do not need to investigate the preparatory talks to understand the Final Act, Takeshi Yamamoto takes a somewhat different view. Yamamoto's work on British, French, and West German foreign policy in the pre-conference period includes a brief section on the MPT. Curiously, he does concede the importance of the pre-talks while radically downplaying the significance of every single *official* negotiating stage of the CSCE proper: 'Although the details were only finally settled during the working phase of the CSCE from 1973 to 1975, the substance of the Helsinki Final Act of August 1975 went no further than what the West had discussed before the opening of the conference in 1973'.<sup>4</sup>

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will not use this account, drawing on clearly identifiable sources instead. For a highly informative account of neutral diplomacy, see Thomas Fischer, *Neutral Power in the CSCE: The N+N States and the Making of the Helsinki Accords 1975* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2009), pp. 151-217.

<sup>2</sup> The Dipoli meeting is treated in one paragraph. See Hakkarainen, *Amplifying Ostpolitik*, pp. 268-9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270.

<sup>4</sup> Yamamoto, *The Road to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, p. 12.

Both statements raise thought-provoking questions about the contribution of Western states and the role of these early negotiations – formal and informal – in hammering out the substance of the Final Act. We will return to these questions in chapters five and six when discussing the significance of the CSCE proper; at this point, it is sufficient to note the scholarly disagreement about the importance of the MPT and the resulting gap in the literature, which this chapter will fill.

### *The MPT as a Microcosm of Détente*

The MPT, I argue, should be seen as a microcosm of European détente (see introduction). Just like the official stages of the conference, the pre-talks brought together the most important state actors and, save for disarmament, discussed the full array of the most crucial issues, ranging from the borders of the divided continent to travel arrangements for divided families, from principles guiding relations between states to the civil liberties of individuals.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to clarifying the procedural aspects and other formalities of the talks, the MPT's significance to this thesis is two-fold. First, the pre-talks forced the participating states to clarify their positions. Since 1966, NATO and the Warsaw Pact had communicated repeatedly yet indirectly with each other by issuing general communiqués about détente and European security. The convening of the MPT required that both blocs and the neutrals/non-aligned formulate more specific proposals for fostering détente in a direct multilateral dialogue. As this chapter and the following ones will demonstrate, this process generated significant tension between but also within the blocs.

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<sup>5</sup> Elliott (Helsinki) to FCO, 'CSCE: The First 200 Days', Diplomatic Report No. 305/73, 13 June 1973, UKNA, FCO 28/2168, paras. 2-3, 10, passim. (Henceforth, Elliott, 'CSCE: The First 200 Days', UKNA, FCO 28/2168.)

At the MPT, British foreign policymakers were confronted with Soviet proposals that reflected a fundamentally different approach to détente. The USSR wanted the MPT/CSCE to endorse a narrow notion of rapprochement: Moscow's conception of détente was status quo-oriented, state-centric and divisible. In other words, Moscow wanted détente in general and the CSCE in particular to freeze the territorial and political status quo in place, including the division of Germany and Soviet hegemony over Central and Eastern Europe. To achieve this aim, the USSR pursued a policy of inter-governmental accommodation. Moscow sought to relax tensions by increasing the interaction between states – not between societies. To Soviet authorities, détente did not mean relaxing their tight grip over exchanges between civil societies across the Iron Curtain. Furthermore, the Kremlin sought to compartmentalise détente. The easing of tension between states in the political realm and increased, government-controlled interaction in the economic field were not meant to spill over into the military, ideological and socio-cultural domains. The Soviet Union therefore saw no contradiction between easing tensions between the blocs, while at the same time tightening its grip on its allies and on its own people.<sup>6</sup> Repression at home and abroad – as reflected in the crushing of the dissident movement and the Prague Spring – did not violate the spirit of détente as conceived by Moscow. Neither did its rejection of Western calls for reducing the Soviet Union's superiority in conventional forces in Europe.

At its core, Britain's approach to détente in general, and to the CSCE in particular, aimed at widening the Soviet Union's restrictive conception. London and, to varying degrees, its allies endorsed a dynamic notion of détente, maintaining that diplomatic engagement needed to increase interaction not just between states, but also

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<sup>6</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 5, para. 19, *passim*.

between peoples. Moreover, London espoused a holistic view of détente, stressing the indivisibility of rapprochement in the political, military, and socio-cultural sphere. This approach to détente is clearly visible in the NATO brief for the MPT, which was based on a British draft. The alliance committed itself to three ‘positive aims’:

[the] reduction of barriers within Europe, especially by promoting freer movement of persons, information and ideas and by developing East/West cooperation; [...] achievement of appropriate confidence-building measures; increase in the freedom of manoeuvre of East European countries by reducing the scope for application of the Brezhnev doctrine.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to its role in clarifying participants’ positions, the second major significance of the MPT lies in its pioneering role of setting the foundation for a compromise between these two conceptions of détente. Over the course of those 199 days, Britain and the other 33 states agreed on procedural arrangements and an agenda, which allowed for the discussion of each other’s core aims. In doing so, the agreements reached in Dipoli laid the groundwork for the set of interlocking compromise packages, which eventually paved the way towards the Helsinki Final Act.

### *Approach and Themes*

These wide-ranging and important functions of the MPT – its official purpose of settling the formal arrangements of the CSCE and its de facto substantive role of clarifying positions and pre-negotiating a bargain between two conceptions of détente – require a close examination of the preparatory talks. A detailed narrative of the Dipoli meeting is needed to understand the subsequent, official stages of the CSCE and Britain’s role within it. This is especially the case because the political devil

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., No. 17, fn. 3.

really was lurking in the details; as we will see, what might at first appear as a technicality reveals a political core at closer inspection. The ever-acerbic Henry Kissinger suggests in his memoirs that the talks got lost in endless bureaucratic quarrels, progressively degenerating into ‘multilateral diplomacy run amok’.<sup>8</sup> A closer, less biased look shows how these ‘bureaucratic’ fights were in reality almost always highly political: they reflected differing national interests flowing from opposing conceptions of détente. As our examination of British CSCE diplomacy will show, the diplomats he ridiculed as ‘cloistered medieval monks elaborating sacred texts’ rarely lost awareness of the political rationale underpinning their daily toils.<sup>9</sup>

This chapter and the following one trace London’s part in the Dipoli talks. A key theme of the overarching narrative of the chapters pertains to the evolution of the British role during the MPT. Despite their active role in pushing NATO towards MBFR and CSCE, the British started into the Dipoli talks as sceptical and fairly marginalised bystanders to détente. But over the course of the Dipoli gathering, their attitude and their overall role gradually changed. Through skilful and pragmatic diplomacy, London earned respect from friend and foe alike, thus gaining influence as the talks progressed. The UK delegation acted, with some success, as a ‘bridge’ between hardliners and détente enthusiasts within the West and, increasingly, contributed to the bargaining between the three groupings. In doing so, the British helped lay the foundation for a multilateral bargain between differing national interests and conceptions of détente. These were significant achievements, demonstrating that Kissinger’s mockery was misplaced. While the ‘flawed architect’ of détente travelled the world pursuing grand designs, HMG’s diplomats were

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<sup>8</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, p. 642. On Kissinger’s view of the CSCE, see Hanhimäki, “‘They Can Write it in Swahili’: Kissinger, the Soviets, and the Helsinki Accords, 1973-1975”, *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 2003), pp. 37-58.

<sup>9</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, p. 642.

judiciously contributing to building the house of multilateral European détente brick by brick in Dipoli.

No narrative can cover everything; nor should it. Mirroring the nature of its subject matter, conducting research on multilateral negotiations is a complicated task, which necessitates striking a compromise between complexity and comprehensibility. To reflect adequately the intricate reality of negotiations, the following sections are structured chronologically. I will discuss each of the four negotiating sessions of the MPT in turn, so as to do justice to the general dynamics of the talks, the specific path dependency of individual sets of decisions, and the evolution of the British role. So as not to get lost in the details of the more than six months of bargaining, I will concentrate on those aspects of the MPT that are necessary to understanding the conference proper. Elements that were relevant only to the Dipoli gathering, but had no significant impact on the CSCE will be treated in passing or altogether omitted. Specifically, I will focus on those aspects that are key to understanding a) the organisational frame and procedure of the CSCE; b) the main substantive issues, which were to prove divisive during the official negotiations; c) the development of the British role within the Western co-ordination process and at the conference at large. The judicious application of these criteria will ensure that a compromise between intricacy and clarity is struck that conveys a good deal of the nuances of the talks without losing one's way in the labyrinthine nature of multilateral diplomacy.

## **The Start of the MPT, November 1972**

My colleagues, who vary considerably in their experience of multilateral diplomacy, found themselves sitting around a large hexagon of tables with microphones in front of them, advisers behind, and very little idea of what awaited them.  
– T.A.K. Elliott, UK Ambassador to Finland<sup>10</sup>

On 22 November 1972, the ambassadors of 34 states gathered in the concrete buildings of the Finnish Students Union in Dipoli for the inaugural session of the multilateral preparatory talks. 18 years after Molotov's initial proposal and half a decade after the Warsaw Pact had re-launched the campaign for a European security conference, the start of the MPT was marked by a curious mix of clarity and uncertainty. On the one hand, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Britain and its allies and partners had spent a considerable amount of time and energy preparing for the gathering, orchestrating a common Western position and trying to predict the line the Warsaw Pact would take. Consequently, EPC in particular entered the talks with a united position on almost all major topics.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, as indicated by the quote above, participants were uncertain about how exactly such a mass gathering – the biggest congregation of European states in a generation – would function. What complicated the start of the MPT was that East and West fundamentally disagreed about the nature and purpose of the talks.

The Soviet Union had accepted the idea of a preliminary meeting only grudgingly, as part of the pre-conference bargaining game between the blocs. Then, Moscow and its allies had been arguing for a short meeting to formulate an agenda in broad terms and to settle basic formalities. Perhaps most significantly, the Warsaw Pact states had treated Western readiness to enter into pre-talks as a firm commitment

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<sup>10</sup> Elliott (Helsinki) to FCO, 'CSCE: The First 200 Days', UKNA, FCO 28/2168, para. 1.

<sup>11</sup> The only major exception pertained to the security content. See Draft Report of the UK Delegation to the MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter X, para. 5. (Henceforth, Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167.)

on the part of NATO and EPC to participate in the CSCE proper. London rejected the notion of a direct linkage between the MPT and the conference proper, wholeheartedly supporting the official Western line that the talks only served an exploratory function: to gauge whether East and West's conceptions of détente overlapped sufficiently to warrant grandiose, Congress of Vienna-style conference diplomacy.<sup>12</sup> This non-committal approach was the result both of Whitehall's genuine scepticism regarding the CSCE and of a tactical rationale: the more credible the official Western stance – the MPT as a test – could be maintained, the more effectively the talks could be used as a lever to extract concessions that would make the conference more palatable. As we will see, the West would repeatedly employ this tactical approach throughout the negotiations, exploiting to great effect Brezhnev's apparent eagerness to hold a grand summit.

*The Three Phases of Dipoli I, 22 November 1972-15 January 1973*

These fundamental differences between East and West manifested soon if not immediately after the MPT opened under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General of the Finnish Ministry of Affairs, Richard Totterman. It had been agreed in advance that the first stage of the Dipoli talks (also known as 'Dipoli I') would consist of three phases: a discussion of basic procedural agreements; a general debate; and a discussion of the work programme for the CSCE proper. Following the conclusion of the first stage, participants would then formulate an agenda and make procedural and organisational recommendations on the basis of which the CSCE proper was to be held. Totterman, who was to prove an able and impartial chairman throughout the

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<sup>12</sup> The UK delegation defined the objective of the Dipoli gathering as establishing 'that enough common ground existed among the participants to warrant reasonable expectations that a conference would produce satisfactory results'. Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter I, para. 7.

MPT, oversaw a fairly uncontroversial first phase.<sup>13</sup> Participants swiftly agreed that all decisions to be taken at the MPT and the CSCE proper required consensus. The quick settlement of what could potentially have been a divisive issue was facilitated by the fact that, in the run-up to Dipoli, the Warsaw Pact states had made their opposition known to any form of qualified majority voting.<sup>14</sup> Although undisputed at the time, the decision to proceed by consensus was of crucial significance. From the MPT onwards, this procedural rule shaped the character of the CSCE negotiation regime decisively.<sup>15</sup> By turning the norm of sovereign equality into an absolute rule governing the decision-making process, the consensus imperative made each participant a veto player. This particularly empowered small states and medium-sized powers such as Britain at the expense of the superpowers.<sup>16</sup> The procedural equality ruling the proceedings at the MPT/CSCE moderated disparities in material power. That a superpower like the Soviet Union argued in favour of the consensus principle was an irony not lost on UK diplomats. In a despatch summarising the Dipoli experience, T.A.K. Elliott, the head of the delegation to the MPT, attributed this decision to miscalculation on the part of the Kremlin:

[...] [T]hey did not judge the situation very accurately. From the first, they found themselves in a forum where they could expect the regular support of only six out of thirty-four delegations; and where the neutral countries, because of the consensus rule, had much more incentive to express, and to persist in expressing, their individual points of view [...]. In the early days of the talks I sometimes had the impression that the Soviet spokesmen were in a state bordering on panic as they found themselves in the negotiating position rather less strong than they had enjoyed in the UN in the early 1950s.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Elliott, 'CSCE: The First 200 Days', UKNA, FCO 28/2168. para. 17.

<sup>14</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter I, para. 3.

<sup>15</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 139, para. 16.

<sup>16</sup> This was to be most drastically demonstrated in mid-July 1975 when Malta held up the conclusion of the final negotiation stage to Kissinger's and Gromyko's dismay. See DBPO, III/II, No. 132, para. 7iii.

<sup>17</sup> Elliott, 'CSCE: The First 200 Days', UKNA, FCO 28/2168, para. 19. See also DBPO, III/II, No. 19, fn. 9.

The importance of individual states – no matter how big or small in material terms – was further emphasized by a Romanian initiative. The Romanians wanted the MPT to formally acknowledge the independent participation of each state, regardless of whether they belonged to one of the blocs. Following Soviet objections to the wording, the following formulation was adopted: ‘These consultations will take place outside the military alliances’.<sup>18</sup> While not affecting the reality that coordination at the MPT (and later the CSCE) *did* primarily take place along the lines of military groupings, the formal rejection of bloc-to-bloc negotiations coupled with the consensus rule levelled the playing field, particularly increasing the leverage of actors heretofore marginalized by the Cold War system.

The ambassadors then moved into the second phase of the opening stage – the general debate –, which was when the fundamentally differing views of *détente*, often hidden in seemingly ‘procedural’ aspects, surfaced. The debate turned out to be ‘an unexpectedly one-sided affair’.<sup>19</sup> Warsaw Pact states, intent on keeping the MPT short and general, ‘gave no indication of what they thought the conference should achieve’.<sup>20</sup> In contrast, Western delegates spoke at length along the lines laid out in the NATO brief for the MPT. Based on a British draft, the brief reflected the core aims outlined above of turning the MPT into a test as to whether enough common ground existed and into a lever to extract concessions to increase that ground on Western terms. In concrete terms, the British delegates and their colleagues were instructed to achieve two specific aims:

- i. an *agenda* which will allow Ministers to raise at the conference proper the points to which they attach importance; and,

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<sup>18</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter I, para. 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 4.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

- ii. an *organisational structure* for the conference which will ensure that the various items on the agenda receive detailed examination before any decisions are taken.<sup>21</sup>

In essence, Western delegations were charged with ensuring that the MPT created a structure capable of widening the Soviet conception of *détente*. The difficulty of this task would become clear during the general debate. The Soviet delegation proposed an agenda in very general terms only and, intent on moving on to the conference proper as quickly as possible, largely declined to elaborate on the three broad headings it contained: 1. political aspects of security; 2. economic cooperation and other forms of cooperation; 3. creation of a permanent organ.<sup>22</sup>

None of the proposed agenda items came as a surprise to the British since they had figured prominently in the Warsaw Pact communiqués in previous years. Eastern speeches in the general debate did little but restate familiar positions. Above all else, the contributions to the general debate highlighted the priority the Warsaw Pact attached to the first item.<sup>23</sup> In particular, the Soviet Union and its allies proposed that the CSCE issue a declaration of general principles, which, taken together, would be the basis of a ‘new system of security’. Ironically, none of the general principles proposed, such as the non-use of force in inter-state relations, were novel and it remained unclear how these would amount to a ‘new system’.

The British delegates joined the general debate by emphasising that *détente* needed to produce practical results instead of vague declarations. They therefore argued for a wider and more concrete range of issues to be included on the agenda and insisted that the MPT engage in an in-depth discussion of each of them. Showing themselves in no rush to finish the talks, they stressed the need for tangible results

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<sup>21</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 17, para. 3 (my emphasis).

<sup>22</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter I, para. 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter IV, para. 4.

that would manifest themselves both in concrete improvements in the everyday lives of individuals living on the divided continent as well as in the military sphere. The West argued that fostering human contacts, lowering the barriers to the free flow of information while building confidence in the military realm were crucial if the rhetoric of détente was to become a reality. In particular, they demanded that human rights topics, such as human contacts and the freer dissemination of information, be put on the agenda as a single, stand-alone item. This, of course, was the ‘lemon strategy’ in action. The West drew attention to the closed nature of Communist societies in order to either force the Warsaw Pact to make concessions in this sensitive area or to publicly expose the narrowness and hollowness of their conception of détente. This rationale largely explains why, from the first stage of the MPT onwards, Britain’s delegates and many of their Western colleagues were to put extreme emphasis on procedural arrangements that were likely to lead to comprehensive discussions and hence to a drawn-out, perhaps even inconclusive conference.

Given the opposing views of East and West, the neutral and non-aligned states’ position became particularly important. In anticipation of this situation, the Foreign Office had reached out to neutral states like Austria, Sweden, and Switzerland in August and September 1972.<sup>24</sup> The FCO then instructed its delegates at Dipoli to ‘cultivate the Neutrals’<sup>25</sup> and ‘to discourage them from setting up a “neutral bloc” which might tend to make a virtue of adopting positions distinct from those of the West’.<sup>26</sup> To the relief of the UK delegations, the neutrals did not assume an

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<sup>24</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 13, para. 4. See also *ibid.*, III/II, No. 10, para. 10.

<sup>25</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter V, para. 26.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter X, para. 3. Given the complexity of the multilateral negotiations under discussion and my focus on the British role, a certain degree of simplification is inevitable in order not to get lost in the nuances of neutral/non-aligned positions. In the following, I will use ‘the neutrals’ or the acronym ‘NNA’ as shorthand for all the neutrals and all the non-aligned participants to the MPT/CSCE. This is

equidistant position between the blocs during the MPT. During the general debate, they ‘staunchly supported’ the Western position on human rights and, more generally, endorsed the view that the conference needed to produce concrete results instead of mere declarations.<sup>27</sup> London’s efforts probably played only a marginal role in influencing the neutral position on human contacts and information, but their resounding support for the Western position on human contacts and related items definitely helped to legitimize the discussions on these sensitive issues, which the Warsaw Pact claimed were domestic issues and hence ill-suited for multilateral discussion.

The combined weight of Western and neutral opinion put the Warsaw Pact on the defensive from the start. The Soviet Union and its allies were forced to defend the status quo in this field. They did so throughout the MPT/CSCE by trying to make a legalistic argument that Western and neutral positions amounted to a violation of sovereignty and the corollary norm of non-interference. The Communist delegations attempted to reinforce this line of reasoning by giving it a socio-cultural note, emphasizing ‘the need to respect other peoples’ [...] customs and to refrain from any form of interference’.<sup>28</sup>

In order to move the talks forward anyway, the Soviet Union widened their proposed second agenda item to read ‘economic *and other forms of* cooperation’<sup>29</sup>. The West objected to this attempt to subsume human contacts and related issues under a different heading and insisted on a separate listing of this item on the agenda. A stalemate ensued, which lasted well beyond the first stage of the MPT.

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neither meant to suggest unanimity of opinion, nor to imply that a specific position was closely coordinated. It does, however, indicate that, *broadly speaking*, a specific position was endorsed by at least a substantial number of these states. For an in-depth treatment of the neutral and non-aligned at the CSCE, see Fischer, *Neutral Power in the CSCE*.

<sup>27</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter VI, para. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., para. 2 (my emphasis).

Marked East-West differences also characterized the third phase of Dipoli I, which was tasked with agreeing on the work programme for the rest of the Dipoli talks. NATO and Warsaw Pact states voiced opposing views regarding the order in which work should be tackled.<sup>30</sup> Again, what might appear as a technicality reflected a deep political divide and, consequently, mutually exclusive approaches to the MPT. The Soviet Union and its allies reiterated their interpretation that states' participation in the Dipoli gathering amounted to a *de facto* agreement to participate at the CSCE. They therefore argued that the assembled delegations should now focus on setting the time and the date of the conference proper and on deciding related issues. EPC and NATO delegations continued to reject the assumption of a direct, unconditional link between the MPT and the conference proper. Western diplomats re-emphasized that the MPT resembled a test of whether a CSCE was likely to produce tangible results and reiterated that Dipoli needed to establish that enough common ground existed. This, they argued, would be proven by agreement on three aspects: a) a satisfactory *agenda*, including human contacts and other human rights-related topics; b) an organisational *structure* conducive to exhaustive discussion of the agenda; c) specific *terms of reference*.<sup>31</sup>

In the preceding phase, Western delegations had made specific suggestions on all three aspects. While disagreement on the agenda has already been analysed above, a few words on the other two Western demands are now in order. The French delegation had taken the lead in elaborating a specific proposal regarding conference structure prior to the MPT and had tabled it during the first stage.<sup>32</sup> The French proposed a 3-stage model for the conference proper, with each successive stage being

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., chapter I, para. 7.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., paras. 7-9.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., para. 7. See also DBPO, III/II, No. 16, para. 1a.

contingent on the success of the preceding one. The conference would be formally inaugurated at the first stage; during the following stage, the conference would branch out into committees where the substantial negotiations would take place; during the final stage, an outcome document would be signed. In essence, the French proposal amounted to a device of extending the Western approach to the MPT – using Dipoli as a test and as a lever – into the conference proper. During such a drawn-out process, the West could use each stage to gauge whether enough common ground existed and as a device to exploit Brezhnev’s apparent desire to see his pet project concluded quickly and at the highest level. The Foreign Office strongly supported the French approach, but was concerned that Paris, eager to foster its ‘special relationship’ with Moscow, might not end up exploiting the potential leverage of the 3-stage model to the fullest.<sup>33</sup> At this stage, the British were still among the most sceptical members of NATO and EPC, and the deep-seated distrust of détente in general and the CSCE in particular, resulted in a fairly hard-line stance regarding the agenda-setting and on organisational issues.

The latter was evident in British endorsement of the 3-stage model and the related issue of terms of reference. While the importance of an agenda including human rights-related subjects is clearly recognisable as a direct result of the ‘lemon strategy’, it may not be immediately obvious why the Foreign Office should have been so adamant about terms of reference. Since these were to become a major sticking point of the preparatory talks, a brief explanation is warranted. It was a key British ambition that the MPT formulate specific terms of reference (or ‘mandates’) for each item on the agenda. The Foreign Office brief for the MPT defined this as ‘a

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<sup>33</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter I, para. 9. See also *ibid.*, chapter VII, para. 8 and chapter XI, para. 5.

major point of importance to us'.<sup>34</sup> They did so because the terms of reference were meant to guide the work during the substantial negotiation stage at the conference proper. According to the French model, the second stage of the CSCE would see the creation of committees. The mandates were important to ensure exhaustive negotiations during that crucial stage by serving as a link between the agenda and the organisational structure: they were to guarantee that each issue of each agenda point was thoroughly discussed in the committees before the CSCE could be concluded.<sup>35</sup> The mandates thus served as a device to pre-empt a scenario in which the Soviet Union would appease the West by conceding a broad agenda and an elaborate conference structure, but then, having secured agreement on uncontroversial points, press for a speedy conclusion of the talks. Under such a scenario, human rights and other key desiderata were likely to be brushed aside and the West would find itself in the undesirable position of holding up the talks. To avoid the risk of being portrayed as unjustifiably obstructing the conclusion of a major international agreement and of sabotaging détente, the British deemed the connection between the organisational structure and the terms of reference 'crucial to the Western concept of the conference'.<sup>36</sup>

Whether the Soviet Union was prepared to even discuss the concept of mandates in Dipoli had remained unclear until the start of the MPT. During Anglo-Soviet bilaterals in the run-up to the preparatory meeting, Moscow had not elaborated on this point, prompting subsequent speculation by the Foreign Office. In view of this uncertainty and as a result of the above considerations, the British took a fairly uncompromising stance towards Warsaw Pact proposals regarding the timing and

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<sup>34</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 17, para. 10. See also *ibid.*, No. 16, para. 1a.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* See also Elliott, 'CSCE: The First 200 Days', UKNA, FCO 28/2168, para. 5.

<sup>36</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter VII, para. 8. See also *ibid.*, chapter I, para. 8.

level of the conference. During the debate of the work programme, they therefore rejected the Soviet proposal to set the opening of the CSCE for June 1973.<sup>37</sup> Deliberately aiming to ‘exploit [...] Soviet anxiety’ to finish the Dipoli meeting quickly, the UK firmly pushed for the inclusion of terms of reference into the work programme for the rest of the MPT. As with the unresolved issue regarding the separate listing of human contacts, the Warsaw Pact refused to budge and a deadlock ensued.

The impasse lasted well into December 1972 and, with the Christmas recess looming, pressure mounted to make some headway so that in the new year the MPT could commence formulating specific recommendations on which basis the CSCE would be held. Unfortunately for the West, it was the neutral delegates – not the Soviet Union – who started to become anxious first. Furthermore, the British suspected that some members of the ‘wet front’ were also beginning to slip.<sup>38</sup> These developments moved the French delegation into the spotlight. As the original authors of the Western core document of conference organisation and procedure, the French, backed especially by Britain and the rest of the Nine, bore the brunt of the criticism from the East. To the satisfaction – and perhaps even mild surprise – of the British, the Quai d’Orsay held firm. During the deadlock, Paris sent instructions to its diplomats to sit the deadlock out, thus re-affirming the position previously agreed within EPC.<sup>39</sup> In the end, the disagreement was solved on terms favourable to the West by the adoption of a compromise proposal sponsored by a neutral state. Originally introduced by Yugoslavia and subsequently amended by the West, the proposal included in the work programme the fixing of the conference date and other

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., chapter IXb, para. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., chapter X, para. 5.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

aspects demanded by the East as well as the setting of the agenda and terms of references demanded by the West.<sup>40</sup> This compromise formula marked the end of the first stage of the Multilateral Preparatory Talks, which formally concluded on 15 December 1972.

The British were content with the outcome of the meeting because a core defensive aim had been fulfilled: Moscow had ‘failed in their attempt to settle the site, place and participation of the conference before we had discussed the agenda and related questions’. As a result, the strategy of using the MPT as a test and a lever to extract concessions was still intact and could be used in the following stages to ensure a thorough discussion of points of interest to the West. This was in no small part due to Western cohesion and, especially, the show of resolve by EPC states. The summary report of the UK delegation judged the row over terms of reference as the, so far, ‘only major test of loyalty to common positions’<sup>41</sup> and particularly praised the performance of the French delegates at what arguably was a juncture of the preparatory meeting: ‘The French were clearly in the key position, and there is no doubt that had they accepted a weak formula a number of our partners would have rallied to them’.<sup>42</sup> And with this positive experience of Western, and especially EPC cohesion, fresh in their minds, the UK delegates packed their bags and returned home for a well-deserved break after two months of diplomatic skirmishes.

### *The Christmas Recess*

During the Christmas recess, the Foreign Office took stock of the MPT and plotted the next moves for stage two. After a month of formal negotiations in the concrete

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., chapter I, para. 8.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., chapter X, para. 5.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

building of the Finnish Student Union, often followed by informal talks in the Union's pub – the 'Sexy Bar' –, the FCO's assessment was on the whole positive.<sup>43</sup> On the plus side, the Western performance had been marked by a high degree of cohesion. This had been much aided by the careful pre-planning before the MPT and the 'leisurely pace' of the exchanges in Dipoli. At this point, the MPT were conducted in plenary sessions, which only met once a day, thus leaving plenty of time for consultations among the Nine.<sup>44</sup> As an expression of the general desire to speak with one voice in foreign affairs, EC member states had resolved to co-ordinate within EPC first before consulting with other Western states. By previous agreement, co-ordination among the Nine took place on an on-going basis both onsite in Dipoli and by regular meetings of the EPC machinery in Brussels. The British delegation decided many tactical issues on the spot in close contact with the eight other Western European delegations. Important issues of substance and major tactical questions were relayed to the Political Directors who met several times throughout the first stage of the MPT. According to T.A.K. Elliott, this two-tier structure functioned well; the hierarchical relationship with the Political Directors clearly in charge helped maintain 'discipline' among the delegations and to keep in mind 'the broader picture'.<sup>45</sup> There was, however, a major problem associated with harmonizing the views of nine states on a broad range of topics in general and with the two-tier structure in particular: it proved incredibly time-consuming.

The prioritization of EC consultations and the time-intensive process of policy formulation and co-ordination made Britain's role in transatlantic relations more complex. The Foreign Office welcomed E(P)C membership, but was somewhat

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<sup>43</sup> The name of the student pub is mentioned in a letter from George Walden to Brian Fall of 5 June, 1973, which summarised certain aspects of the MPT. For example, Walden wrote that 'some of the close diplomatic in-fighting took place in the "Sexy Bar"'. See DBPO, III/II, No. 37, fn. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Elliott, 'CSCE: The First 200 Days', UKNA, FCO 28/2168, para. 2.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 10.

anxious about how these changes would affect transatlantic relations in general and Western co-ordination during the Helsinki talks in particular.<sup>46</sup> At the highest level, the ‘re-launch of Europe’ led to tension between the troika of Brandt, Pompidou, and Heath on one side of the Atlantic, and Nixon and Kissinger on the other. This is probably best reflected in the acrimony over Washington’s ‘Year of Europe’ initiative and Kissinger’s subsequent efforts to get the Nine to return to the traditional practice where Britain and other EC states maintained close bilateral contacts while the decision-making process within the EC was still underway.<sup>47</sup>

One can easily see how the Dipoli talks foreshadowed key aspects of these high-level quarrels on the working-level of experts.<sup>48</sup> As during the ill-fated ‘Year of Europe’, the Foreign Office was apprehensive about excluding the US and reconciling its traditional reliance on NATO with its new role as an EC member:

One of our major objectives during the preparatory talks was to maintain the close co-ordination with our partners and allies which had marked the detailed work done in the political consultations of the Nine and in NATO to prepare for their opening. This work was made more complicated by the fact that from February 1972 we found ourselves discussing the same or similar issues in two fora. As the work of the Nine gathered momentum the difficulties of avoiding duplication with NATO and, more importantly, of avoiding presenting our allies with decisions of the Nine presented as a *fait accompli* [sic] became greater.<sup>49</sup>

The first stage of the MPT showed that the risks of *faits accomplis* and transatlantic miscommunication were not negligible. This was in no small part due to the differences between NATO and EPC co-ordination. In contrast to the Nine, NATO consultation was less institutionalised and, on several issues, less close. The NATO

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<sup>46</sup> See especially the thoughtful dispatch of the UK ambassador to NATO, Sir Edward Peck to Alec Douglas-Home, DBPO, III/II, No. 15.

<sup>47</sup> The best archival-based study of the ‘*relance européenne*’ is Möckli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War*. Möckli depicts in detail how Kissinger eventually succeeded in driving a wedge between the Nine. See *ibid.*, chapter 9. For a detailed summary of UK-US interactions during the ‘Year of Europe’, see Catherine Hynes, *The Year that Never Was: Heath, the Nixon Administration and The Year of Europe* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2009).

<sup>48</sup> This further supports my argument that the CSCE represented a microcosm of *détente*.

<sup>49</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter X, para. 2.

brief for the MPT had merely instructed the fifteen delegations to work out ‘practical and discreet ad hoc arrangements’.<sup>50</sup> This relatively loose framework was reinforced by meetings of the NATO machinery in Brussels, which decided on important policy questions.<sup>51</sup>

To complicate things further, the start of the Dipoli exchanges also highlighted the need to strike a balance between the labour-intensive EPC co-ordination and consultations with the neutrals and non-aligned. The first stage of the MPT had shown the value of cultivating this loose grouping of states. Given that on many issues states were divided along bloc lines, they de facto performed a role that can be roughly equated to ‘tie-breakers’ or ‘swing voters’. On the whole, the neutrals, instead of assuming a position of equidistance, tended to lean towards the Western side. Due to its careful advance preparation, Britain and its partners had been able to present a well-argued case on several issues, resulting in neutral support. For example, neutral backing proved important in putting the Warsaw Pact on the defensive over human rights. The Foreign Office thought it essential to attain the continued goodwill of the NNA on other key issues dividing East and West, such as the topic of terms of reference.

In fact, much of the discussion between Britain and its EPC partners during the break between the first and second stage of the MPT focused on how to overcome the stalemate on mandates. EC states were agreed that the concept of terms of reference needed to be included in the Helsinki Recommendations; at the same time, they were concerned about losing neutral backing if the deadlock were to continue much longer. Instead of risking a standoff with the Soviet Union, the head of the UK delegation recommended adopting a flexible approach, recommending that EPC

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., para. 3.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

‘bypass discussion of the work programme and table proposals on the agenda and on the terms of reference in such a way as to make it clear that we intend the two to be considered together’.<sup>52</sup> This approach quickly won support within the Foreign Office and was approved by Alec Douglas-Home at the start of the New Year, just in time for an expert meeting of EPC officials on 3-4 January.<sup>53</sup> The final decision was taken by the West Europeans during a meeting in Brussels on 9 January, and subsequently endorsed by NATO’s Senior Political Committee (SPC). Thus, the West adopted a flexible tactic along British lines: rather than drawing out the work programme debate, EPC would sidestep the stalemate by presenting proposals which de facto implied the concept of mandates. As we will see in the next section, the resulting diplomatic offensive was to dominate the course of the second stage of MPT and help shape the rest of the CSCE. Because of its overall significance, it is important to point out the impact of concern for the neutrals on the process of West European policy formulation. In fact, the documents reveal a direct causal link between EPC sensitivity for neutral opinion and the tactical shift away from explicit inclusion of mandates into the work programme:

It was decided that [...] there would be no advantage in fighting the point [...]. This might indeed have proved counter productive in the light of a general desire among neutral and non-aligned delegations to get down to business. It was *therefore* decided that the West should table its own proposals for the agenda and the terms of reference [...].<sup>54</sup>

The Nine spent the remainder of the recess hammering out the details of that diplomatic initiative, with Britain playing an active part.

Before we move into the second stage of the MPT, a few words on the UK role during the opening stage of the Dipoli gathering and on the delegations itself are

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<sup>52</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 19, para. 3iii.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, fn. 13.

<sup>54</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter I, para. 11 (my emphasis).

in order. This is relevant because, as we will see throughout this thesis, the personalities of the diplomats involved were at times highly important. Although IR as a discipline neglects the agency of individuals, a number of vital aspects and developments of the Helsinki process cannot be understood without taking certain personalities seriously.<sup>55</sup>

The Foreign Office fielded a relatively small delegation whose members were among the youngest and most junior diplomats at the pre-conference; a choice, which reflected British scepticism towards the Soviet initiative.<sup>56</sup> As the resident ambassador, Sir T.A.K. Elliott was officially put in charge of the delegation. Elliott seems to have been more active in Dipoli and more personally interested in the talks than other ambassadors. His dispatches reflect a detailed knowledge of the process and a personal devotion to the cause; also, unlike many other ambassadors, he went on to serve as the head of the delegation during the first part of the Geneva stage. However, as Elliott graciously acknowledged himself, the delegation was led by Brian Fall of EESD, who, together with the other first secretaries on the delegation, shouldered the lion's share of the daily negotiations.<sup>57</sup> The determined leadership of Elliott and Fall, coupled with the youthful enthusiasm of the other diplomats, was to become an important resource in the months, during the daily toil over the wording – and even the sentence structure, punctuation, translation etc. – of the Helsinki Recommendations.

In the initial stages of the MPT, the UK delegation played a muted role, however. This was a result of the confluence of two developments, one in East-West

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<sup>55</sup> Ian Hall has rightly criticised that 'diplomacy is something of a backwater in the academic study of International Relations'. See Ian Hall, 'Review Article: The Transformation of Diplomacy: Mysteries, Insurgencies and Public Relations', *International Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 1 (January 2010), pp. 247-256 (247). This is in large part due to the emphasis on structure as opposed to (individual) agency.

<sup>56</sup> Elliott, 'CSCE: The First 200 Days', UKNA, FCO 28/2168, para. 23. Author's interviews with Sir Bryan Cartledge, Oxford, 13 February 2007 and Sir Brian Fall, London, 15 March 2010.

<sup>57</sup> Elliott, 'CSCE: The First 200 Days', UKNA, FCO 28/2168, para. 23.

and one in West-West relations: Britain's relative marginalization in European détente from 1968 onwards (see previous chapter) and its simultaneous path into the centre of the EC politics. Elliott noted retrospectively: 'In the early days of the talks the still uncertain state of bilateral relations with the Russians, as well as tactical considerations relating to our position as a newcomer to EEC, led the British delegation to play a cautious role.'<sup>58</sup> As we will see in the following sections, during the remaining stages of the MPT, this caution increasingly gave way to growing ambitions to play a leadership role.

### **Dipoli II<sup>59</sup>**

On 15 January 1973, the Multilateral Preparatory Talks re-opened with a bang. EC states launched a wide-ranging policy offensive, which can be seen as a milestone in European integration history. For the first time, the West Europeans presented joint proposals at an international conference, tabling an elaborate draft agenda for the CSCE coupled with detailed terms of reference to guide the negotiations. This landmark in the still-ongoing process of creating a joint European foreign policy was the result of careful, collective advance preparation. The West Europeans, drawing on the extensive preparatory work in EPC as well as in NATO, submitted proposals spanning the entire spectrum of what they thought the CSCE should cover: from political and military aspects of security to economic cooperation and human contacts.

This section traces the evolution of the second stage of the preparatory talks. I argue that the EC initiative should be seen as the centrepiece of Dipoli II; it sparked a controversial discussion that dominated the second round of the pre-talks and shaped

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<sup>58</sup> Elliott, 'CSCE: The First 200 Days', UKNA, FCO 28/2168, para. 22.

<sup>59</sup> Dipoli II lasted from 15 January-9 February 1973.

the course of the remainder of the MPT; the resulting compromises foreshadowed the interlocking compromise packages that were to lead to the signing of the Final Act two-and-a-half years later.

The studiously orchestrated presentation of the policy offensive was divided among three EC states. Belgium simultaneously tabled the EPC draft agenda, which foresaw three areas to be covered by the CSCE – ‘security; economic and environmental cooperation; cultural and human relations’ – and draft terms of reference for the economic aspects.<sup>60</sup> The Italian and Danish delegations then submitted draft terms for the remaining two areas.<sup>61</sup> Since the latter two were to become major sticking points throughout the entire Helsinki process, I will examine them in detail.

The proposals put forward by Italy dealt with the security aspects that the conference was supposed to tackle. They consisted of two elements, covering the political and the military dimension of security in the form, respectively, of a draft list of principles guiding relations between states and confidence-building measures. Ever since the run-up to the MPT, the Soviet Union had let it be known that it wanted the conference to issue a declaration on European security. This was supposed to consist of a few political principles, especially the non-use of force and the inviolability of frontiers. The West had interpreted the declaration proposition as a dual attempt to gain *de facto* multilateral endorsement of the status quo in Europe, including the division of Germany, and to sidestep a discussion of the military balance on the continent. The declaration proposal catalysed Western thinking on the prospective security aspects of the conference; in order to neutralise Moscow’s initiative and broaden the Soviet approach to security, Western states had started ‘to think in terms

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<sup>60</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 20, para. 2.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

of a declaration covering a wider list of principles'<sup>62</sup> and 'to table proposals for confidence building measures [...], which would both demonstrate that there were military aspects to security in Europe and contrast the Soviet desire for declarations with the Western desire for practical measures'.<sup>63</sup>

The proposals presented by Italy thus embody the culmination of a careful preparation process sparked by the Soviet Union's push for the multilateralisation of détente. The Western draft list of principles as tabled at the opening of the MPT read as follows:

[S]overeign equality of States; refraining from the threat or use of force, particularly as regards the inviolability of frontiers; respect for territorial integrity; non-intervention in internal affairs; peaceful settlement of disputes; respect for human rights, for fundamental freedoms and for equal rights and self-determination of peoples; and the fulfillment [sic] in good faith of obligations under international law.<sup>64</sup>

The list reflects a dual attempt on the West's part to transform the Soviet-sponsored idea of a declaration of principles. First, by combining principles, Western delegations sought to neutralise the status quo-oriented provisions that Moscow favoured. Second, by adding principles of their own, Western diplomats wanted to stretch the underlying conception of détente. The former tactic led to the merging of two Soviet pet provisions – 'inviolability of frontiers' and 'non-use of force' – into one principle.<sup>65</sup> This was meant to de-emphasise both principles but, more importantly, to stress that inviolability did not mean immutability.<sup>66</sup> While borders

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<sup>62</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter II, para. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., chapter IV, para 1.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., chapter II, para. 3ii.

<sup>65</sup> The original FRG intention was to frame the two principles so as to subsume inviolability under the non-use of force. See DBPO, III/II, No. 22, fn. 8. As we shall see below, Bonn later softened its stance in the face of Soviet pressure.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., No. 27, para. 4.

must not be challenged by force, they could still be changed by peaceful means. This was, of course, of the utmost importance to the West Germans.

The latter tactic led to the inclusion of the elaborately phrased human rights principle. The inclusion of human rights as a principle represents a significant conceptual shift towards a widened notion of security.<sup>67</sup> Instead of focusing on the traditional, narrow, state-centric notion, the West proposed a broader definition, which included not just states, but also individuals as points of reference. To the British, this was yet another tactical move in accordance with the ‘lemon strategy’: either Moscow would have to make concessions or expose the narrow scope of its otherwise grandiose *détente* rhetoric. But it also reflected the sincere conviction that a *real* *détente* – as opposed to one that was just a propaganda exercise – needed to be indivisible and comprehensive. This more idealistic motivation is clearly reflected in Foreign Office documents.<sup>68</sup>

The struggle over the essence and framing of *détente*, and the blend of instrumental and ideational motivations which drove Britain’s participation in that struggle, represent key themes to which we will return at several points throughout this thesis. At this stage, it is sufficient to note two aspects about the West European policy offensive: first, the principles tabled at Dipoli II were originally conceived as part of a *defensive* strategy. The aim was to counter the way in which the Warsaw Pact defined *détente*. However, rather than merely aiming for a nullification of the Warsaw Pact initiatives and a return to the normative status quo ante, the West introduced novel ideas. As we shall see in the following chapters, the Western attempt

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<sup>67</sup> Hanhimäki, ‘*Détente in Europe, 1962-1975*’, pp. 214, 216. See also Kai Hebel, ‘Propaganda Tool or Idealistic Policy? The British Approach to Human Security during the CSCE Negotiations, 1972-1975’, Paper presented at the Workshop of the Nordic and North/Central European Network of Cold War Researchers, Copenhagen, 11-12 March, 2011.

<sup>68</sup> For a clear expression that linking inter-state and individual security represented a major aim, see DBPO, III/II, No. 46, para. 20. Importantly, these documents were *not* meant for public consumption; hence, the invocation of these values cannot be simply explained away as a cloak for Realpolitik.

to re-frame the public discourse about the scope of détente laid the foundation for significant normative changes.<sup>69</sup> Second, British sources reveal the multi-faceted nature of the motivations underlying UK policy; this policy was driven by a mix of instrumental and idealistic concerns. Taken together, these two aspects speak against the simplistic view of détente in general and the CSCE in particular as a purely conservative, status quo-reinforcing process. Thus, taking a closer look at the negotiations goes a significant way towards revising the ‘status quo consensus’ in the détente literature discussed in the introduction.

If the inclusion of human rights into the Western policy offensive presents a ‘horizontal’ widening of the agenda, the tabling of confidence-building measures by the Italian delegation can be seen as ‘vertical’ deepening. Instead of accepting vague Warsaw Pact peace rhetoric, the West sought small but tangible improvements in the military sphere. This is reflected in the NATO steering brief for the preparatory talks cited above, which defined the placement of confidence-building measures on the agenda as one of three ‘positive aims’.<sup>70</sup> It specified three types of CBMs: the advance notification of major military manoeuvres and troop movements and the exchange of observers to military exercises. The specific aim of these measures was to enhance transparency, thus reducing the risk of miscalculation and laying the foundation for trust-building. Underlying this objective was a broader political rationale. As with the principles, the Foreign Office and its allies wanted to use confidence-building measures as a device to re-frame the discourse about détente: ‘[We] wish (with varying degrees of emphasis) to bring home to public opinion that the balance of

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<sup>69</sup> Often overlooked, this alteration of the normative framework in which the East-West conflict played out is one aspect of the ‘Helsinki Effect’ as discussed by Daniel Thomas. Thomas’ work tends to be simplistically equated with the thesis that grassroots human rights movements had a significant impact on the end of the Cold War. However, even a cursory reading of the book should make it plain that this aspect of the Helsinki Effect was preceded by a transformation of the normative structure between states. See Thomas, *Helsinki Effect*, esp. pp. 53-54.

<sup>70</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 17, fn. 3.

forces in Europe is the real question affecting security'.<sup>71</sup> CBMs would serve to underscore the indivisibility of détente by highlighting the 'general interrelationship between the political and military aspects of security'.<sup>72</sup> As with the draft principles, Britain and its allies certainly saw CBMs as intrinsically valuable. But, as long as a sceptical mood regarding the CSCE prevailed and as long as it remained unclear whether the conference would prove a forum where 'business' could be done, the West seized on the issue primarily because of its potential public appeal.

To complement the Belgian and Italian proposals, the Danish delegation contributed to the EPC policy offensive by tabling draft terms of reference under the heading 'the development of human contacts, broadening of cultural and educational exchanges and wider flow of information'.<sup>73</sup> This was an EPC reformulation of the original Western plan to achieve a separate listing of 'freer movement of people, ideas and information'. Western states were determined to inscribe this item (or a similarly worded one) as a distinct, stand-alone item on the conference agenda. The Foreign Office brief for the MPT had defined this as 'a point of major importance to us', adding in unusually uncompromising style: 'We have let it be known that we would not be willing to go to the conference if we do not get satisfaction on this point'.<sup>74</sup> As with the other proposals of the EPC policy offensive, Western determination reflected tactical considerations in line with the 'lemon strategy' as well as a genuine belief that these desiderata amounted to 'a *fair* test of the sincerity of the Russians'.<sup>75</sup>

Despite the general agreement in the West, NATO had been unable to reach agreement owing to a division between the 'wet front' and hardliners over tactical questions of phrasing and timing. Due to its smaller size, EPC had managed to reach

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., para. 9b.

<sup>72</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter IV, para. 6.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., para. 3.

<sup>74</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 17, para. 9h.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., No. 46, para. 21 (my emphasis).

agreement on the substance as well as the tactics pertaining to the human contacts provisions. The tabling of the Danish paper, while of intrinsic importance for the future development of the MPT, hence has a deeper significance: it marks one of the earliest indications of EPC taking over leadership from NATO on a core Western desideratum. In this sense, the West European policy offensive was the culmination of a process inaugurated at The Hague Summit of 1969; cloaked in the opaque technicalities and fine points of CSCE-style multilateralism, it was the ‘*relance européenne*’ in action.

The breadth and depth of the West European proposal package, its carefully orchestrated presentation and its subtle linking of the draft agenda with terms of reference put the Soviet Union and its allies on the defensive. It elicited a reaction, ranging from outright hostility to tactical evasiveness. Much criticism was directed against the EPC list of principles. The Warsaw Pact dismissed the inclusion of human rights and self-determination, arguing that the former did not constitute a norm governing inter-state relations and that the latter was only applicable to colonial situations.<sup>76</sup> This came as no surprise to Western diplomats. The Soviet Union had not signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and none of the Warsaw Pact communiqués in the pre-MPT period had shown any willingness to link European security to a potentially embarrassing subject such as human rights.

However, Communist resistance to this kind of linkage was unsurprising not just from a propaganda point of view. It should be remembered that, judged against the standards of the time, Soviet diplomats had a valid political and legal case. As proponents of the pluralist strand of the English School point out, international society is governed by core norms such as sovereignty and the corollary norm of non-

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<sup>76</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter II, para. 5.

intervention. Neither NATO nor Warsaw Pact practice suggested that human rights were a commonly acknowledged norm of the same order. Furthermore, up until that point, states' rhetoric and practice of *détente* had not linked international security to human rights. For example, when the West protested the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, maintaining that it violated the spirit of *détente*, the charge was levelled mainly in the name of the sovereignty of the Czech state and less so on behalf of human rights violations. Interestingly, the human rights principle was not the primary sticking point for the Soviet Union: 'The Russians made it clear that their major objection to the list of principles in the Italian draft was the linking of inviolability to the non-use of force'.<sup>77</sup> We can infer from this order of priorities that the codification of the political and territorial status quo – of the constructed peace in Europe – really was Moscow's number one aim and that it was willing to make concessions to attain that goal. To win multilateral approval of traditional 'Westphalian' norms, the Soviet Union was willing to accept an otherwise unpalatable provision such as the human rights principle.

The Warsaw Pact reaction to the human contact proposals entailed in the Danish papers was more moderate in appearance if not necessarily in substance. These propositions were harder to dismiss given that the Warsaw Pact had conceded in the run-up to the MPT that cooperation in the cultural sphere could potentially contribute to *détente*. From the general debate in the first session onwards, Moscow had been fighting a diplomatic rear-guard battle, attempting to contain Western and neutral proposals in the cultural sphere by subsuming them under a heavily charged, general header of 'cooperation'.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., chapter VI, para. 2.

Faced with stiff resistance on principles and an evasive response on cultural cooperation, the Western cause received much-needed support from the neutral and non-aligned. Not only did the neutrals table agenda proposals whose substance was close to the Western drafts, but they also supplemented their propositions with terms of reference.<sup>79</sup> This helped put the Warsaw Pact on the defensive procedurally as well as substantively and two weeks later, the USSR responded with two significant concessions. On 22 January, the Soviet ambassador, V. F. Maltsev, submitted a revised version of their initial draft agenda featuring a veiled mention of confidence building measures ('certain measures for strengthening stability and confidence') as well as a new, stand-alone item dedicated to cultural cooperation ('expansion of cultural cooperation, of contacts among organisations and peoples and of dissemination of information').<sup>80</sup> The former represented a horizontal widening and the latter a vertical deepening of the Soviet approach to détente. Moscow thus indicated its toleration of a less restrictive notion of détente; one in which military and political aspects of security were indivisible and cooperation extended beyond the realm of increased economic exchanges.

However, the Soviet Union qualified these weighty concessions in two significant ways. First, Maltsev re-emphasised his government's principled opposition to discussing terms of reference at the MPT. Ever since the start of the Dipoli talks, the USSR delegation had argued that the pre-talks should be kept short; they should fix the time, place, and location of the conference and the agenda – terms of reference should be discussed at the conference proper. Since the terms would serve to direct the work of specialised committees in which the drafting would be done, it was for the CSCE to decide on the specific guidelines to direct the work. From the start, the

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., chapter I, para. 12.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., chapter VI, para. 9. See also DBPO, III/II, No. 20, para. 4a.

West had opposed this line of thinking for tactical reasons in order to ensure an acceptable agenda, elaborate conference structure, and detailed mandates.<sup>81</sup> As we have seen in the previous section, the resulting stalemate had led to the inconclusive ending of Dipoli I, with participants failing to agree to an official work programme. Second, Maltsev sharply defined Moscow's position regarding the new topic on its draft agenda. Since the general debate of the first stage, the USSR had been forced to assume a defensive posture, warning that increased exchanges in the cultural sphere must not amount to interference in domestic affairs. At the time, the British delegation had been informally told by a Romanian delegate that 'any mention of freedom will cause difficulty'.<sup>82</sup> Now, Maltsev delivered the same warning in official Soviet parlance, disguised as a speech against the potential abuse of the cultural cooperation item to further the 'dissemination of anti-culture, i.e. pornography, racism, fascism, cult of violence, hostility among peoples and false, slanderous propaganda'.<sup>83</sup>

The Foreign Office saw these hedged concessions as a mixed blessing. On the one hand, they represented a significant step towards an acceptable agenda. The Soviet Union had yielded points directly related to Western core aims as defined by the NATO brief for the MPT. Two of the West's three 'positive aims'<sup>84</sup> – lowering barriers and confidence-building measures – seemed now within reach. On the other hand, breakthroughs in discussions on the agenda heightened the British concern that the terms of reference might get sidelined. In order to maintain a de facto link between the agenda and the mandates, the British delegation decided to push for the

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., fn. 4. As mentioned above, NATO and EPC were concerned that the Warsaw Pact would be able to rush the Dipoli gathering to a conclusion once a draft agenda had been agreed. This would leave the West in the awkward position of either accepting a conference based on a hazy agenda and without specific terms of reference or obstructing the conclusion of the MPT. This in turn would jeopardise the continued support of the neutrals, which were generally keen to make progress, and potentially expose the latent divisions within the West, between the impatient 'wet front' and the intransigent hardliners.

<sup>82</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter VI, para. 1.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., para. 3.

<sup>84</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 17, fn. 3.

adoption of a procedural device, which was to become a trademark of the CSCE – the now-famous ‘Baskets’. Two days after Maltsev’s speech, T.A.K. Elliott took the floor in the plenary meeting and proposed to adopt a suggestion originally floated by the Austrian delegation: to group all the proposals thus far submitted according to subject areas and then to discuss them in successive steps.<sup>85</sup> Elliott also argued that the Baskets should be numbered rather than named.<sup>86</sup> Through this technical device, he sought to postpone the final formulation of the agenda items until the terms of reference issue had been resolved. The plenary agreed and neutral Switzerland offered its good offices, undertaking the task of sorting the proposals according to four Baskets:

- I. political and security questions
- II. economic and related questions
- III. human contacts, culture and information
- IV. follow-up to the conference<sup>87</sup>

The agreement on the Basket structure ushered in the last phase of the second stage of the MPT. Participants moved on to examine the various agenda proposals in Basket I. During the discussions, the Soviet delegation introduced a ‘zadaniye’, an ‘assignment’ meant to delineate the scope of the Basket I.<sup>88</sup> Although briefer than what they wanted a full-fledged mandate to look like, the British delegation nonetheless interpreted the new procedural device as a move towards the Western approach to the MPT/CSCE.<sup>89</sup>

A next step followed shortly afterwards when major differences regarding the security content emerged during the plenary meetings and persisted into early

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., No. 20, para. 5.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., No. 21, para. 2.

<sup>87</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter I, para. 14.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., chapter II, para. 4.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., chapter I, para. 15.

February. With the end of the second stage approaching and no agreement in Basket I in sight, the Soviet delegation was forced to relinquish its hope of finalising the agenda quickly. Maltsev now grudgingly agreed to a first reading of all proposals in the other remaining issue areas and subsequently tabled a short ‘zadaniye’ for each Basket.<sup>90</sup> In doing so, the USSR delegation made two significant concessions: the Soviets adjusted their views on the timetable of the MPT and de facto acknowledged the equal importance of all Baskets. The latter move essentially de-emphasised Moscow’s pet project in Basket I, the declaration of principles. As we have seen, the Soviet diplomats had put supreme emphasis on the speedy adoption of an agenda whose core was to consist of a vague declaration on European security. The USSR wanted states to declare their adherence to political principles such as the inviolability of frontiers, the renunciation of the use of force, and other status quo-oriented measures. By the time Dipoli II ended two and a half months later, on 9 February 1973, it had become clear that delivering these aims would take longer and carry a hefty political price tag.

### *The February Recess*

After almost four weeks of negotiations, Dipoli II ended, providing an opportunity for the Foreign Office again to take stock of past developments and chart the future course of British policy. The second session of the Multilateral Preparatory Talks revolved around the EPC-led policy offensive and the reactions it elicited from the Warsaw Pact and the neutrals. As with the first leg of the MPT, there was broad agreement in the Foreign Office that the second stage had gone very well. EPC had

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., para. 16.

made its mark in unprecedented fashion, clearly putting the Warsaw Pact on the defensive and eliciting several noteworthy concessions from the Soviet Union.

Britain had played an active part in preparing the various proposals and in publicly defending them in the subsequent plenary debate against vigorous opposition from the Communist states. Britain's strong support for the proposal package stemmed from the mix of inter-related motivations, which characterised its approach to Helsinki in general. At its core, what motivated British policy was a blend of the instrumental interest in fighting the Cold War propaganda battle as well as a genuine belief in the intrinsic value of the Western propositions tabled at the MPT. The former was associated with the 'lemon strategy' and the latter aimed at stretching the Warsaw Pact conception of détente horizontally and vertically. The British certainly appreciated the potential public appeal associated with proposals like confidence-building measures and human rights. Yet Foreign Office documents provide rich evidence from internal deliberations to show that UK aims extended beyond the 'propaganda battle' accompanying the Helsinki talks.<sup>91</sup>

Scholars of détente tend to misrepresent British CSCE policy, reinforcing the Cold Warrior stereotype without acknowledging the more idealistic bent that supplemented the instrumental concern for the propagandistic aspects of détente. UK involvement with and support for the EPC proposal package illustrates nicely that both instrumental and idealistic motivations informed policy. Scholars might be excused for getting this point wrong not just because the interrelationship is a complicated one, but also because different policymakers and officials struck a different balance between the two aspects. To clarify this point, a few words about the FCO hierarchy and the attitudes of leading officials and politicians are in order. I

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<sup>91</sup> For Douglas-Home's comments on the MPT, see DBPO, III/II, No. 37, fn. 2.

argue that a variety of views existed, with some individuals taking a wholly instrumental view, but on the whole, a more balanced attitude prevailed. These nuances are reflected at the highest level. While there is little evidence that Heath was much interested in the CSCE, Alec Douglas-Home did follow the proceedings closely, and at several points during the MPT asked the FCO for updates on the state of play. His comments on the materials provided by the Foreign Office show a keen awareness of the propaganda aspects, but also some concern that Britain maximise the chance of achieving tangible, small-scale improvements.

By pushing for the inclusion of new topics and a negotiation structure to ensure in-depth discussions, British MPT policy served a four-fold function: it was intended as a public relations exercise in line with the ‘lemon strategy’; as a ‘fair test’ of Soviet ambitions; as a device to re-define détente; and as a means of achieving small, but tangible improvements in the daily lives of citizens on the other side of the Iron Curtain.

In order to achieve these ambitious aims, British membership in European Political Cooperation represented a key asset. During the course of the first two stages of the Dipoli gathering, EPC had become increasingly more important, turning into the forum in which much of the substantial drafting of key Western initiatives was done. This was partly because the EC’s ‘big three’ – France, the Federal Republic, and the UK – worked closely together and partly because NATO did not live up to British expectations.<sup>92</sup> As the larger forum, NATO had more difficulty than EPC coordinating the views of its diverse membership.<sup>93</sup> More importantly, NATO’s performance was hampered by the American decision to maintain a profile, which, in

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<sup>92</sup> For an expression of British concern about NATO performance during the first two stages of the MPT, see DBPO, III/II, No. 21, fn. 3 and Elliott, ‘CSCE: The First 200 Days’, UKNA, FCO 28/2168, para. 9.

<sup>93</sup> See DBPO, III/II, No. 1, para. 5.

the words of the head of the UK delegation, T.A.K. Elliott, vacillated ‘between the low and the undetectable’.<sup>94</sup> According to Elliott, American restraint diminished the West’s bargaining power and had an unsettling effect on other NATO states, impinging on their performance during the MPT.<sup>95</sup>

On the other side of the Iron Curtain, the Soviet Union did not disappoint; the attitude of the USSR delegation towards HMG’s diplomats came as no surprise. Although almost exactly a year had passed between Operation Foot and the start of the MPT, Soviet diplomats were evidently suspicious of the intentions of their counter-parts and treated them accordingly.<sup>96</sup> Hence, both superpowers, albeit for different reasons, put the UK delegation in an awkward situation: ‘Our own position is made more difficult by the low posture of the Americans and the continuing tendency of the Russians to see the worst in what we say in plenary’.<sup>97</sup>

In regard to the Western hegemon, differences in approach were smoothed over by close personal rapport between the delegations. During the MPT, the delegations stayed in the same hotel and British officials often discussed CSCE matters with the head of the US delegation, George Vest, over a nightcap.<sup>98</sup> While this did not erase the fact that UK officials wanted their American colleagues to assume a more pro-active role, it did prevent the tension expressed in internal FCO documents

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., No. 21, fn. 3.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Elliott, ‘CSCE: The First 200 Days’, UKNA, FCO 28/2168, para. 14.

<sup>97</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 21, fn. 3.

<sup>98</sup> Author’s interview with Sir Brian Fall, London, 15 March 2010. Given that the Heath years are usually portrayed as a particularly rocky time for Anglo-American relations, it should be pointed out that the excellent relationship between officials in the MPT context was in fact echoed at the highest level. In preparation for Heath’s state visit to Washington in early February 1973, Kissinger wrote to Nixon: ‘There continues to be a special relationship (Heath strongly prefers the term natural relationship) with the UK and in your talks with the Prime Minister you can range over a number of issues more freely than with other Europeans. You can expect that, within certain limits imposed by the UK’s entry into Europe, the UK will be our closest confidant and supporter in the European-American dialogue’. Memorandum from Kissinger to the President, 31 January 1973, NARA, NPMS, NSC Files, VIP Visits, Box 942. This strongly suggests that Anglo-American relations only soured in the context of the October War and the ‘Year of Europe’ initiative.

from breaking out in the open. Naturally, differences were not as easy to resolve with the Soviet delegates. In fact, the documents reveal that the delegation was closely and somewhat anxiously monitoring Soviet demeanour, looking for signs of whether Moscow's stance was hardening or whether the Kremlin had decided to let London out of 'the freezer'.<sup>99</sup> At the end of the second stage of the MPT, the British verdict was unanimous: a thaw did not seem imminent. On the contrary, the USSR delegation had, so far, 'concentrated their bilateral attentions on the Americans, French and West Germans, trying to settle as much business as possible with them in the corridors'.<sup>100</sup>

If it had not been for EPC, NATO's suboptimal performance and the current state of the British relationship with the superpowers could have posed serious problems.<sup>101</sup> Yet as full members of the West European caucus, HMG's diplomats found themselves in a privileged position. The determination NATO lacked on certain issues was compensated by the growing stature of EPC, with Britain actively contributing its share. The EPC-led policy offensive represented the first vivid expression of an on-going transition in Western leadership from NATO to EPC and a concomitant, though less pronounced shift in Britain's emphasis from the former to the latter. Furthermore, owing to the multilateral nature of the MPT in general and the cohesiveness of Western co-ordination in particular, the UK could not be as easily singled out by the Communist states and treated as détente's 'European leper'.<sup>102</sup> In the absence of meaningful direct contacts with the Soviet Union, the UK delegation focused on playing an active role in both Western fora, while making a tough yet non-polemical contribution to the plenary discussions.

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<sup>99</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 46, para. 2.

<sup>100</sup> Elliott, 'CSCE: The First 200 Days', UKNA, FCO 28/2168, para. 14.

<sup>101</sup> Interview with Sir Brian Fall, London, 15 March 2010.

<sup>102</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 46, para. 4.

The business-like demeanour of the British delegation, and of EPC in general, had helped win the backing of the neutral and non-aligned at several important junctures of the MPT. Next to the institutional anchoring in NATO and EPC, neutral support was key to Britain's ability to influence the course of the talks. For example, the neutrals had backed key desiderata in Basket III and buttressed the push for the adoption of terms of reference. Neutral support came at a price, however. The Foreign Office deemed several NNA initiatives impractical, but supported them nonetheless for tactical reasons – as a way of cultivating the neutrals.<sup>103</sup> British officials were also concerned that the neutrals might become impatient with the drawn-out negotiation process they deemed necessary. This worry played an important role in Western consultations during the February recess. How could the neutrals' urge to make progress be satisfied without appearing to accept the Soviet argument that the MPT could be wound up quickly? In British minds, this represented a key question to which the West would need to find an answer if the next stages of the MPT were to be as successful as the preceding ones.

In sum, the multilateralisation of détente embodied by the Dipoli talks increased Britain's leverage; it moderated the opportunity costs associated with the lack of direct access to Moscow and represented a fresh start after a period of marginalisation in East-West diplomacy. However, the flip side of the multilateral coin was that Britain's standing was highly dependent on the cohesion of EPC and NATO, and the continuation of a close working relationship between the two. The British delegation was keenly aware that, as long as the Anglo-Soviet relationship remained 'icy', London relied primarily on the 'loyalty' of its allies and partners,

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<sup>103</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter III.

especially the Americans, French, and West Germans.<sup>104</sup> Britain fared well only as long as these delegations resisted the temptation to strike bilateral deals during the coffee breaks in the concrete corridors of the Finnish Student Union or over late-night drinks in the 'Sexy Bar'. As we shall see in the next chapter, the intensification of the negotiation process at Dipoli put Western unity under stress, jeopardising the institutional backing on which Britain's influence depended.

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<sup>104</sup> Elliott, 'CSCE: The First 200 Days', UKNA, FCO 28/2168, para. 14.

## CHAPTER 5

### 199 Days in the ‘Sexy Bar’: The Multilateral Preparatory Talks, Part 2, 1973

#### **The End of the ‘Ambassadorial Tea Party’: Dipoli III**

This chapter examines the British role during the second half of the Dipoli talks. The second half consisted of two stages: Dipoli III lasted from 26 February until 6 April 1973 and Dipoli IV took place from 25 April until 1973 and 8 June 1973. The last two stages witnessed a major transformation of the proceedings, with delegations moving from the discussion to the drafting phase. The two initial rounds covered in the last chapter had been ‘gentlemanly in pace’, with delegations meeting only once a day for a plenary session.<sup>1</sup> This format – half-jokingly referred to as the ‘ambassadorial tea party’ – was superseded by a more intense negotiating process once the third stage of the MPT opened on 26 February 1973.<sup>2</sup> T.A.K. Elliott noted how quickly the ‘salon des ambassadeurs’

gave way to a proliferation of formal and informal working groups and drafting committees; delegations were reinforced by various categories of expert advisers; and the final confusion of night sessions, compromise proposals and interpretative statements was in every way typical of a major international conference.<sup>3</sup>

The British actively contributed to the transformation of the MPT; in fact, they were directly responsible for one aspect mentioned by Elliott: the concept of working groups. In order to allay the concern of the neutrals about the slow progress (see previous chapter), the FCO enlisted Western support for the creation of a working

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<sup>1</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter X, para. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Elliott, ‘CSCE: The First 200 Days’, UKNA, FCO 28/2168, para. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., para. 2.

group where in-depth negotiations were to take place. The members of the group were tasked with finding a way out of the still unresolved Basket I impasse over the principles guiding relations between states. Elliott suggested that they do so using an inductive procedure by which delegates would

start the drafting process from the bottom up. In this way we would consider the individual subjects in each Basket and seek agreed formulations of them and then build up first a number of smaller subject areas [...] and finally a composite agenda item.<sup>4</sup>

While the working group examined each proposal and slowly work its way ‘upwards’ towards agreement on the agenda, the plenary could move on to other Baskets. This was meant to facilitate a degree of measured progress while at the same time ensuring full discussion of Western desiderata.<sup>5</sup>

When the third round of the MPT opened, the British proposal was adopted in the plenary session and a working group on principles founded. Unfortunately, the group did not produce any tangible results; it merely refought the same battles that had deadlocked the second stage, including Soviet resistance to the EPC list, which comprised human rights.<sup>6</sup> In consequence, the neutrals and even some members of NATO became increasingly frustrated with the lack of progress and pressure mounted on the West Europeans to moderate their demands. The trouble was that, although the Nine tried desperately, they struggled to conceive of a fallback option that would rephrase the Italian paper tabled at the beginning of the last session without giving way on points of substance.<sup>7</sup>

To deflect the pressure, the UK delegation introduced yet another procedural innovation, which made the structure of the MPT even more complicated. Without

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<sup>4</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 22, para. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter I, para. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., para. 18.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., chapter II, para. 9.

going into the specifics, the British initiative can be summarised as follows: the delegation introduced a framework for the compilation of terms of reference on which broad agreement had been reached while also allowing for the inclusion of further detail at a later stage. The UK proposal thus accommodated the concern of the delegations keen to make progress, not least the USSR. For the Soviets, the prospect of speeding up the negotiations naturally seemed attractive, but there was a veiled catch to the proposal: the UK delegation had ingeniously weaved the mandates of the original Italian draft into it.<sup>8</sup> Thus, endorsement of the British framework would not only signal Soviet readiness to proceed on the basis of a Western mandate; more fundamentally, it would amount to de facto acceptance of the concept of terms of reference – the very notion Moscow had opposed tooth and nail since the start of the MPT. In the end, impatience seems to have prevailed on the Soviet side. The working group accepted the UK proposal on 9 March and the delegation proudly reported back to London: ‘the Russians accepted the bargain and our proposed outline was accepted without amendment’.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, a ‘mini group’ was founded, which was tasked with elaborating and filling in the outline with more detail. This liberated the working group from the time-consuming work on minutiae, while at the same time ensuring that these details would be worked out eventually. The net result was to speed up the negotiations in a measured way, allowing the working group to move to the discussion of CBMs.<sup>10</sup>

As noted in the previous chapter, it is easy to lose sight of the big picture in the technicalities of the talks. While hardly the stuff of press coverage then and neglected by much of the scholarly literature even today, the UK role in these

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<sup>8</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 26, para. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter II, para. 11.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter I, para. 18.

bureaucratic tugs of war is noteworthy in two respects. First, the initiatives to establish a multi-layered structure in which negotiations could proceed at variable speeds were driven by essentially political motivations. UK delegates neither wanted to create bureaucracy for bureaucracy's sake (as Kissinger's 'cloistered medieval monks' metaphor implies), nor to obstruct the proceedings (as the stereotype of the British as fossils of the Cold War would have it). Instead, Britain's aim was to ensure that Western desiderata would be fully discussed before the more impatient delegations could legitimately claim that the time had come for formulating the Helsinki Recommendations. In the British line of thinking, this was the fundamental pre-requisite to achieving the core aim of using the MPT as a test and a lever capable of stretching the Warsaw Pact conception of *détente*. As we will see in the next chapter, the 'bottom up' method (and the complex structure of committees and sub-committees it created) laid the procedural foundations on which the central bargain would later be struck.

Second, the UK role shows that skilful diplomacy, while hard to 'measure' in methodologically rigorous fashion, *does* matter. The wrangling about the modification of the Italian paper is a case in point. The Nine genuinely tried modifying the language of their proposal on principles – yet 'it proved extremely difficult to *think of* changes'.<sup>11</sup> In other words, the problem was not one of bargaining power or negotiation tactic, but one of inventiveness. The British intervention represented a creative act of adroit diplomacy at a potentially crucial juncture.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., chapter II, para. 9 (my emphasis).

<sup>12</sup> Using counterfactual analysis, it is possible to make a persuasive case for why this moment was a potentially crucial one. Since pressure on the Nine mounted from all sides – including from within the West, thus jeopardising the cohesion of NATO – the Warsaw Pact's proposed method of beginning the drafting process on uncontroversial points first could have quite possibly carried the day. This could easily have set a precedent for the entire drafting process, putting the West in exactly the situation of weak bargaining power it had wanted to avoid: it would have ended up in the role of *demandeur*, faced with a choice between either obstructing the conclusion of the talks or breaking them off. Neither

The discipline of International Relations neglects bargaining processes and, even more so, the skilfulness with which foreign policy decisions are implemented and adapted in multilateral negotiations.<sup>13</sup> To put it somewhat polemically, IR fetishizes material capability and marginalises diplomatic ability. The above episode highlights the weakness resulting from this blind spot. It suggests that diplomatic skill can have an independent causal impact that cannot be solely attributed to ‘bargaining power’, no matter how the latter is defined. Skill can neither be reduced to material sources of influence such as capability, nor to immaterial sources such as status or discursive power. As a state in relative decline, and a newcomer to the EC, Britain was not a powerful actor according to any of these indicators; yet the resourcefulness of its diplomats helped London to make its mark regardless.

Let us return to the proceedings at Dipoli. Fortunately for all of the delegations preferring an exhaustive negotiation process, the two innovations introduced by the UK produced the intended result: they moved the talks along in a measured, predictable way. While the mini group started its work on principles, the plenary would move on and perform a tour d’horizon covering Baskets II, III, and IV consecutively.<sup>14</sup> Thus, an organisational structure was in place that was capable of performing the task that the third stage of the MPT needed to perform: to transform the general discussion of the EPC proposal package introduced at the beginning of Dipoli II into a results-oriented bargaining process. The remainder of this section will examine this process in-depth by focusing on Baskets I and III. These merit closer inspection for a number of reasons: apart from the primary importance the British attached to them, the issues collected in these Baskets were to play a critical role in

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would have been desirable and there is good evidence to doubt whether the latter was ever considered an option at all.

<sup>13</sup> Arguably, this blind spot results from the unfortunate confluence of the long-standing dominance of structural approaches such as Neo-Realism and the neglect of historical process-tracing.

<sup>14</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 26, para. 3.

the development of the MPT and, later, the conference proper. Unlike the other two issue areas (economic cooperation and follow-up), Baskets I and III subsequently turned into central, most contested issues on which the success or failure of the entire CSCE process hinged.

#### *The Mini Group on Principles (Basket I)*

At its inception, the mini group on the declaration of principles was faced with the delicate challenge of finding formulations for an agreement that did not yet exist. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the declaration had been a Soviet pet project ever since Brezhnev's re-launch of the campaign for an ESC in 1966. It eventually became a leitmotiv of the run-up to and the negotiations at the MPT. During the Anglo-Soviet bilaterals in 1972, the USSR representative, Lunkov, had stressed the utmost importance of a general declaration on European security. The Foreign Office disliked the idea of adopting principles that were vague and exclusively political in nature and had prepared a response aimed at neutralising principles it disapproved of and stretching the Soviet initiative. The method to achieving the former was to rephrase and combine the principles that the Warsaw Pact had stressed in its communiqués. As we have seen, this led to the Western draft list of principles tabled by EPC at the start of Dipoli II, which merged the inviolability of frontiers with the non-use of force. The device used by the FCO to realise the latter was a more proactive one: it proposed draft principles of its own and, on top of that, insisted on the discussion of confidence-building measures. The Soviet list was widened by the inclusion of principles such as human rights and self-determination and Moscow's notion of security was contested by juxtaposing it with concrete confidence-building measures of a military nature. During the second stage of the MPT, this proactive

approach had elicited one major Soviet concession when Moscow had agreed to include CBMs in Basket I. Yet the USSR continued to refuse to include human rights and self-determination as principles governing inter-state relations.

In early February 1973, only days before the start of Dipoli III, the Soviet Union's objectives and its proposals on principles were discussed between the British and the Americans at the highest level during bilaterals at Camp David. Prime Minister Heath asked Kissinger which 'device for blocking the interests of the West' the Soviets were likely to come up with at the CSCE. The US Secretary of State replied, 'they would simply go on trying to undermine NATO by every means they could'.<sup>15</sup> To substantiate this claim, Kissinger gave the Prime Minister a Soviet draft paper on principles which he had received from Anatoly Dobrynin, Moscow's ambassador to Washington. The draft called for the abolition of blocs and the establishment of a pan-European system of collective security. The Foreign Office subsequently prepared an analysis of the Soviet draft, which was later transmitted to Kissinger. British officials deplored the collective security proposal, which they saw as a ploy for increasing Soviet hegemony throughout Europe. In the words of George Walden, the proposal amounted to a 'blueprint to transform Western Europe into a sort of Soviet Disneyland'.<sup>16</sup> EESD officials therefore advocated that the British response should be one of 'total rejection'.<sup>17</sup>

The FCO also pondered the problems that the USSR's continuing insistence on the separate and unqualified listing of the principle of the inviolability of frontiers presented to the West. According to Walden, the Irish Republic and Spain were likely to object to this given their respective territorial claims on Northern Ireland and

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., No. 24, fn. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., fn. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., fn. 11.

Gibraltar.<sup>18</sup> However, it was the West Germans to whom the debate about the status of Europe's post-war borders presented the most difficult problems. Bonn had gone a long way towards de facto recognition of the territorial status quo by abandoning the Hallstein doctrine and concluding the domestically highly controversial 'Ostverträge'. But the Social Democratic-Liberal coalition had always insisted that the Germans remained one nation divided by a border that could – and *should* – be changed by peaceful means. London had long acknowledged West Germany's special interest on this issue and the UK approach to the CSCE was shaped accordingly. The British had backed West German reticence on the issue out of principle as well as necessity. British foreign policymakers had clearly recognised that London's application to the EC was dependent on FRG support and hence were especially careful not to irritate Bonn over any major issue related to Ostpolitik.<sup>19</sup> During Dipoli III, on 1 January 1973, Britain formally joined the EC. Although a momentous shift in modern British history, formal accession had no impact on London's CSCE policy. After all, the British had been participating in EPC since February 1972 and had actively contributed to the formulation of a common approach to the Dipoli meeting (see chapter three). Having become formal members, the British saw no reason to change course midway through the MPT. Hence, when the decision to form a mini group was taken in Dipoli, the British line on the inviolability of frontiers remained the same: 'we can go along with anything the Germans accept'.<sup>20</sup>

This was the Anglo-German position when the mini group, chaired by the Swiss, convened for the first time halfway through Dipoli III. The group, which met on a daily basis, was a less formal, though by no means less serious affair. It was

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., No. 27, fn. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., No. 1, fn. 7.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., No. 27, para. 3. See also *ibid.*, No. 35, para 2.

officially open to all states, but only about ten delegations actively participated. The USSR and the GDR were the only representatives of the Warsaw Pact, while the British, along with the West Germans, French, and Italians, represented the West.<sup>21</sup> Reflecting the underlying conceptual divide about the nature and scope of détente, the gulf even within this smaller forum was deep. Participants disagreed not just about which principles to include, but also about ‘the inter-relationship between them; their field of application and the source documents to be mentioned in the mandate’, i.e. the international treaties to which reference should be made.<sup>22</sup> Predictably given the range of both the ground to cover and the states’ views, progress was slow. However, during the course of the negotiations, FRG views were softening on one of the core issues. Britain and its partners in EPC gleaned from a meeting à Neuf on 3 March that their West German colleagues were now ready to accept a decoupling of the principles of inviolability of frontiers and the non-use of force.<sup>23</sup> This flexibility enabled the Swiss conveners to compile and informally distribute a list of the main principles put forward so far. The list comprised ten principles:

1. sovereign equality of States;
2. non-recourse to the threat of use of force;
3. inviolability of frontiers;
4. respect for the territorial integrity of States;
5. peaceful settlement of disputes;
6. non-intervention in internal affairs;
7. respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
8. equal rights and self-determination of peoples;
9. cooperation between States;
10. fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law.<sup>24</sup>

West German flexibility was reciprocated shortly thereafter. On 23 March, the Soviet representative in the mini group, Lev Mendelevich, hinted that the USSR, pending

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<sup>21</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter II, para. 12.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 13.

<sup>23</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 22, fn. 9.

<sup>24</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter II, para. 14 (my numbering).

certain modifications, was prepared to accept the Swiss list. The UK delegation considered this move on the Soviet part a ‘first breakthrough’.<sup>25</sup> Seen from the Western point of view, a bargain along these lines amounted to ‘selling inviolability of frontiers in return for human rights and self-determination’.<sup>26</sup> The Foreign Office deemed this a good deal and advocated conceding the decoupling of frontier inviolability and non-use of force. In British eyes, this was worth the prize because, in return, the West gained Soviet acceptance of two principles of propagandistic as well as intrinsic value. Regarding the propaganda aspect, the acceptance of human rights as a principle guiding inter-state relations represented a significant and potentially embarrassing move away from Warsaw Pact rhetoric (and, of course, practice).<sup>27</sup> Likewise, the acknowledgement of self-determination was deemed an equally weighty prize for it implicitly contradicted the Brezhnev Doctrine, which had served to retroactively legitimise the crushing of the Prague Spring. As for the intrinsic value, by conceding the separate inclusion of these principles, the Soviet Union not only endorsed them, but also acknowledged a connection between the principles and European security. This amounted to a significant widening of the Soviet conception of détente. Thus, after four months and one day of negotiations, Moscow had moved away from a narrow notion of détente as an exclusively state-centric process towards a more comprehensive notion that included peoples and even individuals. No matter how strategically motivated these shifts were and how tentative and hedged they might have been, they nonetheless amounted to a significant shift in the normative

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 27, fn. 6.

<sup>27</sup> It should be remembered that, even on the rhetorical level, Communist states (just like their sympathisers in the West) denounced civil and political rights as ‘bourgeois’.

structure of East-West relations.<sup>28</sup> As we shall see shortly, internal divisions, surprisingly, prevented the West from pocketing this concession.

### *The Working Group on Basket III*

In the meantime, the plenary had continued its tour d'horizon through the Baskets and, on 29 March, founded a working group dedicated to Basket III issues. The group was similar to that founded on principles; it adopted the inductive method proposed by T.A.K. Elliott, which meant working its way through all the detailed proposals on the table, slowly aggregating them into subject groups and only then deciding on the composite agenda item.<sup>29</sup> As with its predecessor, much of the discussion centred on the EPC package proposal introduced at the start of the second stage. Back then, Denmark had tabled an extensive paper on the 'development of human contacts, broadening of cultural and educational exchanges and wider flow of information'<sup>30</sup> (see previous chapter). Following strong criticism from the Warsaw Pact and suggestions from the neutrals to shorten the paper, the West engaged in an internal debate about possible revisions.<sup>31</sup> At Dipoli III, such revision processes tested Western cohesion in a different way. In contrast to the leisurely proceedings of the first two MPT stages, the intensification of the negotiation process in the third round forced Western delegations to adjust their positions faster and in more detail than before. As the authors of the proposal package that formed the basis of much of the discussions at Dipoli III, this posed a particular challenge to the West Europeans. The UK head of delegation succinctly summarised the test facing the still fairly new Davignon machinery: 'The Nine must continue to keep in close touch with the other

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas, *Helsinki Effect*, p. 211.

<sup>29</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter VI, para. 6.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 3.

<sup>31</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 22, para. 7d.

members of NATO and with the neutrals and to show flexibility in negotiating on points which do not affect the substance of our position'.<sup>32</sup>

The start of Western consultations on the revision process of the Danish paper did not bode well. The discussions quickly turned into an intense argument, exposing the latent fault lines, familiar since the pre-MPT period, between moderates, hardliners, and the 'wet front'. For tactical reasons, HMG's diplomats deliberately seized the 'middle ground' in the Nine and the Fifteen, tilting somewhat 'to the right of the centre'.<sup>33</sup> An accurate description of the UK approach to Western consultations during the MPT in general, this entailed adopting a tough yet cooperative stance. In these debates, the UK delegation typically argued that the West should start the bargaining process with a demanding opening position to be presented in self-confident fashion. It should then be prepared to defend its proposals vigorously against criticism. Only afterwards, the British suggested, should the West demonstrate goodwill and flexibility by making tactical concessions on the basis of strict reciprocity. Self-confident perhaps to the point of arrogance, the British criticized many Western delegations (with the notable exception of the French) for failing to see the merits of their approach in one way or another. While clearly sympathising with those 'to the right of the centre' ideologically and emotionally, the British nonetheless criticized these hardliners on tactical grounds.

The debate about the revision of the Danish paper is a case in point. The UK delegation disapproved of hardliners like the Italians and the Dutch not for their intentions, but for their categorical refusal to make any changes to the paper. On the other side of the spectrum, HMG's diplomats criticised fellow delegates like the Danes, Canadians, and Norwegians for their 'disappointing eagerness [...] to move

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., No. 26, para. 6.

<sup>33</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter VI, para. 9.

more than half-way to meet the Russians'.<sup>34</sup> This reflected the British disapproval of any approach, which went beyond strict tit-for-tat bargaining. Unilateral concessions of any kind should be avoided since the other side would pocket them without giving anything back in return. Hence, rather than improving the atmosphere, calls from the NATO 'left' for a more forthcoming stance would be interpreted as a sign of weakness.<sup>35</sup> In the debate on the human contacts paper, the UK delegation therefore advocated a more measured line of action designed to make concessions in form if not in substance: the paper was to be abbreviated yet not watered down. This was meant to signal goodwill and flexibility especially to the neutrals whose support the Foreign Office deemed essential.<sup>36</sup>

In the event, the arguments advanced by the moderate faction carried the day and the Danish tabled a revised version of their paper. The text was much shorter, but retained the core Western desiderata, including the stress on human contacts and other exchanges of a non-governmental kind, and even contained a reference to 'ideas' not contained in the original text.<sup>37</sup> The new draft 'received the almost unqualified support of the neutrals', thus putting the Communist states on the defensive.<sup>38</sup> The Warsaw Pact responded with a concerted presentation of counter-drafts, which covered most of the substance of the Danish paper. Poland, the GDR, and Czechoslovakia tabled texts on culture, information, and education respectively. The most important aspect of this counter-initiative lay in what it left out: the Communist states refrained from tabling their own text on human contacts. Warsaw Pact silence on this point spoke volumes; it was a clear indication that this sensitive subject had

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> The fact that Brandt's *Neue Ostpolitik* – a policy strongly supported by the Foreign Office – had started off with several major unilateral concessions seems to have been lost on the British.

<sup>36</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter VI, para. 7.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., para. 6.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., para. 7.

succeeded in putting the Communist states on the defensive. Given the widespread opinion that the provision should feature in the Helsinki Recommendations, the British saw the absence of an Eastern draft as a victory for the Western states in general and for EPC in particular. This impression was confirmed when members of the Russian delegation informally alluded to the possibility of agreeing to discuss the issue at some point in the future.<sup>39</sup>

However, the end of Dipoli III highlighted that the Soviets would put up a good fight until then. During the last days of the session, one of the USSR's most senior diplomats took the floor to deliver a couple of hardline speeches to the working group. Valerian Zorin – who as USSR ambassador during the Cuban missile crisis had infamously denied the existence of Soviet nuclear warheads on the island – argued that Western ideas violated state sovereignty and current state practice. Nicknamed ‘the poisoned dwarf’ by the British delegates, Zorin defended the traditional line that human contacts and other humanitarian issues were matters of a purely bilateral nature. Multilateral discussions along the issues suggested in the Danish paper were thus illegitimate. Rather than intimidating his opponents, the content and abrasive delivery of the speeches had a unifying effect on the West. The ‘monster’ thus inadvertently contributed to the subsequent process of mending transatlantic fences, which took place after the rather rocky experience of Dipoli III.<sup>40</sup>

As Sir Brian Fall later recalled half-jokingly,

[T]he great thing about Zorin was that he was a Western secret weapon. If they had left him at home [...], we would have had vastly more trouble. When [...] the Danes got so fed up with the Dutch and the Belgians and discipline and proper co-ordination among the Nine was under threat – it only took one speech from Zorin to remind us what we were trying to deal with.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., para. 10.

<sup>40</sup> Author's interview with George Walden, London, 14 June 2010.

<sup>41</sup> Author's interview with Sir Brian Fall, London, 15 March 2010.

### *The End of Dipoli III*

While the revision process of the Danish paper and its subsequent discussion exercised the working group on Basket III, the mini group remained deadlocked over the package deal on principles. Interestingly, the impasse resulted from differences of approach *within* the Western camp. Basket I thus betrayed at least two similar dynamics to the negotiations on Basket III. First, in both Baskets, the slow progress had strained Western cohesion, bringing latent differences over tactics and varying national priorities within EPC and NATO closer to the surface. Second, the two Western fora found it difficult to adjust their common positions once the negotiation process at Dipoli intensified and turned into a highly detailed bargaining exercise. This is not surprising given that it demanded the adjustment of commonly agreed positions on wording and on substance on a rolling basis. As discussed in the last chapter, the institutionalised process of policy harmonization within EPC, while on the whole successful, proved time-consuming and was not always in synch with the ad-hoc consultation process adopted by NATO. Thus, in addition to the increasingly more complicated bargaining on substance, the transatlantic strains of Dipoli III stemmed from the problems of adjusting the multi-level co-ordination process within the West to the increasingly more complicated, multi-level negotiation structure of the MPT. One can describe the Western experience at Dipoli as a three-level game. Western negotiators needed to reconcile three inter-locking levels concurrently: the international 'table' (the MPT), the Western 'table' (EPC and NATO) and the domestic 'table' (domestic politics). Unsurprisingly, the juggling act of reconciling these 'tables' brought states' differing priorities and tactical approaches to the fore.

The deadlock over principles towards the end of Dipoli III illustrates this problem well. As we have seen, on 23 March, the Soviet Union had proposed a

bargain, with Mendeleevich indicating his general acceptance of the list of ten principles floated by the Swiss. This represented two significant steps towards the West (both human rights and self-determination would be accepted as core principles fundamental to European security) in return for the West conceding the decoupling of the inviolability of frontiers and the non-use of force. To the dismay of several Western delegations, a quid pro quo along these lines was held up by the Italians, who had initially tabled the EPC proposal on principles. Within NATO, the Italian delegation spent the rest of March drumming up support for resistance to the deal. While the British privately sympathised with this uncompromising stance, they thought Rome's belated intervention tactically unwise.<sup>42</sup> As noted above, the UK delegates generally supported a tough stance, but deemed the hardliners unrealistic in their apparent assumption that the West could avoid tactical concessions during the preliminary talks.<sup>43</sup>

On 6 April 1973, Dipoli III ended with little tangible progress on core issues. With the West internally divided, no deal was struck in Basket I despite the major Soviet concession to accept human rights as a principle guiding inter-state relations. Negotiations in Basket III were divided on East-West lines, with Moscow refusing to discuss human contacts and related measures pertaining to humanitarian concerns and civil liberties. Through its procedural innovations, Britain had made important contributions to the creation of a flexible, multi-level structure, which allowed simultaneous movement on various topics at different speeds. However, even the most flexible proceedings could be blocked by the intransigent stance of hardliners, who were willing to use the consensus rule to the fullest. Ironically, the same multilateral process that empowered Britain, enabling it to negotiate on a par with the

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<sup>42</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter II, para. 15.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. See also DBPO, III/II, No. 17, para. 12.

superpowers, could be rendered impotent if only one determined state, no matter how big or small, dissented. In the eyes of the UK delegation, this was just as well. Provided that Western cohesion and neutral support could be maintained, the delay in the mini group was not seen as a major problem per se. Concerned with their core aim of using the MPT as a test and a lever, they wanted to secure first and foremost that all Western desiderata would be extensively discussed; the speed of the negotiations was of secondary importance. Unlike their Soviet counter-parts, the British delegation, reassured by instructions from Alec Douglas-Home who wanted to see all Western desiderata fully discussed, was not in a hurry.<sup>44</sup>

### *The Easter Recess*

When HMG's diplomats returned to the UK for the Easter break, almost six weeks of increasingly intense negotiations lay behind them. Whereas the leisurely proceedings of the second stage were dominated by the tabling of and general response to the Western European policy offensive, Dipoli III witnessed the emergence of a detailed and increasingly intense bargaining process. This development posed two challenges: an organizational/procedural one and a substantive one. First, to ensure the full discussion of all their proposals, the Nine blocked Warsaw Pact attempts to rush the MPT to a quick conclusion by pushing for the creation of an elaborate organizational structure and an inductive approach to drafting. This allowed both for a comprehensive discussion and variable degrees of progress on multiple levels. Yet the multi-level organisational structure and 'bottom-up' approach to drafting, while enabling some movement in one working group, limited the amount of overall

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<sup>44</sup> Douglas-Home repeatedly endorsed a thorough discussion process, even if this meant long-drawn out negotiations. See, for example, DBPO, III/II, No. 51, fn. 1. The delegation's view is expressed well in Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter VII, para. 11.

progress. EPC was successful in installing a structure and a process, which necessitated that all tabled proposals were extensively discussed before final decisions on the Helsinki Recommendations were taken. This antagonised the Warsaw Pact and frustrated some of the more impatient delegations in the neutral and Western camp. Britain played an active part in these developments; the UK delegation enlisted Western support for the creation of working groups and introduced a draft framework, which paved the way for a more flexible negotiation process. In introducing these procedural innovations, HMG's diplomats kept their substantive aim clearly in mind:

This working structure [...] will enable us to secure full discussion of those items on the agenda to which we attach importance (particularly the economic and cultural baskets) before we give formal agreement to formulations on Basket I (security) which the East favour.<sup>45</sup>

Second, to retain neutral support and maintain Western cohesion in the face of slow progress, EPC needed to demonstrate flexibility. This meant modifying all of the core papers in Baskets I, II, and III contained in the policy offensive. Although EPC eventually managed to table modified papers in all three Baskets, this revision process brought intra-Western divisions to the fore and strained the relationship between EPC and NATO in heretofore unprecedented ways. The UK delegation was alarmed by the transatlantic fall-out the process created:

The dangers of a split between the Nine and the Fifteen became apparent during the third session. As the pressure of the negotiations mounted, and the Nine found themselves in the difficulties described above, consultations with the rest of the Alliance were not always as regular as could have been wished. The problem was

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<sup>45</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 26, para 4. Elliott's reference to economic co-operation in this context is misleading. In contrast to Basket III, UK interest in this area served a short-term tactical aim only. Certainly, the British were, like their Western European partners, keen on increasing trade with the Soviet Union. For example, the agricultural sector in the UK did not hesitate to jump at the opportunity provided by the breakdown of US-Soviet grain deals following the Jackson-Vanik amendment. However, London did not see a multilateral conference with 34 participants as the appropriate forum to strike trade agreements. See *ibid.*, No. 1, paras 9f, 28. British policy at the CSCE used Eastern interest in Basket II mainly as a tactical device to advance London's interests in relation to Basket III. For witness testimony to this effect, see CCBH, *The Helsinki Negotiations*.

compounded by the fact that the Belgians and Dutch (and to some extent the Italians) regarded the Americans, Canadians and Norwegians as a pressure group for a speedy conclusion to the consultations and something of an adversary relationship grew up between the Nine and the Fifteen.<sup>46</sup>

Faced with a decline in transatlantic cohesion, the British delegation ‘played an active part in trying to maintain harmony’.<sup>47</sup> In the heated debates during the redrafting process, UK diplomats steered a moderate course aimed at mediating the tension between those eager for speedy progress and those refusing to make the concessions needed to strike bargains with the Warsaw Pact. This is exemplified in the intra-Western wrangling over the Soviet offer to accept human rights as a principle in Basket I. Arguably, this represented the most significant substantive development of Dipoli III – a normative ‘breakthrough’. The British were eager to pocket this momentous concession and argued for accommodating the Soviet Union’s principal aim – a separate listing of frontier inviolability. Although NATO’s eventual failure to agree to this bargain further exacerbated transatlantic tension, Britain did its part in containing the damage. It consistently argued for a firm though pragmatic approach to East-West bargaining and contributed to the search for positions that all Western states could agree on. Furthermore, it played an active role in establishing an informal co-ordination mechanism designed to minimise the friction between EPC and NATO – the so-called ‘buddy system’.<sup>48</sup> From the third round of the MPT onwards, each member of the Nine was responsible for keeping specific NATO delegations informed of current development within the Davignon machinery.

However, during Dipoli III, the British delegation did start to play a more active and visible role at the conference at large, at times with resounding success. Its

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<sup>46</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter X, para. 16.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Author’s interview with Sir Brian Fall, London, 15 March 2010.

creative procedural contributions serve as good evidence of a more assertive posture. During the first two stages, the British had intervened in the plenary debates in a firm though non-polemical way and participated actively in both Western caucuses, sometimes acting as a transatlantic mediator role behind-the-scenes. During the third stage, Britain's procedural contributions played a significant role in transforming the 'salon des ambassadeurs' into a full-fledged international conference.

Britain's mounting visibility is also reflected in the changing behaviour on the part of the Warsaw Pact. Initially shunned especially by the USSR, several Communist delegations started making bilateral advances from Dipoli III onwards.<sup>49</sup> Even senior figures like Zorin began cultivating lower-ranking officials as happened when the 'poisoned dwarf' invited Brian Fall and George Walden, both First Secretaries at the time, to dinner.<sup>50</sup> These overtures can be seen as both an indicator of the growing stature of the UK delegation and of the mounting difficulty the USSR faced at Dipoli. Put on the defensive by Western initiatives in Basket I and Basket III, Moscow apparently had concluded that it was time to at least open the door of the 'freezer' and see whether a thaw in Anglo-Soviet relations was in the offing.<sup>51</sup> It is

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<sup>49</sup> Elliott, 'CSCE: The First 200 Days', UKNA, FCO 28/2168, para. 14. See also Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter VI, para. 15 and *ibid.*, chapter VIII, para. 8.

<sup>50</sup> In an interview, George Walden, recalled: 'They invited us to dinner...because that was a recognition...in the Soviet embassy, Brian and me. They wanted to sort us out, in a sort of ham-handed, Soviet way. I suppose, [they assumed; KH] as junior people we were going to be overwhelmed with gratitude'. In response to a follow-up question about the evolution of the UK role at Dipoli, Mr Walden also 'remember[ed] [...] feeling that we had the wind in our sails, after a while – not immediately, but after a while'. Author's interview with Mr George Walden, London, UK, 14 June 2010.

<sup>51</sup> In the absence of a comprehensive, archival-based examination of Moscow's ambitions regarding the Helsinki process, assertions about Soviet intentions need to be taken with a grain of salt. To avoid a methodological weakness of several studies of the CSCE based on non-Soviet documents (examples), I would like to explicitly point out that statements about USSR motives in this thesis, unless indicated otherwise, are based to a significant extent on *Western* archival materials. Nonetheless, these claims represent more than mere speculation. Western analyses of Soviet designs regarding the CSCE are usually of a high quality; this can, at least to some extent, be inferred from the accuracy with which the Foreign Office and other Western ministries predicted Moscow's initiatives. Furthermore, I have accessed Soviet thinking indirectly through the analysis of some key documents from the archives of the German Democratic Republic and an in-depth interview with the head of the Policy and Planning Department of the East German Foreign Ministry and leader of the GDR delegation, Professor

likely that the non-polemical approach of the UK delegation further contributed to this change in Soviet behaviour. T.A.K. Elliott had taken care that his delegation should pursue a consistently business-like approach in interactions with the USSR; he noted in retrospect:

[W]e did our best to establish in the minds of the Russians the idea that, although we would fight hard in defence of our positions, our underlying attitude to the talks was a constructive one; and that we were in as good a position to influence the opinions of the Nine and the Fifteen as any other delegation. They reacted realistically; and during the third and fourth session of the talks, we were fully accepted as a delegation with whom the Russians thought it necessary and profitable to do business.<sup>52</sup>

These various pieces of evidence hint at a transformation of the UK role during the Dipoli talks. Having started from a disadvantageous position, Britain re-asserted itself over the course of the MPT. At Dipoli, the erstwhile newcomer to the Davignon machinery and marginalised bystander to European détente, made a ‘comeback’ of sorts. As we shall see, it would take another round of tough negotiating until the Soviet advances in Dipoli would be continued at the highest level, with the leadership of the Soviet Union courting Britain specifically because of the CSCE (see next chapter).

These observations on Britain’s growing visibility in East-West exchanges and at the talks at large should not mask the fact that London’s primary goal remained a defensive, introspective one: maintaining the unity of the West. Dipoli III had ‘ended with markedly less cohesion among the Nine than had previously been the case’.<sup>53</sup> During the Easter recess Britain continued with its attempts at mending fences. The delegation prepared a paper, which outlined the contours of a possible bargain to be

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Siegfried Bock. A leading Warsaw Pact diplomat during both the MPT and CSCE, Bock was intimately familiar with Soviet CSCE policy. The combination of these indirect ways of elucidating Moscow’s ambitions provides a sufficient evidentiary basis on which to hypothesise about the ‘other’ side of the Anglo-Soviet relations in the context of the CSCE.

<sup>52</sup> Elliott, ‘CSCE: The First 200 Days’, UKNA, FCO 28/2168, para. 14.

<sup>53</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter X, para. 10.

struck at the next stage of the MPT.<sup>54</sup> With the explicit approval of Alec Douglas-Home, the delegation proposed making a satisfactory outcome on human contacts the prerequisite for the successful conclusion of the MPT.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the paper, which was discussed in EPC on 12 April, used the general consensus among the Nine concerning the fundamental importance of human contacts as a device to help restore unity.<sup>56</sup> Complementing this attempt to strengthen cohesion through substance, relations were further improved by the common reaffirmation of the norms governing EPC. During the recess, the Nine reaffirmed the consensus principle by renewing the pledge to resist any attempt to rush the Dipoli talks to a conclusion ‘until an agreement satisfactory to all delegations had been reached’.<sup>57</sup> This pacified the hardliners who anticipated that, once the next stage was underway, pressure would soon mount to finish the MPT process, turning Dipoli IV into a closing sale of Western desiderata.

As we shall see in the next section, both measures, substantive as well as procedural, went a long way towards renewing Western cohesion during the final round of bargaining at Dipoli.

### **The Final Round: Dipoli IV**

Given the slow rate of progress during the previous stages, pressure mounted on all participants to gain significant headway, turning timing into one of the dominant issues of Dipoli IV.<sup>58</sup> During the third session, the question of when to fix an end date for the MPT had already become a steadily more important issue. The Warsaw Pact in particular wanted the pre-talks to finish in early June 1973, so as to leave enough time

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<sup>54</sup> The core of said bargain is summarised in DBPO, III/II, No. 30, para. 7e.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, fn. 15.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 8.

<sup>57</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter X, para. 10.

<sup>58</sup> Dipoli IV lasted from 25 April-8 June 1973.

to prepare for the first stage of the official negotiations to take place at the end of the month.<sup>59</sup>

The backdrop to this timeline was the understanding reached by the superpowers before the start of the MPT, which had linked the start of the CSCE to the other major multilateral negotiation on European security, MBFR. If the so-called 'Brezhnev/Kissinger timetable' were to be fulfilled, the MPT would indeed need to wrap up in early June.<sup>60</sup> Douglas-Home supported this schedule and instructed the delegation to help bring the talks to a conclusion within that timeframe.<sup>61</sup> However, unlike the superpowers, the British and their West European partners entertained ambitious goals for the MPT, particularly regarding Basket III. In a telegram of 28 March, Douglas-Home committed the delegation to the June deadline, but also maintained: 'Provided we can stick together and generally bring along the neutrals with us, we see no need to make real concessions of substance to meet Eastern views'.<sup>62</sup> This was obviously a tall order for the delegation. To maintain Western cohesion and neutral backing was difficult enough; but how could the ambitious goals of the Nine be achieved under time pressure and without offering a substantive quid pro quo in return for progress?

The delegation responded to this challenge in multiple ways. First of all, T.A.K. Elliott cautioned Douglas-Home and the higher echelons in the FCO against taking too hard a line against the Warsaw Pact, re-emphasising that 'the East have already moved some way towards us on a number of issues'.<sup>63</sup> Second, in view of the

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<sup>59</sup> According to the French 3-stage model, the first round of official negotiations would be attended by the foreign secretary of the participating states who would officially inaugurate the proceedings. The second stage was reserved for intensive negotiations at the expert level, to be followed by a final stage, possibly at the head of state level, which would sign the outcome document.

<sup>60</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter IXb, para. 18.

<sup>61</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 29, para. 3.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 2a.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 30, para. 3.

general agreement within the West that Basket III remained the major outstanding point at this stage of the negotiations, the delegation proposed putting a package deal to the Soviet Union.<sup>64</sup> The West should clearly indicate its willingness to make overall progress in the negotiations, provided that the Warsaw Pact made further concessions on the most controversial issues in Basket III – human contacts and information.<sup>65</sup> Finally, to exploit Soviet urgency, clear signs of which had emerged during the third stage, Britain and its EC partner should be careful not to commit themselves publically to the Brezhnev/Kissinger timetable.<sup>66</sup>

The Nine took a major step towards this position when the talks re-opened on 25 April. On the same day, the Political Directors met in Brussels and relativised the superpower timeframe. They decided to make their consent to a conclusion of the MPT conditional on progress on substance, not on some externally imposed timeline: ‘the date of end June for the beginning of the conference could be a hope but not a constraint’.<sup>67</sup> This agreement enabled the EC delegations to continue using Soviet urgency as a lever, while also smoothing over the internal division between the hardliners and the more impatient members of the Davignon machinery.<sup>68</sup>

#### *Dipoli IV as a Microcosm of Détente*

The negotiations became more complex during the final MPT stage: working groups, mini groups and informal drafting committees proliferated, fighting over the wording within each Basket and weaving intricate package deals between them. So as not to lose sight of the wood for the trees, this section focuses on the main package deals and relates them to the development of European détente and Britain’s role within it.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., para. 7e.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., para. 7e(i).

<sup>66</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter II, para. 11.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., chapter I, para. 23.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

If we understand Helsinki as a microcosm of European détente, then the MPT bargaining provides us with pertinent insights about the nature of this process. Therefore, a few words on the ‘big picture’ are in order before taking a final, guided dive into the sea of details of pre-CSCE bargaining.

The significance of the fourth stage, I argue, lies in its role in clarifying the major points of contention in each of the Baskets and in forging compromise packages within and, increasingly, between them. The main dividing lines emerged between the following topics: the scope and limits of sovereignty and the status of Europe’s borders, on the one hand, and human rights and the possibility of peaceful changes to the continent’s territorial order, on the other. The former represent the attempt to define the CSCE as a stage in a process geared towards the reinforcement of the political, territorial, and normative status quo of the constructed peace; the latter embody the endeavour to inject the seeds for change, a change that could potentially supersede the constructed peace. Seen in this light, the MPT (and the subsequent CSCE) negotiations appear as an attempt to turn détente into a process that reinforces and/or challenges traditional ‘Westphalian’ notions of sovereignty and security. This section and the following chapters show how these larger developments played out in the diplomatic exchanges in Helsinki. As we shall see, some of the UK officials who went through the daily toils of haggling over wording, sentence structure, punctuation, translation etc. were quite aware of the larger political and normative implications of their work. To refer a final time to Kissinger’s polemic, Britain’s diplomats may have shown the devotion of ‘cloistered medieval monks elaborating sacred texts’, yet the documents reveal a global outlook which linked the

bargaining in Dipoli to the world of international politics beyond concrete walls of the Finnish Students Union.<sup>69</sup>

### *State of Play*

When the talks resumed in late April, a mountain of work lay ahead in all issue areas. In Basket I, the question of an East/West bargain on principles was still open. In Basket III, the Warsaw Pact refused to move towards the West on key desiderata – human contacts and information. The picture in Basket II, where the rather technical discussions proved far less divisive, was more encouraging while in-depth discussions on potential follow-up to the conference in Basket IV had yet to start. Since the final resolution of economics and follow-up were widely recognized as depending on developments in the former Baskets, I will focus on the key controversies in Baskets I and III. These were widely recognised as blocking the successful conclusion of the MPT and, as we shall see, it would take two bargains – one within and one between these Baskets – to open the door towards the start of the CSCE.

### *The Western Focus on Basket III*

In the opening phase of Dipoli IV, the West successfully implemented its tactic of slowing down discussions on the declaration of principles in Basket I in order to focus on Basket III. In the first week, the responsible mini group in Basket I met only once while sessions in Basket III were conducted on a daily basis.<sup>70</sup>

Reflecting an increasingly defensive posture, the Soviet Union also shifted its tactics, focusing its attention on securing agreement on a preamble (or ‘châpeau’). The USSR delegation had originally introduced this method during the third stage of

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<sup>69</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, p. 642.

<sup>70</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 32, para. 2.

the MPT when tabling a preamble to the revised Danish paper in Basket III.<sup>71</sup> Soviet *châpeaus* contained highly restrictive language, such as references to the need to respect existing ‘laws and customs’ of states, which were obviously intended to qualify the main body of the respective texts.<sup>72</sup>

On 7 May 1973, drafting began in the working group.<sup>73</sup> In the previous days, the British had strongly advocated that the West throw its weight behind a draft preamble introduced by the Austrian delegation.<sup>74</sup> The rationale behind the UK initiative was of a purely tactical nature: to signal Western flexibility and to move the moderate Austrian draft into the centre of the discussion, thus marginalising the highly restrictive Soviet draft.<sup>75</sup> Following this logic, EPC subsequently withdrew the draft preamble contained in the revised Danish paper and concentrated on secretly lobbying the Austrians to modify their paper along Western lines.

In response, the USSR delegation tabled a revised draft that, while using some Austrian formulations, remained unyielding in substance. The revised draft also featured a direct reference to ‘non-interference’; henceforth, this formula became the main Soviet desideratum. To the British, the Soviet intention to highlight the need to refrain from meddling in internal affairs was obvious: ‘Their aim was no doubt to poison the body of the mandate by introducing this omnibus negative qualification into the introduction’.<sup>76</sup>

Over the course of the following days, USSR emphasis on non-interference intensified; the Soviet delegation stepped up its campaign for an explicit reference to the point where it came close to an all-consuming endeavour. This development

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<sup>71</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter VI, para. 7.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 12.

<sup>73</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 32, fn. 5.

<sup>74</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter VI, para. 7.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 12.

nicely illustrates a general and a specific trend during the fourth stage: the more the West was able to focus on Basket III, the more the Soviet Union was put on the defensive; and the more the balance of opinion tilted against the Warsaw Pact, the more dogged the Soviet delegation became in its pursuit of non-interference. Meanwhile, the secret talks between Western delegations and the Austrians bore fruit, leading the latter to table a revised draft of their chapeau. According to the UK record, their interlocutors, though officially neutral, proved ‘willing accomplices throughout’. They even used the old diplomatic trick of changing the translation of their draft to further accentuate its pro-Western aspects.<sup>77</sup> These methods may not have been the most virtuous, but they certainly proved effective: the Soviet negotiators de facto deserted their own draft, dug in their heels, stubbornly making any progress in Basket III dependent on the acceptance of a preambular reference to non-interference.

In the meantime, the single meeting of the mini group in Basket I mentioned above produced some movement. Here, too, a neutral initiative played a role. Until then, the group had not been able to agree on any texts. To make some headway, Hans Blix, then a legal adviser to the Swedish delegation, introduced a compromise paper on principles, which the mini group discussed on 5 May.<sup>78</sup> HMG’s diplomats privately praised the ‘ingenious attempt’ to avoid previous points of contestation, but criticised what they regarded as a failure to use the terms of reference to insert formulations negating the Brezhnev doctrine.<sup>79</sup> Noting his personal ambition to play the role of mediator,<sup>80</sup> the UK delegation christened Blix ‘the only doubtful apple in the Swedish basket’.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 32, fn. 2.

<sup>79</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter II, para. 22.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., chapter XI, para. 45.

The Blix draft subsequently became the basis for drafting in an informal group founded at Soviet request. During negotiations in this group the British eventually secured a couple of provisions at odds with the Brezhnevian notion of the limited sovereignty of socialist states. For example, one agreed text mandated that states apply the principles in universal fashion, ‘irrespective of their political, economic or social systems’.<sup>82</sup>

Two days after the Blix paper was discussed in the mini group, drafting finally began in Basket III on the basis of the revised Austrian draft. The Bulgarians, probably acting at the behest of the Soviet delegation, tabled an amendment, which limited the main body of the Austrian draft with a reference not only to non-interference, but also to sovereignty and the need to respect national laws.<sup>83</sup> Naturally, this triple qualification was even less acceptable to the West than a sole disclaimer and both EPC and NATO rejected the amendment. The Western delegations argued that selectively inserting principles into a preamble was inappropriate. Even private assurances by Western diplomats failed to convince the Soviet delegates that the issue was non-negotiable, once and for all turning non-interference into ‘a major test of wills between East and West’.<sup>84</sup>

T.A.K. Elliott thought it quite likely that the disagreement represented ‘the key to progress not only in Basket III but in the MPT as a whole’.<sup>85</sup> He was concerned about the effects that a prolonged deadlock would have on Western cohesion and the neutrals and therefore tried to devise a compromise formula. The resident ambassador proposed substituting non-interference for two positively worded principles: ‘the

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., chapter II, para. 23.

<sup>83</sup> This episode is likely to be an instance of what the UK delegation saw as a ‘standard Soviet practice of using East European countries (often with more liberal attitudes) to defend untenable Soviet positions’. See *ibid.*, chapter VI, para. 5.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., para. 14.

<sup>85</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 33, para. 12.

sovereign rights of states and the rights of individuals'.<sup>86</sup> The proposition was put to the Political Directors at their meeting on 14 May. The Nine decided to continue the all-out rejection of non-interference, but gave the green light to a deal along the lines proposed by Elliott. They would consent to the selective mention of state sovereignty and individual rights, provided that the Soviet Union showed flexibility on other key aspects of Basket III, including the texts on human contacts and information in the main body of the Austrian draft.<sup>87</sup> Only the Netherlands objected, rejecting any conciliatory move.

Let us use this juncture in the negotiations to re-emphasise the political rationale and highlight the normative implications underlying the bargaining at Dipoli. Elliott's proposition expresses the normative issues underlying the bargaining in and between Baskets I and III most clearly. EPC policy regarding Basket III amounted to an attempt at changing the normative structure underpinning the Soviet conception of *détente*: the rapprochement between states was to be supplemented by a societal dimension and by respect for the rights of individuals. In contrast, Warsaw Pact policy in Basket I and its campaign for non-interference in Basket III represented the sustained attempt to reinforce Westphalian norms of sovereignty. In theoretical terms, one can roughly equate this to the distinction within the English School between solidarist and pluralist strands of International Society theorising, represented respectively by EPC and the Warsaw Pact. The British compromise proposal, by listing the rights of individuals next to the rights of states, re-affirmed the former, but at the same time upgraded the latter. In effect, this move deemphasised the pluralist emphasis on states as the only legitimate members of International Society.

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, fn. 11.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, fn. 12.

Three days after the meeting of the Political Directors, the USSR delegation responded with the ‘most radical shift in the Soviet negotiating position’ to date.<sup>88</sup> In return for Western concessions on the *château*, the USSR vowed to drop its insistence on non-interference.<sup>89</sup> As was the case with the breakthrough during the third stage when Moscow accepted the human rights principle, the British wanted to strike a deal quickly, but found themselves confronted with hesitant partners. The ‘usual pattern’ emerged, with the hardliners – the Dutch, Italians, and Belgians – reluctant to enter into any bargain on a key Western desideratum.<sup>90</sup> HMG’s diplomats argued that the Soviet concession represented ‘a major psychological victory for the West’ and urged their partners to agree to the package deal. Unlike the previous debate about the human rights principle, this time the Nine and the Fifteen reached a consensus faster and gave their consent to the package.<sup>91</sup>

Following this important compromise regarding the preamble, participants moved on to finalise the texts of the four mandates of Basket III: human contacts, culture, education and information. By making several tactical concessions on wording, the Western delegations were able to secure what the UK delegation deemed a very satisfactory text on human contacts. For example, instead of instructing the CSCE to ‘work out new ways and means’ to promote interactions between individuals, Western diplomats settled for a text that mandated the conference proper

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<sup>88</sup> DBPO, No. 34, para 6.

<sup>89</sup> To a large extent, the Soviet requests amounted to non-interference provisions in all but name. For example, the USSR requested to add a sentence to the preamble stressing that the provisions in Basket III needed to be grounded in the ‘full respect for the principles in Basket I’. See Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter VI, para. 16. The USSR still wanted to reinforce the traditional notion of sovereignty and pre-empt any attempt to widen the scope of multilateral discussion. This is why the British documents emphasise the primarily ‘psychological’ nature of the Western ‘victory’. However, the weight of the concession – the abandonment of the tremendously contentious and highly restrictive term and the transferral of the safety clauses against interference to less prominent parts – is nonetheless considerable. As we shall see in the following chapters, the Warsaw Pact struggled for the rest of the CSCE to regain the lost territory on these issues.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 17.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

to ‘prepare proposals to facilitate human contacts’.<sup>92</sup> The stress on the novel nature was thus lost, but this was largely a tactical concession. After all, the mere inclusion into the context of multilateral détente of such a dynamic and transnational element represented a new in and of itself. It thus did not necessarily require the extra emphasis on novel measures.

Western delegations subsequently decided to divide up the work on the remaining three sub-sections. Individual delegations would put out their feelers bilaterally and pre-negotiate texts with their Warsaw Pact counterparts. The Danes elected to discuss culture, the Canadians tackled education and the UK delegation volunteered to take on what ‘promised to be the most difficult outstanding issue’ – negotiations on the dissemination of information with the East Germans.<sup>93</sup>

After many bilateral meetings with Siegfried Bock, the head of the GDR delegation, the UK was able to exact several substantive concessions. In addition to a text on improving the working conditions for journalists, the most important British achievement was a phrase that mandated the CSCE to work towards the ‘freer and wider dissemination of information of all kinds’.<sup>94</sup> During these meetings, the British pursued an ambitious goal: to them, the ideal text would ‘imply clearly that it was the dissemination of ideas [...] which promoted security’.<sup>95</sup> Although eventually the explicit reference to ‘ideas’ proved unacceptable to the Communist states and had to be dropped, the ambition to establish such a link is remarkable. Not only does it falsify the claim that the British merely played a ‘procedural role’, but it also serves as yet another piece of evidence against the claim that the CSCE merely aimed to cement the status quo. Even the phrase that was eventually agreed upon widens the

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., para. 18.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Author’s interview Sir Brian Fall, London, 15 March 2010.

<sup>95</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter VI, para. 22.

Soviet conception of détente considerably. It can be seen as marking a normative change away from a narrow, state-centric notion of security towards a more holistic definition, thus foreshadowing the post-Cold War paradigm of human security.<sup>96</sup>

HMG's negotiators were particularly pleased with – and a little surprised about – Bock's acceptance of the rich array of adjectives – 'freer and wider...of all kinds' – which they attributed to the Soviet Union's growing sense of urgency. In this context, the delegation's MPT Report noted that

The East Germans and the Russians themselves made it clear that they were anxious to avoid the ideological debate in the Working Group which was bound to arise if a compromise paper was not agreed before the subject was due to be discussed. We made full use of their nervousness, by emphasising our need for a good presentational text and our determination to fight hard to get it, whether informally or in the Working Group.<sup>97</sup>

In an interview, Sir Brian Fall put the point more bluntly: 'Bock was left high and dry'. Fall recalled cheerfully that

[...] people who were dealing with this knew [...] that there was a tiny bit of negotiating fat left in that. Something might go and maybe 'of all kinds' would be the thing to go. And then the Russian just said, 'Right, everybody in!'<sup>98</sup>

This example of human rights bargaining illustrates how the Western tactic of slowing down the overall negotiations in order to focus on Basket III paid off nicely. It also shows that the British approach to Dipoli in general and its bargaining style proved quite effective. By stressing their resolve to 'fight hard' for an adequate text, the British credibly signalled that an intransigent stance on the part of the GDR would lead to prolonged deadlock. At the same time, as the evidence from the interview indicates, the British had also been prepared to compromise by dropping some of the

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<sup>96</sup> Hanhimäki, 'Détente in Europe, 1962-1975', pp. 214, 216.

<sup>97</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter VI, para. 21.

<sup>98</sup> Author's interview Sir Brian Fall, London, 15 March 2010. Siegfried Bock has confirmed that Soviet Union pressure frequently trumped GDR interests. Author's interview with Professor Siegfried Bock, Berlin, 11 June 2008.

adjectives. Without evidence from the Soviet side, we cannot know for sure how much the British mix of toughness and flexibility impacted on the USSR delegation. But it seems a reasonable counter-factual argument to make that other Western delegations would have secured a less satisfactory result. Those championing a ‘softer’ approach to the MPT would probably have been loathe to raise such a controversial subject in the first place and would have put forward a less loaded formulation. The hardliners, on the other hand, might have been tempted to table a more polemical text, which might have proven non-negotiable despite the time pressure that Eastern delegations were apparently under. Counterfactuals aside, the UK delegation certainly interpreted these bargaining successes as results of their reputation as tough-nosed yet pragmatic negotiators. This was a lesson the Foreign Office would not forget for the remainder of the CSCE. The British would continue to play for time to exploit their opponents’ ‘nervousness’, but along the way, they would also take care to float moderate proposals that stood a chance of winning the acceptance of Western delegations, the neutrals, and the Communist states. As we shall see in chapter seven, this dual approach would prove the recipe for success when the British-sponsored global solution paved the way for agreement in Basket III.

#### *Agreement in Basket I*

The agreement on Basket III had a major impact on the entire MPT, paving the way for a speedy resolution of outstanding issues. The negotiations in Basket I profited especially. This is not surprising, given that the agreement had found a way of reconciling status quo-oriented and transformative elements – a tension which had also plagued the negotiations on principles. With time running out, delegates did not want to fight the same battle all over again and, consequently, the long-standing

dispute over the list of principles was resolved. So, the West finally acquiesced to the decoupling of frontier inviolability and the non-use of force in return for the inclusion of human rights as a distinct and equal principle.<sup>99</sup>

Naturally, the deal was of the utmost importance to the Germans. In registering Bonn's approval of the bargain, the FRG delegation stressed its interpretation of the meaning of the inviolability of frontiers. This is worth noting for the intrinsic importance of the issue to the negotiations, but also because the debate provides us with another insight into the grand debate about the nature of *détente* (see introduction). Was *détente* a conservative, even reactionary phenomenon like Jeremi Suri asserts – a process to pre-empt change? The West German position on frontiers is evidence to the contrary. Bonn was adamant that inviolability did not mean immutability. With the backing of the UK and other delegations, the FRG emphasised that the principle did not preclude a peaceful change of borders by mutual agreement.<sup>100</sup> This show of solidarity in support of the West Germans was important because of the commitments it had entered into as part of its bilateral *détente* policy. As the GDR and Soviet delegations were quick to point out, inviolability featured in Bonn's Eastern Treaties where, importantly, it was *not* juxtaposed with human rights. By joining the Western choir which insisted on the inclusion of human rights, the FRG could now be portrayed as going back on its bilateral pledges, or, to put it more precisely, demanding more than it initially had.

This represents another instance where the multilateralisation of *détente* changed a bilateral dynamic and where multilateralism also levelled the playing field. The trade-off between the decoupling of two key Soviet desiderata and the human rights principle did not merely cement what had been agreed bilaterally during the

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<sup>99</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter II, para. 26.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 28iii-iv.

‘bicycle race to Moscow’ phase. In consequence, West Germany, arguably the most powerful participant apart from the superpowers, found itself in a vulnerable, semi-dependent position. Western backing in the Nine and the Fifteen was crucial to sustaining the slightly dubious argument the Ostverträge were irrelevant in the CSCE context. After all, if Ostpolitik kick-started the rapprochement on the continent, how could its legal embodiments not be pertinent to a grand détente conference of all the states of Europe?

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the legal status of the principles was next on the to-do list of the mini group in Basket I. The dividing lines in this debate cut across the East-West chasm. Whereas the Soviets remained ‘neutral’, Blix and the Romanian delegation argued against the British, West Germans, and Americans for turning the declaration into a legally binding commitment. Blix wanted participants to express their adherence to the principles by using verbs such as ‘shall’; he maintained that other expressions, such as the more loose ‘should’, would in effect weaken those principles in the declaration that states had previously endorsed in other documents, such as the United Nations Charter. As ever so often during the MPT, opposing views were papered over by a compromise, which postponed the final resolution of the issue until the conference proper. The formula eventually used in the Blue Book bypasses the point of contention. Paragraph 17 of the English version of the Helsinki Recommendations mandates that ‘each participating State is to respect and apply’ the ten principles.<sup>101</sup>

The mini group then proceeded to hammering out the precise formulations of the principles. The ensuing debates were much aided by the bargain in Basket III,

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<sup>101</sup> The Helsinki Recommendations are reprinted in Cmnd. 6932, No. 52. (The quote is from para. 18.) It should be noted, however, that the French version uses verbs with a stronger thrust, such as ‘régir’ and ‘devoir’. See Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter II, para. 25.

especially when it came to drafting the human rights principle.<sup>102</sup> The Holy See, although remaining aloof from most of the negotiations at Dipoli, became an important player during this stage. The Vatican's primary goal was to secure explicit references to freedom of religion in the declaration and in the terms of reference in Basket III. The issue was resolved relatively quickly. The Holy See gained a generously worded extension of the human rights principle, which committed states to respect the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief'. In return, the Vatican stopped pressing its case in Basket III.<sup>103</sup> This can serve as further evidence for how Helsinki-style multilateralism empowered materially weak actors and for how Basket III issues, coupled with mounting time pressure, put the Warsaw Pact on the defensive. The Soviet Union was thus willing to pay a tangible price in return for an intangible concession; it apparently preferred the concrete nuisance of an ever more loaded human rights principle to the potentially awkward situation of confronting the Holy See over the minutiae of Basket III. Yet another bargain had been struck between Baskets I and III, thus foreshadowing the major issues of contention as well as the potential ways of finding compromises at the conference proper. With this final human rights bargain, the prolonged struggle at Dipoli to widen and to deepen the Soviet agenda – and, by extension, Moscow's conception of détente – came to an end.

#### *The End of Dipoli IV: The Delegation Takes Stock*

On 8 June 1973, the Multilateral Preparatory Talks concluded. The UK delegates packed their bags and returned to Britain after 199 days of exhaustive (and exhausting) negotiations at Dipoli. In comparison to the preceding round, the UK delegation experienced Dipoli IV as a much more gratifying experience. If the third

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., para. 30.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

round was characterised by the interrelated problems of transatlantic divisions and little progress on substance, the final leg witnessed both the West closing ranks and entering into substantive East-West bargaining in a flexible manner. As persistent advocates for a pragmatic negotiating style, this was much to the delegation's liking. During the stocktaking exercise that followed their return to London, HMG's diplomats thus reviewed the fourth stage in positive terms. According to the UK delegation, reasons for the improved performance of the West at Dipoli IV as well as at the MPT in general were manifold.

First of all, HMG's diplomats thought that the Western tactic of focusing on Basket III in order to exploit the USSR's apparent sense of urgency worked very well. From the third stage onwards, the Soviet delegation had been displaying signs of being in a hurry, putting the West in a potentially favourable position.<sup>104</sup> This was turned into actual leverage by the West's ability to win neutral support and to signal credibly to the USSR that concessions on Basket III were a precondition to overall progress.

Transatlantic cohesion was key to this strategy and, fortunately for the West, the Nine and the Fifteen managed to hold together more efficiently than during the preceding round. Several reasons, some substantive, some procedural, account for the more unified approach in the final round. Throughout, the substantive focus on liberal core values as embodied in the human contacts and information sections helped maintain cohesion within EPC. These found their practical expression in the Western proposals regarding the human contacts and information sections of Basket III and the human rights principle in Basket I. Measures geared towards increasing freedom of movement and the free flow of ideas fulfilled two important functions: they appealed

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., para. 11.

to parliamentary/public opinion and promised tangible (though probably limited) improvements. This appealed both to the hardliners and the 'pacesetters', thus helping to bridge the internal division that had hampered Western flexibility during the third stage.

This liberal explanation has its limits, however. After all, the focus on the human rights principle at the end of Dipoli III had not deterred Italy from blocking the bargain that the British and many other delegations wanted to strike. This points to the need to look closer into the issue, at a level of detail that only a chronological narrative can provide. For one, the decisions of the Political Directors to relativise the Brezhnev/Kissinger timetable and to reaffirm the consensus rule to those to the 'left' and to the 'right'. Everybody could rally behind the position that a speedy conclusion of the MPT was desirable, but not at the price of prematurely abandoning core desiderata.

Second, by the time the fourth stage of the MPT started, learning processes had taken place, enabling delegations to coordinate their policies despite the growing speed of the negotiations. To give just two examples, the Belgians, who were holding the EC presidency, exercised their role more flexibly; in addition, the buddy system, introduced halfway through Dipoli III, together with other procedural measures, was helpful throughout in keeping NATO informed of the state of play in EPC.<sup>105</sup> These measures strengthened trust and minimised opportunities for wedge-driving on the part of the Warsaw Pact.

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<sup>105</sup> The UK delegation had criticised their Belgian colleagues for their 'rigidity' and Etienne Davignon for putting the delegation on too short a 'leash', thus preventing them from responding adequately to changing circumstances. See *ibid.*, chapter X, para. 9. Another organisational device that proved helpful was that intra-Western coordination during the East-West bargaining in Basket III took place in NATO, not in EPC. (During this episode, France took active part in the otherwise unloved forum.)

Third, certain individual delegations played particularly important roles.<sup>106</sup> Next to the more flexible Belgians, a good argument can be made on behalf of the importance of the French delegation. In contrast to the ‘patchy performance’ of the West Germans and the ‘remarkably silent’ US delegation, the French had played a leadership role at Dipoli from the start.<sup>107</sup> The overall performance of the French delegation and the individual calibre of its members elicited rare praise from the British. In a review of all delegations at Dipoli, the French delegation is the only one exempt from major criticism. This otherwise biting document, brimming with critical remarks at times bordering on outright condescension, applauds the ‘very competent delegation’. The British praised their colleagues’ hard-nosed behaviour towards the USSR and honoured France’s overall contribution as ‘a major factor in getting the Western concept of the conference generally agreed’.<sup>108</sup>

The UK delegation had consistently argued for several of these measures and, despite its sympathy for the hardliners of the NATO ‘right’, steadily argued that the West should negotiate flexibly and make concessions when necessary. As we have seen, the delegation played an active role in putting words into action. During key junctures of Dipoli IV – including the Western decision to focus on Basket III at the onset and the detailed bargaining with the GDR at the end – the delegation’s skill and determination proved successful. It therefore seems justified to attribute a significant, at times even leading role, to the UK delegation during the second half of the Dipoli talks.

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<sup>106</sup> The regular disclaimers regarding the danger of overemphasising the agency of individual actors in multilateral settings apply (see introduction).

<sup>107</sup> The UK delegation criticised their West German colleagues on several levels. Most importantly, the British complained about their preoccupation with ‘bilateral concerns’ and their overly ‘narrow conception of immediate German interests’. See Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter XI, para. 7. For the British assessment of the American performance, see *ibid.*, para. 17. See also Elliott, ‘CSCE: The First 200 Days’, UKNA, FCO 28/2168, para. 9.

<sup>108</sup> Draft Report MPT, UKNA, FCO 28/2167, chapter XI, para. 5.

The overall outcome of Western endeavours is, of course, more important than the performance of individual delegations. On the basis of the evidence presented in this and the preceding chapter, it seems fair to assess Dipoli as a significant success for the West. As the last-minute bargain between Basket I and Basket III indicated the USSR was willing to pay a price for the successful conclusion of the MPT. In return for the re-affirmation of traditional Westphalian norms – notably, sovereignty and the inviolability of frontiers – the USSR had consented to the inclusion of a ‘new’ principle. Moscow – a non-signatory to the UDHR – thus became party to an agreement that elevated human rights to the status of a core norm of international society. Moreover, the procedural device of the terms of reference ensured an in-depth discussion of topics heretofore excluded from multilateral scrutiny, most importantly the specific civil liberty provisions of Basket III.

Seen from the Western perspective, the extent to which Dipoli had helped to turn the tables was remarkable. The change in the British outlook provides a good litmus test of the nature and extent of this development. As we have seen in chapter three, the Foreign Office had initially defined the pre-talks as an ‘exercise in damage limitation’; roughly six months later, the head of the UK delegation noted with barely disguised Schadenfreude how the talks had trapped the Soviet Union

in a defensive position; and one where their only hope of making their point was by rational argument rather than the exercise of pressure. It was a stimulating situation for Western delegations to find the Russians, in the hearing of representatives of all their satellites, obliged to give a detailed defence of their domestic policies on, for example, the increase of human and cultural contacts, in order to answer criticism by Liechtenstein.<sup>109</sup>

After years in which the CSCE proposal had put the West on the defensive, it was Moscow’s turn to minimise damage. It is certainly important to stress how the

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<sup>109</sup> Elliott, ‘CSCE: The First 200 Days’, UKNA, FCO 28/2168, para. 19.

substance of the Dipoli agenda, including the prominence of liberal values such as the general human rights principle and the specific civil liberty provisions, played an important role in the reversal of fortunes. However, it is equally important to note the limits of this explanation; it would be ludicrous to argue that, by themselves, a few provisional texts on certain values can challenge key interests of a sovereign state – let alone of a nuclear-armed superpower. To provide a fuller, more credible explanation of how the Helsinki process – and the multilateralisation of European détente more generally – slowly turned against their initiator, we have to take other key contributing factors into consideration.

Here again, analysing the multilateralisation of European détente from a British perspective provides us with distinct insights. Unlike the superpowers or West Germany who ‘naturally’ took centre stage by virtue of their influence and key role in bilateral détente, the UK started into the Helsinki process as a marginal actor. As noted throughout, its status as détente’s ‘European leper’ and as a newcomer to the EC imposed limitations on London’s room to manoeuvre.<sup>110</sup>

This chapter has therefore traced the role that the UK delegation played within these confines and how, through skilful and determined diplomacy, Britain’s negotiators made the best of the situation. It has demonstrated that liberal values did play an important role; British diplomats actively seized on and benefitted from the ‘soft power’ of these values, which helped win over the neutrals and patch up Western cohesion in times of tactical division. Yet it has also noted a fundamental prerequisite to this process, one that is neatly expressed in the above quote: the procedural norms adopted at Helsinki flattened power asymmetries by chaining even the most powerful actors to consensus-based decision-making and to a bargaining process that militated

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<sup>110</sup> For the quote, see DBPO, III/I, No. 46, para. 4.

against coercive diplomacy and amplified the force of the ‘rational argument’. To be sure, as in the process of bilateral détente, ‘the application of pressure’ was still possible. Yet the nature of the negotiation regime adopted at Dipoli and maintained throughout the Helsinki process, raised the political costs associated with coercive devices such as veiled threats and other ‘bullying tactics’.<sup>111</sup>

If these procedural norms enabled mini-states like Liechtenstein to challenge the dominant states, the same, of course, also applied to middle powers like Britain. Throughout the Dipoli meeting, the UK delegation increasingly shed its inhibitions and exploited the opportunities provided by the procedural norms governing the MPT. While these procedural norms levelled the playing field, the soft power of liberal values helped turn the momentum of the talks against the Warsaw Pact. In sum, it is the *combination* of these two factors, which helps explain both the development of the overall dynamic of the Dipoli talks and, coupled with the skilfulness and determination of the UK delegation, the ‘comeback’ of Britain as a significant actor in East-West diplomacy.

However, a caveat needs to be added to these positive assessments of the outcome of the MPT and the performance of the British delegation. In terms of significance, the Blue Book negotiated at Dipoli was not nearly of the same significance as the UDHR; it merely bound states to discuss human rights at the CSCE. Thus, as of June 1973, the UK delegation, their partners and the West-leaning neutrals who had pushed for the human rights provisions had achieved a preliminary success only. Moscow had acquiesced to little more than a round of talks that were likely to become somewhat embarrassing. Helsinki Recommendations could have

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<sup>111</sup> Elliott, ‘CSCE: The First 200 Days’, UKNA, FCO 28/2168, para. 19. For example, the USSR delegation had alienated the neutrals with their attempt to arm-twist them into compliance. It seems safe to assume that this helped to convince the neutrals that a policy of equidistance from both East and West was not in their interest. See *ibid.*, para. 19.

turned out to be one of diplomatic history's many 'paper tigers'. The next two chapters will examine the laborious struggle to turn mere recommendations into actual texts.

## CHAPTER 6

### Negotiating the Final Act, Part I, 1973–1974

#### **The Central Bargain**

This chapter and the following one trace the British contribution to the complex set of package deals – the central bargain – that, I argue, represent the essence of the CSCE negotiations. While the contours of the projected negotiations had gradually become visible throughout the ‘dialogue through communiqué’, it was not until the end of the Multilateral Preparatory Talks of 1972-1973 that an agenda was laid down. Over the course of the 199 days at Dipoli, it had become clear what the most contested issues were going to be: the status of Europe’s post-war borders, the security dimension of détente, and human rights-related topics. During the MPT, the first two of these items had been grouped under the common header ‘questions relating to security in Europe’ and were put into Basket I, while the provisions pertaining to the latter item had been compiled in Basket III, which – according to official parlance – dealt with ‘cooperation in humanitarian and other fields’. Discussions on Basket I items mainly revolved around the elaboration of a set of principles governing inter-state relations – including the question whether borders were ‘inviolable’ and could be changed by ‘peaceful means’ – and military aspects in the form of confidence-building measures. The negotiations on ‘cooperation in humanitarian and other fields’ in Basket III chiefly focused on the degree to which participating states should promote the ‘freer movement of people’. In essence, the CSCE negotiations struck a bargain between Moscow’s aim of formalising the constructed peace and the Western goal of keeping said peace tacit while at the same time working towards small-scale changes of that

framework. As we will see, a great deal of transatlantic tension was to revolve around the question of how important these changes – improvements in human contacts, information flow, military transparency etc. – were to the success of the conference and to the essence of détente more generally. Transatlantic disagreement put the British in an awkward position: should they make concessions regarding the transformative aspects of détente for the sake of speeding up the negotiations, as Washington demanded? Or should they stick to the lemon strategy and the EPC approach of making progress in Geneva contingent on Soviet concessions on small-scale improvements?

The prolonged negotiations and intermittent deadlocks at Dipoli had made it clear that some kind of compromise between the central bargain issues would have to be struck if the conference was to be successful. The Geneva stage was essentially about which side was to hold out the longest before making crucial concessions. The current chapter and the following one analyse the British contribution towards the central bargain between Basket I and III in detail.

### **British Aims**

The United Kingdom and its allies used the ten-week break separating the MPT from the next round of substantial bargaining in Geneva, Switzerland, to take stock and to coordinate strategies for the road ahead. The results of this exercise are spelled out in detail in the steering brief for the UK delegation to the Geneva stage. Having discussed the brief in some detail, the remainder of this chapter traces British policy towards the central bargain from the start of Stage 2 in mid-September 1973.

The UK steering brief, which dates from 13 September 1973, committed the delegates to Stage 2 to working for the realisation of ‘Western positive aims’ while

keeping ‘specific British considerations’ in mind.<sup>1</sup> Anticipating a Soviet offensive in Basket I with Moscow pushing for an unqualified declaration that Europe’s post-war frontiers were ‘inviolable’, the West reiterated its MPT strategy of ‘counter-attacking’ with initiatives in Basket III. Therefore, the UK delegation was instructed

(a) to secure the widest possible acceptance of the view that détente cannot be secured through declarations alone but requires practical improvements in specific areas; (b) to encourage the lowering of barriers within Europe, especially by promoting freer movement of people, ideas and information and by developing cooperation in its various aspects between the two halves of Europe, not forgetting the neutrals; (c) to contribute to conditions which may in the long term somewhat increase the freedom of manoeuvre of the East European countries with regard to the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup>

In essence, British delegates were instructed to work towards the central bargain. In particular, they were told to exploit the Soviet interest in general declarations – particularly evident in USSR initiatives regarding the catalogue of principles in Basket I – by extracting small, but detailed commitments, especially in Basket III.

The steering brief’s section on ‘specific British considerations’ will be quoted in considerable length because it illustrates how British perceptions had shifted. The brief, while reflecting a high degree of continuity in official thinking on the CSCE, shows clearly how FCO thinking had become more optimistic and ambitious. As a result of the Dipoli experience, foreign policymakers now saw a better chance of extracting tangible concessions from the East as well as of using the CSCE to increase Western cohesion by further developing the EPC machinery. Once perceived as an exercise in damage limitation, the conference was now appreciated as ‘important’ to the UK ‘both as a major development in East/West relations and because it has become something of a test case for the development of foreign policy co-ordination

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<sup>1</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 46, paras. 9-12, 19-26.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., para. 9.

among the Nine'.<sup>3</sup> While the FCO position paper of February 1972 had featured only one positive British aim – establishing a follow-up mechanism – London now committed its delegates to six goals.

One of the most important objectives was to secure Warsaw Pact commitment to a set of clearly defined confidence-building measures. The British had become the floor leaders of NATO and EPC on this subject and were to devote considerable energy on an issue that split East and West, but also exposed intra-Western divides. Since the following account will not cover this particular aspect in great depth, let us examine here how CBMs fit into the larger interpretative framework – most importantly, the notion of *détente* as a process of revising the constructed peace – and how these provisions relate to the analytic device of the central bargain. As an element of Basket I, the British essentially used confidence-building measures as a device to balance the Soviet attempt to confirm the territorial status quo within that Basket. In return for Western flexibility on certain aspects of the declaration of principles, the FCO wanted Warsaw Pact states not only to make concessions on human rights, but also in the sensitive area of military secrecy.

This move to stress confidence-building had a strong tactical as well as a substantive element. Regarding substance, CBMs functioned as a device to highlight the indivisibility of military and political elements of *détente*, despite the fact that the CSCE agenda clearly focused on the latter.<sup>4</sup> As we have seen, stressing this indivisibility had been a core British concern associated with the key dilemma discussed in chapter three and, as depicted in chapters four and five, had formed part of the Western agenda at Dipoli.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 46, para. 19.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 9.

CBMs also served a tactical purpose, however. Raising military aspects had presented a difficulty to NATO ever since the alliance had adopted the Reykjavik Signal of 1968. This was in no small part due to France's self-exclusion from the alliance's military wing and its unwillingness to engage in any type of negotiations on military détente that were conducted on a bloc-to-bloc basis. Paris had therefore declined to participate in MBFR and adamantly refused to link MBFR to CSCE.<sup>5</sup> In this tricky situation, CBMs worked as a tool that enabled the West to put the Warsaw Pact states on the defensive without forcing them to formally link the CSCE to explicitly military negotiations like MBFR.<sup>6</sup>

As we have seen, the Heath government, fearing the consequences of troop cuts, had reversed the British position on MBFR, emphasising CSCE instead. CBMs were naturally appealing to the British because these provisions might help to tackle the key dilemma of public perception. It would serve to highlight the military dimension of European security by pinpointing Warsaw Pact secrecy, thus helping to expose the hollowness of Soviet peace rhetoric. Although MBFR and CBMs were both nominally about changing the status quo, to British minds, both of them could serve to maintain it by preserving Western troop levels and public vigilance. In that sense, the CBM component of the CSCE agenda represents a case par excellence of what I term conservatory détente. The primary aim was to defend the West's structure of deterrence both militarily as well as psychologically, thus reinforcing the constructed peace system. CBMs thus provide much stronger evidence for Suri's claim, discussed in the introduction, that the CSCE was conservative project – much stronger than the human rights provisions he uses to make his argument. British

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<sup>5</sup> Helga Haftendorn, 'The Link between CSCE and MBFR: Two Sprouts from One Bulb', in Wenger/Mastny/Nuenlist (eds.), *Origins of the European Security System*, pp. 237-258 (250).

<sup>6</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 9.

foreign policymakers deeply believed that greater civil liberties could not but have a corrosive effect on authoritarian states; they entertained no such beliefs regarding military measures. At best, the Soviets would make some concessions in this area, which would increase transparency and decrease the risk of miscalculation on both sides. Taken together with their tactical value, CBMs would thus enable the West to maintain its current defences while enhancing understanding between the military establishments on both sides. In sum, this would enable both sides to keep the constructed peace in place at lower cost.

The relative success of British efforts is reflected in Brezhnev's criticism of the CBM discussion at the CSCE. In a conversation with Kissinger, the Soviet leader acknowledged that he had made a 'mistake' by agreeing to discuss measures like the prior notification of troop movements. He also admitted to being 'sick and tired' of the protracted negotiations.<sup>7</sup> As it turned out, the various provisions on CBMs were among the last items to be agreed upon in late July 1975.<sup>8</sup> These are widely acknowledged as a Western success and as integral to the balanced nature of Basket I and the Helsinki Final Act in general.

Let us return to our discussion of the steering brief for the UK delegation to the Geneva stage. In addition to concrete improvement regarding CBMs, delegates were instructed to work towards a declaration on principles that would accentuate human rights and self-determination, thus making it 'clearly incompatible with the Brezhnev doctrine'.<sup>9</sup> As the 'most important' British aim, the brief highlighted the attainment of 'small but tangible results' in Basket III, 'coupled with a general

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<sup>7</sup> Memcon, Kissinger and Brezhnev, 24 October 1974, in William Burr (ed.), *The Kissinger Transcripts: The Top Secret Talks with Beijing and Moscow: A National Security Archive Document Reader* (New York: The New Press, 1999), pp. 327-344.

<sup>8</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 134.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 46, para. 20a.

recognition of the relevance of these subjects to the strengthening of security and the development of cooperation'.<sup>10</sup>

It is indicative of the British approach to the CSCE that the section dealing with the abovementioned 'points of particular interest to the United Kingdom' was explicitly linked to 'the question of co-ordination within the Alliance'.<sup>11</sup> Like the steering brief for the UK delegation to the MPT, the instructions for the Geneva phase concluded with a lengthy passage on Britain's role in transatlantic relations. Invoking an episode from the MPT during which London's EPC partners had openly abandoned the Davignon line, the FCO urged the delegation to 'treat the co-ordination of policies and tactics with our partners as a task of major importance'.<sup>12</sup> Characteristically, the subsequent paragraph immediately qualifies this call for Western European collaboration by highlighting London's role in EPC-NATO relations:

We do not wish the development of co-ordination among the Nine to take place at the expense of effective consultation within the Alliance [...]. [...] [E]xperience suggests that the main requirement is that our non-EEC allies should be quickly and fully informed of what is being discussed in the Nine. This again is a subject to which the delegation should attach importance, although they should seek to ensure that the burden of maintaining relations between the Nine and the Fifteen is not shouldered by the United Kingdom alone.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast to the French policy of separating EPC from NATO, the British consistently defined linking the two institutions as a top priority. Whereas Paris saw the CSCE as an opportunity for 'Western Europe's self-assertion towards the superpowers', London was determined to give the evolution of foreign policy

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., para. 20e.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., para. 18.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., para. 24.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., para. 25.

coordination within the EC an Atlanticist twist.<sup>14</sup> It is no surprise, therefore, that the instructions for Geneva, like the brief for Dipoli, closed with a paragraph on the American role and Anglo-American relations:

*The key to an effective working relationship between the Nine and NATO will again be the Americans. They have hitherto taken little real interest in the CSCE and they may be tempted for reasons connected with their bilateral relationship with the Russians, to work for an early conclusion to the second stage. This would not only weaken the Western position generally, but would almost certainly give rise to a serious dispute between the Americans and the Nine. The delegation should discreetly encourage the Americans to play an active role in promoting agreed Western initiatives, especially on Agenda Item III.*<sup>15</sup>

The highlighted passages clearly indicate that the great importance the British attached to transatlantic unity extends beyond the tactical necessities of the CSCE. As with the foreign policy coordination of the Nine, London saw the conference as a general test case for US-EPC relations. As has been argued throughout this thesis, London's conception of détente as a mix of deterrence and diplomacy was predicated on transatlantic unity. To the British, Western cohesion was essential to maintaining the 'position of strength' necessary for successful bargaining with Moscow and to pre-empting Moscow's attempt at wedge-driving.<sup>16</sup> Due to their belief that Washington's role was central to transatlantic unity, the British sketched out a role for themselves as encouragers of American initiatives and as a link between Washington and EPC. According to the Foreign Office, Euro-Atlantic cohesion could best be achieved by joint proposals in Basket III. As we will see, American activism on human rights-related subjects was not forthcoming until the final stages of the CSCE

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<sup>14</sup> Angela Romano, 'Western Europe's Self-Assertion towards the Superpowers: The CSCE Chance and its Aftermath', in Anne Deighton and Gérard Bossuat (eds.), *The EC/EU: A World Security Actor?* (Paris: Soleb, 2007), pp. 152-169.

<sup>15</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 46, para. 26 (emphasis added).

<sup>16</sup> This was one of the primary issues that the Joint Intelligence Committee had warned about. See chapter three.

negotiations. This led to West European disappointment with the American performance and constituted a source of chronic transatlantic tension.

Thus, the British approach to Geneva was tough but constructive. The UK put primary emphasis on issues such as freer movement and confidence-building measures because they represented concrete demands (instead of polemical rhetoric), appealed to public opinion, and proved congenial to Western unity. With the aid of the neutrals and non-aligned, the Soviet Union could thus be put on the defensive. It is important to point out, however, that British interest in human rights exceeded tactical considerations. The brief clearly instructs HMG's diplomats to work towards widening the concept of security to include human rights – a definition that has come to be known as 'human security' in the post-Cold War era. Thus, Bange's claim that London only realised the transformative potential of human rights at the end of the CSCE in 1975 is inaccurate. As the previous two chapters have shown, the British position certainly evolved as a result of the talks; they became more optimistic about the usefulness of the CSCE in advancing the cause of human rights and in linking them to security and cooperation. But the roots of British thinking about transformative détente go back to the 'evolutionary approach' of the 1960s; the FCO did not suddenly discover them as 'in 1975, as a by-product of the CSCE process', as Bange writes.<sup>17</sup>

In terms of intra-Western relations, British diplomats were disappointed (though not surprised) by the lack of American leadership. However, this 'vacuum' was quickly filled by the West Europeans who coordinated among themselves effectively, with the British playing an active part.<sup>18</sup> As in Dipoli, the UK delegation in Geneva was among those advocating a hard-nosed yet pragmatic stance vis-à-vis

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<sup>17</sup> Bange, 'Ostpolitik as a Source of Intra-Bloc Tension', p. 38. See chapter three.

<sup>18</sup> Mayer, *National Foreign Policy through Multilateral Means*, p. 101.

the East. HMG's diplomats thus kept pursuing a 'judicious warfare' approach while deliberately avoiding to be singled out by allies or opponents as hardliners or even enemies of détente. They refrained from unnecessarily antagonising the Warsaw Pact and ensured that proceedings were as 'business-like' as possible.

### **The Start of the Geneva Stage, September 1973**

The Geneva stage, which opened on 18 September 1973, can be seen as a protracted process of renegotiation and refinement of the central bargain struck at Dipoli. The participating delegations, having agreed on the agenda and organisational framework during the MPT, now got to work on the specific texts to be included in the Final Act. In doing so, the participating delegations refought many of the diplomatic battles of the MPT, albeit in a much more detailed manner. The negotiations soon branched out over a dozen committees, sub-committees, working groups and many more informal drafting groups with shifting membership emerging on the scene. The results were more than two years of exhaustive (and exhausting) negotiations.

The last two chapters have covered the 199 days of the MPT in great depth. This was necessary to introduce the major aspects of the Helsinki talks and the main features of the British role. It was also warranted because Dipoli was crucial in setting the agenda and pre-negotiating the crucial issues of the 'central bargain'. Given the length and highly technical nature of Stage 2, it is not feasible to cover the 2-years of bargaining at Geneva at the same level of detail. Nor is it necessary for our purposes. In essence, Stage 2 was an extensive re-negotiation of the MPT; having examined Dipoli at length, we can now focus more sharply on the most important aspects: critical junctures in the (re-)negotiation process between the three groupings and within the West, and developments regarding the British role.

The adoption of a more selective approach does not result in a simplistic picture of the negotiations; it merely leaves out technical aspects and details that are not essential to the research questions pursued in this thesis. That this approach is in order can be gleaned from British documents showing that officials in London struggled to keep up with developments in Geneva. Even experts in the Foreign Office had trouble understanding the reports from the UK delegation.<sup>19</sup> The following example from the Sub-Committee dealing with film and broadcasting in Basket III is indicative. UK negotiators requested ministerial guidance on whether they should reopen the discussion on a draft text on ‘information disseminated by radio’. The aim of the potential renegotiation would have been to replace, in the English translation of the text, the words ‘so as to’ in the last paragraph of the text with ‘in order to’ while leaving the agreed draft Soviet translation unchanged. Several FCO officials expressed their bewilderment. H.T. Morgan of the Western European Department replied:

No ordinary man [...] could readily suppose that the phrases in question meant anything much one way or the other. The passion they have aroused on both the Soviet side and our own seem to me characteristic of people living a good deal too close to their subject.<sup>20</sup>

Other London-based officials agreed and the request to seek ministerial guidance was denied with the verdict that ‘HMG should not appear to be holding up the conclusion of Stage 2 over a rather “angels on a pin” point [...]’.<sup>21</sup> In order to allow for a subtle discussion of London’s role that at the same time does not get lost in ‘angels on a pin’

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<sup>19</sup> Author’s interviews with Sir Crispin Tickell, Abington, 27 February 2007, Mr David Miller, London, 8 December 2008, and Mr Richard Davy, Oxford, 31 January 2007.

<sup>20</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 128, fn. 5.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

details, we will concentrate on how the British contributed to the ‘long haul’ of the Geneva negotiations.<sup>22</sup>

The Soviet line at Geneva can be seen as a two-fold attempt to shift the central bargain pre-negotiated at Dipoli in Moscow’s favour. First, in Basket I, the Soviet delegates fought hard to keep the principle of the inviolability of frontiers unqualified while trying to gain further concessions on the formulation and ordering of the other nine principles. Most important, Moscow was determined to fend off Western attempts to attach a provision on the possibility of ‘peaceful change of frontiers’ (PCF) that would qualify the IOF principle. Second, the USSR delegation tried to minimise the scope of the concessions already made in Basket III. The dual strategy to achieve this aim was to insist on the narrowest interpretation possible of the terms of reference laid down in the Helsinki Recommendations while simultaneously pushing for the adoption of a restrictive preamble to Basket III. The preamble was meant to circumscribe the scope of the provisions on human contacts, freer movement, and all other liberalisation items by accentuating the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference. The main tactical device adopted by Warsaw Pact delegations to pursue this two-fold renegotiation attempt was to call for a speeding up of the proceedings without, however, adopting a more flexible negotiating stance. Apparently, the Communist states were playing for time in the hope that the West and the neutrals would cave in first.

The first few months of the Geneva stage saw a flurry of Western activity on Basket III.<sup>23</sup> Keen on filling the favourable procedural provisions of the Helsinki Recommendations with substance, NATO and EPC states tabled numerous papers in Committee III aimed at achieving the desired ‘small but tangible results’. In

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., No. 94.

<sup>23</sup> Minute from Tickell to Wiggin and Brown, 15 March 1974, UKNA, FCO 28/2669.

accordance with the mandate laid down in the Blue Book, Committee III was charged with elaborating texts on ‘cooperation in humanitarian and other fields’. The detailed negotiations on the various elements of Basket III took place in four sub-committees. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, this elaborate structure had been one of the West’s successes at Dipoli. It was designed to allow for the thorough discussion of all proposals in sub-committees before final decisions could be taken in Committee III. The sub-committees respectively dealt with human contacts (including freer movement of people), the freer dissemination of information, cooperation in the field of culture, and exchanges in the field of education. The West, aided by the neutrals, tabled proposals in all of these committees.<sup>24</sup>

The Soviet Union reverted to its Dipoli strategy of trying to block Western activism on procedural grounds. Moscow declined to discuss the tabled proposals on a subject-by-subject basis and insisted that Committee III first draw up a preamble to circumscribe the overall scope of the Basket. The USSR delegation had obviously learned a lesson from the Dipoli talks where the ‘bottom up’ approach had led to the detailed discussion of topics the Soviet diplomats would have liked to avoid altogether. Having agreed at the MPT to further negotiate on the unfavourable Basket III terrain, the Warsaw Pact’s preamble initiative sought to pre-empt the anticipated results of sub-committee discussions before those bodies had even started negotiating on substantive issues.<sup>25</sup>

In contrast, the negotiations on the ten principles governing inter-state relations – the so-called ‘décologue’, which formed part of Basket I – showed a completely different picture. In Sub-Committee 1, the Soviet Union was pressing for

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<sup>24</sup> For a selection of the most important Western and neutral proposals, see the annex to the minute from Tickell to Wiggin and Brown, 15 March 1974, UKNA, FCO 28/2669.

<sup>25</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 68.

a quick conclusion of the discussions.<sup>26</sup> The UK delegation suspected that this uneven pace was the result of a purposeful Soviet attempt to complete work on the *décatalogue* in order to rush negotiations in other committees towards the finishing line. If successful, this tactic would leave the Western delegations less time to qualify the inviolability of frontiers in Basket I while putting them in the suboptimal bargaining position of *demandeurs* in Basket III.<sup>27</sup> The British feared that, once work on principles was nearing completion, the West could be portrayed as blocking negotiations on human rights-related matters. The FCO anticipated that the NNA would lose patience and settle for much less in Basket III than was otherwise obtainable.<sup>28</sup> Following discussions in NATO and EPC, the West agreed to play for time in the sub-committee dealing with the *décatalogue* in order to allow for a thorough discussion of the extensive list of liberalisation proposals in Committee III. This strategy also included the rejection of Soviet and neutral suggestions to relegate contentious items to follow-up machinery to be established by the CSCE. As Douglas-Home pointed out in a telegram to the UK delegation to NATO, this would amount to ‘setting an undesirable precedent’ for Basket III-related issues.<sup>29</sup>

On substance, the Warsaw Pact rejected the EPC Draft Declaration on Principles that the French had tabled in late September 1973.<sup>30</sup> Reflecting West

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<sup>26</sup> In accordance with the Helsinki Recommendations, the discussions on principles took place in Sub-Committee 1. In line with the provisions of the Blue Book, Sub-Committee 1, the ‘Special Working Body’ on the Swiss proposal to establish a European dispute settlement body, and Sub-Committee 2, which dealt with CBMs, were established as sub-organs of Committee I. As has been mentioned, Committee I was charged with the overall mandate to discuss ‘questions relating to security in Europe’.

<sup>27</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 43.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 59, para. 12. The adoption of this strategy is one of the reasons why Clarke’s (1992) claim that London worked particularly hard to establish follow-up machinery is unconvincing. See Clarke, ‘A British View’, p. 95. It is true that the FCO envisioned follow-up as a potentially useful outcome of the CSCE in early 1972. See DBPO, III/II, No. 1, para. 36. This was, however, dropped from the list of priorities well before the MPT began. See *ibid.*, No. 17. As the FCO pointed out, the neutrals and non-aligned were the only grouping in the CSCE to argue persistently for the merits of follow-up. See *ibid.*, No. 94, paras. 11, 20.

<sup>30</sup> The draft is reprinted in Kavass/Granier/Dominick (eds.), *Human Rights, European Politics, and the Helsinki Accord*, Vol. 3, pp. 296-298.

Germany's special interest in the subject, the draft had coupled the principle of frontier inviolability with a provision that borders could be changed peacefully. However, the Warsaw Pact stuck to their line and the ensuing deadlock put Britain in a tactically awkward position. The British held firm views about the subject. They had originally adopted a fairly hard-line stance by arguing against the tabling of the French draft. Judging the paper as moderate, the FCO had made the point in EPC negotiations that, once Paris submitted the paper, the West would never again be in a position to make more demanding proposals.<sup>31</sup> At the time, the UK delegation had given in because the French had been eagerly 'straining at the leash' to present their proposal and the British did not want to stir already troubled waters.<sup>32</sup>

Once the French draft was on the floor, the Foreign Office urged that the West, and especially the Federal Republic, put their full weight behind it. In British eyes, however, the FRG delegation was 'sadly rudderless', failing to provide leadership on an issue where it was difficult for other states to do so.<sup>33</sup> Although generally content with Western performance in other Baskets, the UK delegation felt that their partners, including the Germans and the French, tended to give away points of substance prematurely. The British diplomats speculated that this was due to 'an exaggerated sense of the risks likely to result from pressure of time'.<sup>34</sup> Given that the US delegation had instructions to continue its low profile role and hence could not be counted on to exert leadership, the UK continued to advocate a hard-headed approach to timing.<sup>35</sup> Its policy was designed to play for time so as to 'exploit Brezhnev's sense

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<sup>31</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 48, fn. 9.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. Owing to the complex structure of the negotiations, coordination in Geneva had become more difficult than in Dipoli. As a result, intra-Western relations suffered and were further damaged when EPC states openly disagreed over the Maltese proposal of a declaration on security in the Mediterranean. After a training period, Western coordination adjusted to the new environment.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., No. 60, fn. 8.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., No. 67, para. 4.

<sup>35</sup> For the US view, see Maresca, *To Helsinki*, pp. 211-218.

of urgency [...] in order to drive hard bargains'.<sup>36</sup> This strategy certainly reflected deep-seated distrust of Soviet motives, but it was also based on an analysis of Moscow's negotiation tactics. Following SALT I and the quadripartite negotiations on Berlin, the FCO was convinced that 'last-minute trade-offs' were a 'Soviet hallmark'.<sup>37</sup> This strategy tended at times to put the British at odds with their European partners while inviting criticism and pressure from the superpowers.

The negotiations on IOF illustrate this dilemma. In January 1974, Moscow emphasised once again the importance of the *décatalogue* by exerting pressure on London at the highest level. Brezhnev wrote the first of several letters to the Prime Minister, warning him that 'unduly prolonging' the conference would damage Anglo-Soviet relations.<sup>38</sup> Heath replied that he opposed 'both artificial delays and artificial deadlines' and left British CSCE policy unchanged.<sup>39</sup>

Even when the deadlock on Basket I persisted for another two months, the British were among those in the Western camp arguing for perseverance. As of March 1974, only two out of ten principles had been registered (even these two were still heavily square-bracketed) and negotiations stalled on the third principle, the inviolability of frontiers. In this situation the Spanish delegation made a suggestion that promised to pave the way for an East-West compromise on the inviolability vs. peaceful change issue before the upcoming Easter recess. Spain proposed to concede a decoupling of the peaceful change formula from the inviolability principle, but to retain PCF, register it on a separate sheet of paper, and decide about its place in the *décatalogue* later.

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<sup>36</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 38, para. 2.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 71, para. 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 62, fn. 2.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* For evidence of the continuity of British CSCE policy, see *ibid.*, No. 68.

The Soviet delegates indicated that their superiors attached great importance to achieving progress on inviolability before the Easter recess. If the West showed flexibility on the issue, the USSR delegation promised that it would obtain more forthcoming instructions in regard to Basket III and confidence-building measures.<sup>40</sup> A heated debate about the risks and chances of a package deal along these lines followed within EPC. Asserting that peaceful change was ‘the one real bargaining counter which the West possesses’, the UK delegation argued that EPC should withhold Madrid’s proposal until the Europeans had ‘obtained a much clearer idea than we have now of possible Soviet counter-concessions in Committee III’.<sup>41</sup> Other delegations, including the French and the West Germans, showed more interest in breaking the deadlock on principles.<sup>42</sup> This was especially so since the impasse was starting to slow down the entire conference.<sup>43</sup>

While Soviet concessions on Basket III were not forthcoming in the following days, the Soviet Union did make further promises regarding Basket I. During bilaterals in Moscow in late March, Brezhnev informed Kissinger that he was ready to accept a provision on peaceful change somewhere in the *décatalogue* if the West made its recognition of the inviolability of European frontiers ‘crystal clear’.<sup>44</sup> The FCO judged a solution to the deadlock on Basket I along the lines of the Spanish proposal a ‘rather patchy compromise’ and lamented the ‘indecent haste’ they felt subjected to by opponents and partners alike on ‘one of the most important areas of the

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., No. 70.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> To the surprise of the British, Bonn had changed its mind and suddenly agreed to the decoupling. This turn seems to have been the result of a conversation between Walter Scheel and Henry Kissinger. See Mayer, *National Foreign Policy through Multilateral Means*, p. 140.

<sup>43</sup> Even the rather technical discussions in the relatively isolated Committee II were made contingent on progress in the *décatalogue*. See DBPO, III/II, No. 73, fn. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Garvey to FCO, 28 March 1974, UKNA, FCO 28/806. Kissinger’s trip primarily sought to resolve the impasse on SALT. The UK delegation at Geneva speculated about a secretive US-Soviet understanding on the proposed package deal. The British diplomats thought it ‘pretty clear’ that their American colleagues had been instructed to work towards the compromise so as not to ‘sour the atmosphere of Kissinger’s visit’. See DBPO, III/II, No. 70, para. 6.

Conference'.<sup>45</sup> However, fearing isolation on the Western side 'on a subject which is of less intrinsic importance to us than to our Allies', the FCO reluctantly gave the UK delegation the green light.<sup>46</sup> On 5 April 1974, the package deal was concluded when Sub-Committee 1 separately registered the texts on inviolability and peaceful change of frontiers. At the end of that week, after 140 days of negotiations, delegations dispersed for a two-week Easter break.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., No. 72, para. 5.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 7

### Negotiating the Final Act, Part II, 1974–1975

When the Geneva talks resumed on 22 April 1974, British scepticism about the pre-Easter package turned out to have been justified. The Soviet delegation had apparently not received more flexible instructions during the recess, and so continued with their familiar tactic of publicly advocating the need for progress without giving way on points of interest to the West. As a result, the deadlock on confidence-building measures and Basket III remained unresolved. The British judgment was unambiguous. The Soviets had ‘totally failed to give the West the quid pro quo in Basket III which was implicitly part of the deal over inviolability of frontiers’, Sir David Hildyard surmised.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Resisting Pressure from the Superpowers**

On 30 April, eight days after the resumption of the Geneva talks, Henry Kissinger sent a message to James Callaghan, who had become Foreign Secretary in the second Wilson government in March. The message seemed to confirm British suspicions about the American attitude towards the CSCE. The message informed the FCO about Kissinger’s meeting with Gromyko in Geneva on 28-29 April, during which the Soviet foreign minister had pressed forcefully for ‘winding up the CSCE’ with a summit at the highest level as soon as possible.<sup>2</sup> The US Secretary of State sympathised with the Soviets and asked Callaghan for his support, in order to avoid a

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<sup>1</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 79, para. 2. Sir David Henry Thoroton ‘Toby’ Hildyard (1916-1997) served as the permanent representative to the UN in Geneva until the summer of 1974 before replacing T.A.K. Elliot as head of the CSCE delegation in September of that year.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., No. 77, fn. 1.

transatlantic ‘squabble’ on the issue.<sup>3</sup> The British were struck by what they saw as extraordinarily bad timing on Kissinger’s part. Having reluctantly consented to the pre-Easter package deal on principles, UK officials were in no mood to grant further concessions, given the Soviet failure to live up to their promises.<sup>4</sup> After the decoupling of the peaceful change of frontiers provision from the inviolability principle, the British felt that the timing and the level of the final summit were the only real bargaining counters left. Therefore, committing Western heads of state to a summit at an early date was the exact opposite of the strategy the UK had consistently endorsed at the CSCE. The FCO argued that playing for time as long as possible stood the best chance of exploiting the Soviet desire for a successful summit-level conclusion.

Kissinger’s message also contained the request to adopt a stance more acceptable to Moscow on CBMs. The British saw this as further evidence for the Secretary of State’s disinterest in the substance of the negotiations and thought Kissinger was courting Moscow in view of the upcoming US-Soviet summit in June, yet the British feared that the American stance would undermine the Western bargaining position. For example, in a minute of late April 1974, Crispin Tickell informed the Private Secretary that ‘Western co-ordination at the CSCE has so far been extremely effective, but all are [...] anxious lest anyone should now decide to cut and run. The Americans, who have always taken less interest in the CSCE than the others, have long been suspect’.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., para. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., para. 2.

In line with the diplomatic tradition associated with the ‘special relationship’, the British answered Kissinger’s request in moderate fashion.<sup>6</sup> Referring to the unsuccessful package deal on frontiers, Callaghan replied that Soviet behaviour on Basket III and CBMs did not yet justify a summit-level conclusion and suggested further Anglo-American coordination on the matter.<sup>7</sup> This reflected the general line agreed within EPC. West European objection to settling for a date of a high-level summit seemed to have had an impact on the American position.<sup>8</sup> Less than a week after Callaghan’s reply, the UK delegation to NATO reported that the Americans had promised not to ‘press for allied agreement to Stage 3 at a summit level in connection with President Nixon’s plans to visit Moscow in June, despite Soviet pressure to juxtapose the two events’.<sup>9</sup>

One month later, the other superpower pressured the UK to speed up the gruesomely slow negotiations at Geneva. Gromyko told Sir Thomas Garvey, the UK ambassador in Moscow, that the British delegation was wasting time by focusing on ‘trivia’ and ‘creating artificial obstacles’. Furthermore, Gromyko alleged that the attention the British devoted to Basket III and CBMs that was ‘100 times greater’ than these items deserved. Although the tone of Anglo-Soviet exchanges on the CSCE was markedly different than discussions between Washington and London, the similarities on substance cannot be overlooked. Both superpowers wanted the UK to modify the playing-for-time strategy and urged London to adopt a more forthcoming stance on

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<sup>6</sup> According to Kissinger, one key reason why Anglo-American relations were ‘special’ was due to the fact that the British, unlike the French, were masters in using conciliatory rhetoric in order to overcome differences on substance. See Kissinger, *The White House Years*, p. 90. For a theoretically sophisticated analysis of the differing degrees of British, West German and French influence in Washington, see Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation among Democracies: The European Influence on US Foreign Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 210-212.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 77, fn. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Kissinger had also written to the West Germans, who were holding the EC Presidency at the time, on the matter. Bonn’s reply was judged by the FCO (which had received a copy of from the German embassy in London) as less flexible than the British answer. See *ibid.*, fn. 8.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 77, fn. 9.

Basket III and CBMs. Gromyko called these issues ‘trivia’ and Kissinger spoke of ‘minor points’.<sup>10</sup> The US Secretary of State judged some of the Basket III issues the British were pressing for as not ‘essential’ while Gromyko openly admitted that he would like to ‘cut the bottom out of the Basket and let all the accumulated details in it fall out’.<sup>11</sup>

### **Kissinger’s ‘Minimum Requirements’**

Anglo-American and US-EPC discord grew over the summer of 1974. During that time, the CSCE remained bogged down in a nerve-wracking deadlock on the essential elements of the central bargain, and even battle-hardened diplomats started showing signs of what one could call ‘mental wear and tear’. Two examples from Basket III illustrate both of these points well. On 30 May 1974, one of the sub-committees had succeeded in elaborating a joint working paper. Although only one and a half pages long, this fruit of laborious negotiations contained no less than thirty square-bracketed passages. On that same day, the Canadian delegate in the sub-committee on information vented his frustration about the lack of progress by reading aloud from George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. (The recited passage depicts how the officials of the Ministry of Truth quarrelled during the drafting process of a new edition of the ‘Newspeak Dictionary’.)<sup>12</sup>

One month later, President Nixon travelled to Moscow for what was to be his last summit meeting with Brezhnev.<sup>13</sup> To the dismay of America’s European allies,

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<sup>10</sup> For the Gromyko quote, see *ibid.*, No. 85, para. 1; for the Kissinger quote, see *ibid.*, No. 78, fn. 1.

<sup>11</sup> For the first quote, see DBPO, III/II, No. 89, para. 3); for the second, see *ibid.*, No. 81, fn. 7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 83.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

the summit's final communiqué committed the superpowers to the conclusion of the CSCE 'at an early date' and 'at the highest level'.<sup>14</sup>

The communiqué and Western CSCE policy were discussed at a NATO ministerial meeting on 4 July. Although the FCO had been deeply unhappy about the communiqué, the British again refrained from public criticism, leaving it to the Belgian foreign minister to declare his government's discontent.<sup>15</sup> Kissinger maintained that the US had not struck a deal with the Soviet Union about convening Stage 3 at summit level, but at the same time criticised the negotiation process at Geneva. He urged NATO to draw up a list of 'essential aims' or 'minimum requirements' on CBMs and Basket III to speed up the talks.<sup>16</sup>

Kissinger's 'minimum requirements' initiative worried the Foreign Office. Officials saw this shift in American policy as a 'major problem' and feared that 'blatant US pressure to end the negotiations may be disastrously divisive'.<sup>17</sup> The FCO was not only concerned about Western unity, but also anticipated that the US proposal to communicate a set of essential points to the East would antagonise the neutrals. An East-West attempt to reach agreement on selected topics at a point when the conference had not even finished a first round of drafting on all items covered in the Helsinki Recommendations was bound to upset the NNA states. However, an analysis of the comprehensive internal discussion of the American proposal reveals that the British were not unsympathetic to American concerns about the lack of progress and the overly detailed nature of the conference. Whitehall also acknowledged that it was tempting for the White House to strike bilateral deals with the Soviets over the heads

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<sup>14</sup> The communiqué is reprinted in US Office of the Federal Register, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard M. Nixon, 1974* (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), pp. 571-572.

<sup>15</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 89, fn. 5.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 1, 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 94, para. 17.

of Washington's allies. Finally, the British suspected that Moscow was using American domestic pressures and internal problems like the Watergate scandal to lure the US into a more conciliatory stance.<sup>18</sup>

A degree of empathy notwithstanding, two main concerns nevertheless emerge from a close examination of the British debate on Kissinger's initiative. The first is of a tactical nature. While lamenting the tedious and protracted character of the conference, the British nonetheless remained convinced that their preferred method of playing for time was best suited to furthering Western objectives.<sup>19</sup>

This finding is consistent with Jeremi Suri's assessment of transatlantic relations during détente. In line with his general view of détente as a uniformly conservative policy response to domestic upheaval, he claims that no deep-seated dispute existed: 'The differences between West European and American conceptions of détente centred on tactics'.<sup>20</sup> Suri's interpretation is particularly interesting because he does recognise the *conceptual* tension between the American and West European approaches to détente, locating it – correctly, in my view – 'in their respective emphases on change and stability'.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, Suri ultimately dismisses transatlantic disagreement as superficial, as a mere reflection of diverging preferences over *how* to implement the same vision of détente. For him, the '[m]ost significant' difference was that 'the West European approach was multilateral [...]. The American definition of détente remained primarily bilateral [...]'.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., *ibid.*, paras. 12, 17.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Nos. 89, fn. 7. See also *ibid.*, No. 94.

<sup>20</sup> Suri, 'Détente and Human Rights', p. 529.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 528.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* Those familiar with Suri's thought-provoking writings will recognize how this argument enables him to reconcile evidence of transatlantic discord too plentiful to ignore with the major hypothesis underlying his entire scholarship: the sweeping claim that détente was a reactionary attempt by leaders on both sides of the Iron Curtain to curtail the 'global revolution' of 1968 (Suri 2003, 2007, 2008). By implication, the counter-argument presented in this essay challenges Suri's simplistic view of détente.

Evidence from British documents contradict Suri's view, however. Transatlantic tension extended well beyond 'tactics'; the simple dichotomy between bilateralism and multilateralism does not capture the core of what was at stake. As the following quotes from leading British diplomats make clear, US-West European disagreement was of a substantive nature. For example, T.A.K. Elliott criticised Kissinger for

misunderstand[ing] the significance of the CSCE to the West. He often gives the impression that détente is primarily a matter of inter-governmental accommodation and that the human aspect is secondary. Painful discussions in Geneva about increasing the number of kiosks at which foreign newspapers will be sold in the Soviet Union are no doubt insignificant by comparison with the issues of the strategic balance. But there is more to it than that. One thing the Conference has already achieved: to get it accepted for the first time by the Communist states that relations between peoples – and therefore the attitudes of Governments towards their own citizens – should be the subject of multilateral discussion.<sup>23</sup>

Elliott's nuanced criticism is highly instructive. His commentary does touch upon the issue of multilateralism, but ultimately targets Kissinger's Realpolitik conception of détente: his statist approach and the accompanying narrow notion of security. The focal point of Elliott's critique is not Kissinger's well-known penchant for backroom negotiations with limited participants, but his failure to see the CSCE as a vehicle for what I call 'transformative' détente. For the West European diplomat, however, the CSCE's true achievement is a conceptual innovation: the blending of 'conservatory' détente – 'inter-governmental accommodation' designed to uphold the constructed peace – with 'transformative' détente designed to promote civil liberties and the transnational diffusion of ideas ('the number of kiosks at which foreign newspapers will be sold').

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., No. 94, para. 18.

It is, of course, possible to question the representativeness and profoundness of assessments made in correspondence of this kind. After all, diplomats on the ground who are caught up for years in daily battles over minutiae might lose a sense of perspective. However, senior officials in London tasked with taking the overall view concurred with the views of the UK delegation. Crispin Tickell also lamented that Kissinger failed to appreciate the ‘genuinely idealistic element in the European approach, but rather, like his hero Metternich, wants stability and détente (in the Russian sense of the word) for their own sakes’.<sup>24</sup>

Again, the British comment did not amount to an all-out condemnation of White House diplomacy. Kissinger’s ‘conservatory’ détente was not the object of criticism; as has been argued throughout this thesis, British officials did not see détente as a radical alternative to the Cold War and hence acknowledged the fundamental importance of the ‘strategic balance’. Instead, British officials contested Kissinger’s embrace of a narrow conception of accommodation that, in its lack of a societal dimension to advance liberal values, resembled too much the Soviet version. In short, transatlantic disagreement over the CSCE was not merely a quarrel about tactics, as Suri contends. Instead, it reflected a self-conscious contest between two distinct conceptions of détente. Absent from the grand design of the ‘neo-Metternichs’ in the White House and the Kremlin, the ‘genuinely idealistic element’ inherent in ‘transformative’ détente was the root of transatlantic disagreement.

The deep-seated nature of US-West European differences reflected in British sources cannot help but cast doubt on Suri’s interpretation of détente as a uniformly conservative phenomenon. Conversely, it highlights the value of adopting a genuinely

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., No. 94, fn. 19.

‘pericentrist’ perspective. Taking ‘junior partners’ seriously serves as an important corrective to any attempt to generalise about détente from a superpower perspective.

Transatlantic disagreement about the nature of détente put UK officials in an awkward situation. It pitted the ‘idealistic element’ in their approach against one of their core goals – maintaining the cohesion of the West. As we will see, British diplomats responded in two ways. On the one hand, they kept supporting the substance of the EPC approach, thus continuing with the ‘lemon strategy’ regarding Basket III. On the other hand, they tried to mediate regarding tactics, looking for ways to forge a common approach between the White House and the EC states in spite of the deep-seated conceptual disagreement.

Characteristically, London’s immediate response was to refrain from openly criticising the Americans. In fact, Callaghan quickly agreed to cooperate on the review of objectives during a meeting with Kissinger on 8 July. However, Callaghan chose to go along with the US initiative in order to influence it according to their preferences. Judging from the records, London responded constructively to Washington’s lead because it thought that the review exercise could increase Western cohesion if handled properly.<sup>25</sup> Callaghan therefore sought to modify the American initiative by making the list of ‘minimum requirements’ more demanding than the one Kissinger had in mind. Instead of creating a short list presentable to the East, the British altered the American idea and turned it into a ‘revised negotiating brief’ for internal use only that would help guide the West ‘through the last most slippery stretch of the Conference’.<sup>26</sup> This was a subtle way of making the not-so-subtle American initiative more acceptable to Britain and its EC partners. EPC had taken the lead on Basket III and shouldered most of the work that went into the discussions

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., No. 89, fn. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., No. 94, fn. 15.

Kissinger now aimed to streamline. As a result, the French, who had recently taken over the EC Presidency, rejected Kissinger's push vehemently.<sup>27</sup> The British response to Kissinger's CSCE initiative can therefore be seen as an attempt to act as a 'bridge' between the US and the EPC on a major issue of transatlantic disagreement. While seemingly focusing on a peripheral point of procedure, the British intervention in effect mediated between two differing conceptions of détente. Kissinger's conception, inspired by Realpolitik and driven by the perceived imperatives of superpower détente, conflicted with the necessities of Western European détente, embodied in the EPC approach to the conference.<sup>28</sup>

While the Allies disagreed over strategy and substance, proceedings at Geneva accelerated somewhat before the summer recess. By the end of July, Sub-Committee I had provisionally agreed upon six out of ten principles, although all of them were littered with square brackets. Meanwhile, in Committee III, the neutrals were trying hard to break the deadlock between Western perseverance on concrete measures and Eastern insistence on a preamble that would circumscribe these measures. Following a month of intense bargaining, a deal was struck on the last day before the summer break. The compromise traded Western acceptance of a preamble to Basket III for Eastern concessions on its wording.<sup>29</sup>

While the US delegation had been instructed to rush the review of Western objectives along before the summer recess, the reappraisal of Alliance objectives actually took place during the six-week break.<sup>30</sup> It went some way towards calibrating

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., No. 92, fn. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Hanhimäki, "They Can Write it in Swahili", p. 53.

<sup>29</sup> Instead of the explicit reference to non-interference into the internal affairs of states, the preambular text only contained a general reference to the *décatalogue*. See DBPO, III/II, No. 93, fn. 1. This underlines my argument that the CSCE was essentially a trade-off between Basket I and III. The compromise package is nothing more than a miniature central bargain struck *within* Basket III.

<sup>30</sup> See Summary Record of a Meeting of the Council, Brussels, 19 July 1974, NATOA, C-R(74)37 (record dated: 28 August 1974), paras. 1-50. Cf. also DBPO, III/II, No. 92.

NATO views, particularly on Basket III, but its results were not communicated to the East because of tactical differences between the US and the EPC states. The UK and its partners in the Davignon machinery feared that the Warsaw Pact would regard the list of Western objectives merely as a point of departure for further bargaining. EPC states therefore tended to see the official presentation of the list of Western demands as a premature concession.<sup>31</sup>

The UK steered a moderate course throughout the Western row. The Foreign Office was sceptical about the ‘minimum requirements’ scheme, emphasising its potential tactical disadvantages for negotiations in Geneva.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, James Callaghan stressed the general potential benefits of the initiative. First and foremost, the Foreign Secretary saw it as an indication of increasing White House interest in Basket III, which he hoped to cultivate and to extend to other areas.<sup>33</sup> Given that the review of objectives had apparently leaked to the East, Callaghan also felt it imperative to enlist public American support for the Western position immediately after the summer recess.<sup>34</sup> Callaghan therefore instructed the delegation to take a cooperative stance on recent US proposals on Basket III. As a tangible contribution to the ‘minimum requirements’ exercise, the American delegation had circulated texts on working conditions for journalists, freer travel, and other issues.<sup>35</sup> These texts were of a deliberately moderate nature in order to render them acceptable to the Soviet Union. In tune with the EPC line, the UK delegation judged these texts as useful

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<sup>31</sup> See Summary Record of a Meeting of the Council, Brussels, 19 July 1974, NATOA, C-R(74)37 (record dated: 28 August 1974), paras. 16, 21.

<sup>32</sup> During a NAC meeting, D.A. Logan, the British ambassador to NATO, warned his impatient US colleague, Donald Rumsfeld, that a list of essentials would unduly tie down the delegations in Geneva. *Ibid.*, para. 21.

<sup>33</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 98, para 3.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* The head of the GDR at the time has confirmed the leak. Author’s interview with Professor Siegfried Bock, Berlin, Germany, 11 June 2008.

<sup>35</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 92, para. 3.

fallback options, but felt that tabling them immediately would constitute a precipitate concession.<sup>36</sup>

James Callaghan adopted a two-pronged approach to the ‘minimum requirements’ initiative. On the one hand, the Foreign Secretary urged the delegation to maximise efforts to retain the support of the neutrals, which Kissinger’s plan threatened to undermine. On the other hand, while urging British delegates and the EPC to take a cooperative line, he used bilaterals to convince the Secretary of State of the potential risks associated with the initiative. The first month after the resumption of the Geneva talks in early September saw some movement on both sides of the Atlantic. EPC agreed upon a positive joint statement on the concrete American Basket III proposals mentioned above. Later that month, Kissinger told Callaghan that he acknowledged the need to reach agreement on the substance as well as the tactics of the ‘minimum requirements’ initiative. The US Secretary of State assured his opposite number that ‘[h]e did not want accusations from the Europeans that they were being “raped” by the Americans’.<sup>37</sup>

These developments on the American and on the EPC side paved the way for a deal which mended transatlantic fences over the Kissinger initiative. A.W. Sherer, the head of the US delegation, approached his British and French counterparts and proposed a bargain.<sup>38</sup> He was willing to press the State Department for instructions to publicly endorse a first drafting of all items on the agenda as mandated by the Blue Book in return for substantial EPC movement towards the American Basket III proposals. Following agreement within EPC, the deal was struck. On 3 October 1974,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., No. 98, fn. 3. This stark choice of words conveys Kissinger’s frustration about the European reaction on this specific point, but it should also be seen as a reflection of the strained nature of transatlantic relations. In any case, the drastic simile of sexual abuse does reflect Kissinger’s acknowledgement of the importance of consultation norms and European influence on American foreign policy.

<sup>38</sup> Sherer served in this capacity from February 1974 onwards.

the Americans joined the British and other Western European delegations in urging the conference to complete a first drafting of all items in Basket III. Sherer also told the British delegation that Kissinger had been briefed to convey the same message to Gromyko and to insist that the first drafting was an essential precondition for further progress at the CSCE.<sup>39</sup>

Following months of transatlantic disagreement, the British saw these developments as ‘an impressive display of Western resolve’.<sup>40</sup> The FCO hoped that the display of Western unity convinced the Soviet Union that the US would not be the ‘*interlocuteur valable*’ with whom the Kremlin could ‘work out the framework of a limited agreement with the help of the Americans who themselves were trying to concentrate and speed up the negotiations’.<sup>41</sup> According to the FCO, the Americans had ‘realised that this would not be generally acceptable. They have now agreed to a common line with the rest of the Fifteen, and seem to be under instructions to adopt a low profile at least for the time being’.<sup>42</sup>

In the following months, progress on the issues associated with the central bargain remained slow. In the *décologue* sub-committee, the exact placement and wording of the peaceful change of frontiers paragraph remained contentious while agreement on the three outstanding principles was being held up by proposals of the NNA. Basket III continued to show the familiar picture of East-West confrontation on the substance of the operative clauses. The FCO retained its moderately optimistic

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., fn. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., fn. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., No. 107, para. 3.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. See also *ibid.*, No. 105, para. 2. It should be noted, however, that in staff meetings and conversations with Warsaw Pact representatives, Kissinger continued to distance himself from the West European position on Basket III. For example, the Secretary of State reassured one of his Rumanian interlocutors that he continued to support the summit-level conclusion of the CSCE by the end of 1974. He also professed that the US saw eye to eye with Bucharest on CBMs and on human contacts. See Memcon, Meeting Kissinger with Presidential Counselor Pungan, 27 August 1974, Gerald R. Ford Library, National Security Adviser Files, Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Box 5.

outlook that useful results would eventually be achieved if the West kept using the ‘cumbersome, but workable’ conference machinery.<sup>43</sup> Despite the slow progress, Britain’s diplomats saw ‘no reason to despair of the prospects for the Conference, or to look for short cuts’.<sup>44</sup> The members of the delegation were therefore content to keep working slowly ‘on the principle of the coral reef rather than the prefabricated house’, as an FCO paper of late November 1974 metaphorically put it.<sup>45</sup>

During the Geneva stage, the UK delegation introduced a procedural innovation that reflects the growing leadership aspirations on the British side. In addition to the regular meetings of the EPC and NATO, the UK started hosting regular meetings that all sixteen delegations of the Western camp attended.<sup>46</sup> The Western Organisations Department saw the positive echo that these initiatives at increasing cohesion received as an encouraging sign that the British were increasingly playing a leading role.<sup>47</sup> FCO views on this point had thus come around full circle. As we have seen, the initial scepticism and the associated belief that the UK ‘shall have to avoid appearing to lead the pack’ had, at the end of the MPT, given way to the view that the EPC could not be led ‘from behind’.<sup>48</sup> Midway through the Geneva stage, Whitehall felt it had various ‘important assets’ at its disposal that enabled a leading role: ‘an effective delegation; a reputation for not promising more than we can deliver in discussions with the East; and the freedom to look at the Conference as a

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<sup>43</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 103, para. 13.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* The enthusiasm of the relatively young diplomats was an important factor in sustaining the commitment of the UK delegation throughout the arduous CSCE process. This was a recurring theme in the interviews with British diplomats conducted for this study. For example, George Walden spoke of an ‘almost schoolboy-ish’ excitement. Author’s interview with George Walden, London, 14 June 2010.

<sup>45</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 104, fn. 8.

<sup>46</sup> These sessions included the Irish (the only Davignon member that was not part of NATO), and the French who continued in their refusal to participate in NATO consultations on a regular basis.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 11.

<sup>48</sup> For the first quote, see DBPO, III/II, No. 11, para 2; for the second, cf. *ibid.*, No. 37, para. 22.

whole without the commitment to particular hobby horses which distorts the perspective of many other participants'.<sup>49</sup>

### **The French 'Coup' and the Anglo-Soviet Summit of February 1975**

The late fall and winter of 1974 demonstrated that turning these assets into effective leadership would not be easy. One problem was that individual 'hobby horses' made agreement on the central bargain more difficult. The bargaining in Committee I had reached a stage where West Germany's vital interests were directly involved, most notably regarding the on-going negotiations on the peaceful change of frontiers. As a result, Bonn increasingly exhibited what the British saw as 'secretive' and 'erratic' behaviour, and an unwillingness to cooperate adequately with either EPC or with NATO partners.<sup>50</sup>

In Committee III, it was the French who broke ranks on the question of preambular texts. Since the package deal on a general preamble to Basket III, the West had conceded that each sub-committee would also elaborate specific preambles to each sub-section of the Basket. These so-called 'mini-preambles' were meant to serve as an introduction to all the sub-sections, which dealt with human contacts, freer dissemination of information, cultural exchanges, and cooperation on education. A visit by Leonid Brezhnev to Paris in December 1974 afforded the French the opportunity to use bilaterals to further their CSCE objectives. They apparently used the occasion to reach agreement with Moscow over the mini-preamble to the human contacts section, one of the most sensitive aspects of the entire Basket. In mid-December, the French convinced the Austrian chairman of the relevant sub-committee

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., No. 103, para. 13. The self-assessment that the UK had a more objective view of the proceedings is a leitmotiv that runs through the primary documents of the CSCE period. For example, see *ibid.*, No. 1; No. 104, para. 19. It certainly contributed to the belief, widely shared within the FCO, that the UK had a special role to play in 'managing' the alliance.

<sup>50</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 102, para. 5; No. 107, para. 4.

to accept the tabling of the new preamble by arguing that it represented the common position of the Nine.

However, the Nine had not been consulted on the subject, either before or after Brezhnev's visit to Paris.<sup>51</sup> France's EPC partners rejected the substance of the text, which they felt was too restrictive, but they also detested the flagrant violation of the consultation norm. The British judged the 'French "coup"' as a disappointing end to Pompidou's presidency of the European Community and subsequently viewed allusions by the Quai d'Orsay to the Franco-Soviet 'special relationship' with even more scepticism than before.<sup>52</sup> More importantly, the FCO used the unfavourable assessment of French behaviour to guide its approach to Harold Wilson's upcoming visit to Moscow. Whitehall was divided on how to use the high-level talks to advance British interests vis-à-vis the CSCE and whether to 'sound out the Russians' beforehand. However, even those in favour of using the imminent bilaterals to discuss CSCE matters were determined to avoid the talks from clouding their multilateral ties. The head of the British delegation at Geneva maintained:

After the experiences of the past, particularly with the French, we should have to expect a good deal of suspicion and mistrust but if we were considerably more frank and willing to take the views of others into account we might be able to make a substantial and constructive contribution.<sup>53</sup>

During Harold Wilson and James Callaghan's trip to Moscow, the Foreign Secretary addressed one of the most sensitive CSCE items of all – the peaceful change of frontiers.<sup>54</sup> Callaghan employed a whole range of arguments, including West German domestic politics, to convince Gromyko of the merits of coupling PCF with the

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., No. 107, fn. 4.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. See also *ibid.*, No. 114, fn. 3.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., No. 107, para. 11.

<sup>54</sup> They stayed in the USSR for four days, between 13-17 February 1974. It marked the first visit of a British Prime Minister in half a decade; Heath had never travelled to Moscow.

principle of mutual respect for the territorial integrity of states (Principle IV). Gromyko refused to move on this subject, but he did give Callaghan an unambiguous assurance that *inviolability* did not mean *immutability* of frontiers.<sup>55</sup> While certainly not leading to a breakthrough, Callaghan's effort is nevertheless noteworthy. Although no vital British interests were at stake, the Foreign Secretary nevertheless made a genuine attempt to lobby on Bonn's behalf. Callaghan strictly followed the line previously agreed within NATO and EPC and refrained from making concessions that would have run counter to that position.

### **Striking the Central Bargain**

#### *Sealing Basket I: The Agreement on the Peaceful Change of Frontiers*

The two months following the Moscow summit saw uneven movement on central bargain issues. While negotiations on Basket III did not move substantially, the 'problem child' of Committee I was finally settled in early March 1975. Following a personal intervention by Henry Kissinger on behalf of West Germany, the Soviet Union accepted the insertion of the text on peaceful change of frontiers into the first principle on the sovereign equality of all states.<sup>56</sup> The British were not involved in this major development. The FRG had informed their British colleagues on 28 February that Moscow was considering making a concession regarding PCF. More details about the negotiations, including the decisive American role, were not revealed until a meeting of the EPC Political Committee on 3 March. It turned out that Kissinger had succeeded where Callaghan had failed – the Kremlin agreed to inserting the text into

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., No. 112, para 5.

<sup>56</sup> Mayer, *National Foreign Policy through Multilateral Means*, pp. 142-143.

Principle IV. However, in the face of East German and Polish objections, the parties involved eventually concurred to attach the provision to Principle I.<sup>57</sup>

Brezhnev followed up on his significant concession with another round of letters to Western heads of state urging for a speedy conclusion of the CSCE by July 1975 and a final summit at the highest level. The two initiatives were judged by the West as an indication of Soviet willingness to finally deliver the necessary concessions to achieve the progress Moscow had been publicly demanding all along.<sup>58</sup> The British and their allies were careful not to commit themselves to the timetable proposed by Brezhnev and, with a view to exploiting the latter's sense of urgency, held firm on the desiderata of interest to them.

This particularly applied to items in Basket III where US delegates were increasingly supporting EPC negotiators. From March onwards, the US delegation took a more proactive approach, especially on the provisions relating to improving the working conditions of journalists.<sup>59</sup> The FCO generally welcomed this development. The British had traditionally attached great importance to achieving substantial improvements in the information field. This had been acknowledged by London's allies when the UK was made the Western floor leader in the information sub-committee in late 1974. However, the FCO also saw American activism as a potential stumbling block. Having maintained a low profile for so long, 'belated' US engagement apparently led the Warsaw Pact to conclude that their recent concessions

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<sup>57</sup> The relevant passage of the Final Act reads: 'The participating states will respect each other's sovereign equality and individuality as well as all the rights inherent in and encompassed by its sovereignty [...]. [...] They consider that their *frontiers can be changed, in accordance with international law, by peaceful means and by agreement*'. From the Western point of view, the crucial aspect about the compromise formula is that the conditions for frontier change allow for a disjunctive interpretation. In other words, the provision can be read as demanding that only one of the conditions mentioned – lawfulness, peaceful means, mutual agreement – needs to be satisfied. The Final Act is reprinted in Cmnd. 6932, No. 81, pp. 225-282 (227-228).

<sup>58</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 117, para. 2.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., No. 118, para. 2.

on peaceful change had paved the way for increased Western demands.<sup>60</sup> The result was an impasse in Committee III, which lasted well beyond the second Easter recess of the Geneva talks. The deadlock persisted for another month after the resumption of the talks and it was in this situation that the British made one of their most constructive contributions to the central bargain.

### *Sealing Basket III: The British 'Global Solution'*

In British eyes, the deadlock in Committee III was a peculiar one. According to Hildyard, the Soviet delegates were 'clearly [...] in a great hurry to finish off the Conference' as they were trying to honour the Brezhnev deadline.<sup>61</sup> Yet they nonetheless withheld the necessary concessions to overcome the impasse, apparently out of fear that these would 'merely be swallowed up by the West'.<sup>62</sup> In order to move the talks along, the UK delegation reached a tactical agreement with other key Western players. They were to remain firm in order to let the Warsaw Pact 'stew for a little longer' while simultaneously making preparations to respond in a flexible manner once the other side showed flexibility.<sup>63</sup> However, this passive approach provided no answer to the question of how to induce their opponents to start moving in the first place. This was especially problematic given the likelihood that protracted stalemates would again expose latent divisions within the Western camp and jeopardise neutral support.

In this situation, Michael Alexander, one of Britain's chief negotiators in Committee III, prepared a package deal – the so-called 'global solution' – that was to

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 118, para. 1. Brezhnev's self-imposed time limit put Warsaw Pact delegations under severe pressure, including hardliner states like the GDR. Brezhnev's move was perceived as an unhelpful intervention by the Kremlin, which weakened the Eastern bargaining position significantly. Author's interview with Professor Siegfried Bock and Mr Peter Steglich, Berlin, 11 June 2008.

<sup>62</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 119, fn. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

pave the way for agreement on Basket III. The global solution episode will be recapitulated at length for three reasons. First, the British initiative broke the deadlock on one of the most contentious items on the agenda. Second, it has been inadequately represented in the existing literature on the CSCE. This is especially true of one of the most influential books on the CSCE, John Maresca's *To Helsinki*, which wrongly portrays the initiative as an exclusive deal between the superpowers and omits the British role altogether.<sup>64</sup> Third, it is characteristic of the British approach to the CSCE.

Alexander proposed to compile moderate texts on the most important outstanding issues in Basket III – human contacts and information – and to present them informally to the USSR delegation. The Soviets would be told that if these texts were accepted, the West would refrain from making further demands in Basket III. The proposal also allowed for a reasonable amount of changes to the texts. However, if Soviet demands were to prove excessive, the West would withdraw the entire list and return to the time-consuming strategy of negotiating item-by-item.<sup>65</sup>

The FCO gave the global solution initiative the green light in late April.<sup>66</sup> In Geneva, the proposal as such and the texts to be included in the package deal were first discussed in depth with the West's principal players – the Americans, the West Germans, and the French. With the exception of a text on radio and TV broadcasts, which included language recently proposed by the US, the new drafts had been prepared by the British. London's key allies agreed and the initiative was subsequently presented to the Nine and the Fifteen. Reiterating their traditional hard-line stance, familiar since the start of the MPT, the Dutch delegates were the only

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<sup>64</sup> Alexander's own account has been published posthumously. See Alexander, *Managing the Cold War*, pp. 45-57.

<sup>65</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 119. Alexander, *Managing the Cold War*, pp. 46-48.

<sup>66</sup> FCO London to UKMIS Geneva, 30 April 1975, UKNA, FCO 41/1769.

ones to reject the global solution outright.<sup>67</sup> While the Dutch kept arguing that the West should block any movement until the very last minute, most of their EPC partners were attracted by the British idea and swiftly moved to making comments on the substance of the texts that were to be proposed to the Soviets.<sup>68</sup> Following intense discussions, British diplomats succeeded in securing the support of the West and leading neutral delegations and subsequently presented the texts to the USSR delegation on 15 May 1975.<sup>69</sup> While Western hard-liners kept harbouring doubts about the proposed package deal, the Americans emphatically endorsed it. The US delegation even asked the State Department to have Kissinger speak on its behalf during his upcoming meeting with Gromyko. Using speaking notes drafted by Alexander, the US Secretary of State presented the global approach to Gromyko on 20 May.<sup>70</sup>

The formal response came one day later. The Soviet Union generally welcomed the package, but demanded substantial changes that most Western delegations deemed excessive.<sup>71</sup> The British reaction was more moderate. Alexander saw the reply as ‘evidence of a real effort’ on the part of the Soviets to make progress.<sup>72</sup> However, he perceived it necessary for tactical reasons to ‘keep the heat on the Russians’ and hence refrained from disagreeing openly with the more negative assessments of his allies.<sup>73</sup> Alexander judged a ‘united display of disappointment’ as the best way of getting the Soviet delegation to moderate their demands for revision,

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<sup>67</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 120, fn. 11. Ferraris, *Report on a Negotiation*, p. 321.

<sup>68</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 120, fn. 11.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 122, para. 1.

<sup>70</sup> Alexander, *Managing the Cold War*, pp. 51-52. DBPO, III/II, Nos. 122, fn. 9, 123, fn. 8. See also Hanhimäki, “‘They Can Write it in Swahili’”, p. 53.

<sup>71</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 123, fn. 1.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

but he also anticipated the risk that some of his 'more hot-headed colleagues' would overreact and thus spoil the deal.<sup>74</sup>

In response to the Western reaction, the Soviet delegation withdrew a third of their initial objections and subsequently started working out the details with a Western team, composed of British, American, Danish, and Irish delegates.<sup>75</sup> Final agreement on the various texts of the package was held up until late June, however. By then, the only outstanding issue was the aforementioned text on radio and TV broadcasts that contained American-sponsored provisions. The disagreement reflected the general East-West divide on the interrelationship between détente and the dissemination of information that had blocked agreement throughout the conference. The basic Western objective was to obtain a text that declared the jamming of radio and television broadcasts as incompatible with the spirit of détente.<sup>76</sup> The Soviet Union argued that it could only grant more access to Western media if Western governments were willing to take the responsibility for the content of the broadcasts under discussion. This was obviously unacceptable to the Nine and the Fifteen who did not want to expose themselves to charges of censorship. In view of this substantial disagreement on fundamentals, the British had initially sought to exclude the issue from the 'global approach' package. However, the American delegation was under instructions to secure a text that could be used to convince Congress that funding for *Radio Free Europe* and the *Voice of America* was compatible with détente.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid. The transatlantic disagreement about how to react to the initial Soviet response to the 'global solution' showed the familiar fault lines within the West in miniature form. The 'wet front', in this case represented by Denmark and Norway, advocated a conciliatory response whereas the Italians and the Dutch pushed for a 'very hard line'. See 'Delegationsbericht No. 974', 22 May 1975, PAAA, Zwischenarchiv 100011, 'KSZE-Delegationsberichte Nr. 871-1010'. Cf. also *ibid.*, 'Delegationsbericht No. 986'. The British worried that some of their Western allies and the neutrals, encouraged by Brezhnev's apparent desire to conclude the negotiations, lacked the flexibility to strike reasonable bargains. Alexander therefore mediated between the two camps within the West. See DBPO, III/II, No. 117, para. 2. Cf. also Alexander, *Managing the Cold War*, pp. 52-57.

<sup>75</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 123, para. 6. Ireland was included because it held the EC presidency at the time.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 128, para. 3.

Eventually, a formula was found that was vague enough to paper over the disagreement.<sup>77</sup> This compromise marked the conclusion of the British-sponsored package deal. The global solution thus paved the way to agreement on Basket III, one of the crucial elements of the entire CSCE. In doing so, it broke the deadlock on issues that had bedevilled the conference since the MPT. One month later, thirty-five heads of state gathered in Helsinki to sign the Final Act, thereby officially declaring their approval of the central bargain struck at the CSCE.

### *Summary*

The discussion of Stage 2 has shown a remarkable consistency of British CSCE diplomacy. The delegation stuck to the central aspects that had already characterised London's approach to the Dipoli talks. For example, the Foreign Office continued with its tough but constructive stance.<sup>78</sup> Whitehall was tough on questions of substance as well as on procedure. In regard to the former, the UK advocated firmness on issues of interest to the West, such as the provisions on the peaceful change of frontiers. Having initially objected to the decoupling of PCF from the text on the inviolability of frontiers, British scepticism was redeemed when the Soviet delegation did not show the flexibility promised in return for this major Western concession. This reinforced British hard-headedness on procedural matters, especially London's insistence on continuing with the 'bottom-up approach' and its objection to what the FCO saw as premature package deals.

Both aspects of Britain's robustness inevitably led to protracted negotiations, as the Soviet delegation was not in a position to match Moscow's public advocacy for

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, fn. 4.

<sup>78</sup> The 'business-like' conduct, professionalism and skill of the British delegation was explicitly recognised in the interviews conducted with a neutral and two East German opponents. Author's interviews with Professor Karl Birnbaum, Stockholm, Sweden, 8 September 2010 and Professor Siegfried Bock, Berlin, Germany, 11 June 2008.

a speedy conference with a flexible bargaining posture. As we have seen, British persistence was a matter of concern for the superpowers. In their own ways, both superpowers exerted pressure on London and urged the British to adopt a more forthcoming stance on issues related to the central bargain. Having failed to extract concessions from Wilson and Callaghan during their visit to Moscow, Brezhnev complained to Kissinger about the slow progress in the UK-led discussions on Basket I.<sup>79</sup> The US Secretary of State subsequently sought Callaghan's assistance to speed up the conference. Kissinger's belated CSCE activism, which was no doubt influenced by growing domestic opposition to détente, pertained to both elements of the central bargain. On Basket I, the American leader became personally involved and secured Soviet acceptance of a compromise on PCF while his 'minimum requirements' particularly targeted Basket III.

Foreign Office historian Keith Hamilton argues that the internal FCO criticism of Kissinger's 'minimum requirements' initiative reflects 'the extent to which senior British officials had abandoned their early doubts about what the West might achieve at a security conference'.<sup>80</sup> While the documents certainly back Hamilton's claim, we can also see the official British response as a measure of how London tried to reconcile specific British interests with the overall objective of maintaining Western unity and 'special' relations with the Americans. In contrast to the White House, the British had developed a growing interest in the CSCE over the course of the negotiations. Subsequently, London felt it imperative to tie Washington into the Western European strategy and prevent the superpower from squandering the chance to extract tangible concessions from the Soviet Union. Securing American support was not only an essential precondition for Western success at the CSCE. Conceiving

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<sup>79</sup> DBPO, III/II, No. 112.

<sup>80</sup> Hamilton, *The Last Cold Warriors*, p. 17.

of the conference as a test case for US-EPC relations, the British also felt that they were setting a precedent for transatlantic relations more generally. As we have seen, Callaghan reacted in pragmatic fashion. Refraining from public criticism, he went along with the basic thrust of the Kissinger initiative while trying to modify it along the way. His efforts to broaden the initiative were an attempt to bridge Anglo-American as well as US-EPC differences.

British officials clearly understood that intra-Western differences were in good part due to differing conceptions of détente that divided Washington from London and, more generally, the US from Western Europe. Western European stakes in the CSCE were different from those of the superpowers. To Washington and Moscow, the conference was part of a grander bargain and they conceived of the Helsinki process largely in superpower terms. As has been demonstrated, their criticism notwithstanding, British foreign policy makers did empathise to an extent with US concerns and they certainly saw the need to mediate. The most important British contribution to the Geneva phase – the global solution initiative – was such an attempt at mediation. The initiative involved drawing up a list of moderate texts and communicating them to the Warsaw Pact, thus accommodating long-standing American demands. However, in contrast to Kissinger, the British proposed launching the initiative at a time that took the *internal* dynamics of the conference – including Western European and neutral/non-aligned opinion – into account.<sup>81</sup> This accommodated the concerns of the West Europeans, who, after laborious months of dedicated bargaining, wanted to see their efforts come to fruition.

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<sup>81</sup> This supports Hanhimäki's argument that Kissinger never saw any intrinsic value in the CSCE; he merely tried to weave the talks into his linkage strategy. See Hanhimäki, "They Can Write it in Swahili", pp. 38, 47, 53.

## CONCLUSION

I believe that a conference on the highest level should take place between the leading Powers without long delay. This conference should not be overhung by a ponderous or rigid agenda, or led into mazes and jungles of technical details, zealously contested by hoards of experts and officials drawn up in vast, cumbrous array. The conference should be confined to the smallest number of Powers and persons possible.

– Winston Churchill, 11 May 1953

The CSCE was the exact opposite of what Winston Churchill would have wanted. And yet, twenty years after his landmark speech, during the negotiations of the Final Act, HMG's diplomats achieved several long-standing core aims of Britain's détente policy: they contributed significantly to a process that reduced East-West tension; increased Britain's leverage in Western counsels; contributed to transatlantic unity; and boosted London's international prestige. The signing of the Helsinki Accords on 1 August 1975 represented the highpoint of multilateral détente in Europe, but it also marked a comeback for British diplomacy. After a period of marginalisation in East-West diplomacy, of acrimonious deadlock in Anglo-Soviet relations, and of exclusion from West European integration, the tables had turned. During the Helsinki process, the British had started to play a full part in the European Community as well as in NATO; they had acted as tough yet flexible negotiators, and had earned the respect of their interlocutors. As a result, they were increasingly courted by Moscow. During the CSCE, the British turned from détente's 'European leper' to 'fathers of the Final Act'.

This development was anything but straightforward, however. Although British documents tend to convey this impression, it would be highly misleading retrospectively to construe London's involvement in the CSCE process as a simple 'success story'. To be sure, there were successes – including hard-earned ones during the 'long slog' of the negotiations –, but the 'story' was also one of cul-de-sacs,

policy reversals, and unintended consequences. For much of the time period covered here, the British role was a reactive, at times anxious one and London's search for détente should be seen as akin to Goethe's desperate Zauberlehrling rather than Homer's heroic Odysseus.

### **Contributions**

This thesis has sought to advance existing scholarship in four principal ways. First, it has presented the first in-depth account of London's involvement in the negotiations leading up to the Final Act. I have argued that Britain made a significant contribution to the talks and that London reasserted its influence in the process. This development took place in incremental steps. At the beginning of the Helsinki process, Britain's reach was confined to the intra-Western consultation process; during the course of the negotiations, however, the British became more ambitious and, as the global solution initiative shows, they ended up playing an important role at the CSCE. This finding confirms the 'pericentrist' argument about the impact of 'junior partners' on the East-West conflict.

The British comeback was the function of three main factors: a firm anchoring in Western institutions, most importantly EPC; the special nature of the multilateral negotiation regime in Helsinki; and skilful diplomacy that seized the opportunities created by European détente. Let us discuss these factors in turn. First, the comeback was due in large part to Britain's creative use of its new role as a member of the European Community. The diplomatic clout of the Nine was a crucial enabling factor, greatly increasing London's potential to shape East-West diplomacy. Both the timing and the nature of Britain's integration into EPC proved fortunate and beneficial. London joined EPC as a candidate country in February 1972, shortly after the new

institution had begun to prepare for the CSCE. By coincidence, Britain entered early enough to influence and co-formulate Western European policy towards the CSCE, but too late for the détente sceptics in London to block the development of a proactive stance. Prior to EPC membership, hardliners in London such as Thomas Brimelow and Julian Bullard had vetoed requests for a more active policy towards the East and had concentrated on Britain's quest for membership. London had thus de-emphasised relations with the East precisely at the time when other West European states intensified their endeavours. But once Britain joined EPC, the FCO thought it best to follow their new partners; because of his pro-European orientation, even Brimelow was thus forced to play a more active role in détente. Thus, Britain's Ost- and Westpolitik were effectively harmonised in the run-up to the CSCE. In that sense, London's road to Helsinki – and, consequently, towards a more constructive relationship with the East – ran first and foremost through Brussels. To put it more succinctly, the new institutional framework served to increase London's bargaining leverage, but it also impacted on British foreign policy through multilateral lock-in and effects of socialisation.

At Dipoli and later in Geneva, dual membership in both EPC and NATO proved highly advantageous throughout the Helsinki talks, particularly given the frosty state of Anglo-Soviet relations. Membership in these major groupings acted as a loudspeaker and a shield. On the one hand, Western cohesion boosted UK leverage; it gave the Foreign Office the chance to influence its partners and the British used this to restrain both the détente enthusiasts and the hardliners in the Western camp. On the other hand, as members of the Nine and the Fifteen, Britain could not be easily singled out for its relatively tough stance by Warsaw Pact states.

Second, the nature of the Helsinki negotiations proved conducive to British diplomacy. The CSCE represented a special negotiation regime whose procedural and substantive norms boosted London's influence. At the beginning of the talks, participants had agreed to decision-making by consensus; the vast disparity in material power was thus rendered less important – middle powers like Britain and even small states like Malta had the same rights as the superpowers and, as it turned out, they were not afraid to use them.

The substance of the agenda enhanced this 'egalitarian' effect. Its breadth ensured that the CSCE was much more inclusive than other détente negotiations, for example, arms control talks such as SALT. The inclusion of human rights on the agenda proved particularly conducive to Western delegations. British diplomats actively seized on the 'soft power' of these values, using them to win over the neutrals and to patch up Western cohesion in times of tactical division.

The net effect of the procedural and substantive norms of the CSCE negotiation regime was to put the Warsaw Pact states on the defensive. They were not only outnumbered, but also forced to negotiate on the awkward terrain of military transparency (CBMs) and human rights (Basket III). The British exploited this situation deliberately. They relentlessly pushed Basket III issues; persistently made the case for 'human security', i.e. they argued that improving civil liberties and the freer flow of information enhances security; and they played for time, thus using Brezhnev's personal investment in the CSCE and his sense of urgency to extract concessions.

The third and final reason for Britain's reassertion is directly connected to and builds on the previous points. The institutional anchoring of British foreign policy and the nature of the CSCE negotiation regime were crucial enabling factors, which

greatly enhanced London's potential for influencing détente. But potential leverage does not automatically translate into tangible influence. It was turned into actual leverage primarily by a small group of British officials who were intimately involved with the Helsinki talks. These diplomats seized on the space created by the relative disinterest of their superiors and ministers to give London's CSCE policy an increasingly proactive thrust. Initially framed as an 'exercise in damage limitation', Helsinki became redefined as an opportunity: as a chance of turning the long-standing Soviet project against their creators; as a test case for Britain's new role in Europe; and as an occasion where positive aims, such as small-scale steps in the liberalisation of authoritarian states could be realised.

The second contribution to scholarship that this thesis has made goes beyond the CSCE negotiations: it has refined existing accounts of London's role in the international politics of détente more generally. Cold War historiography has primarily focused on Britain's role at the beginning and at the end of the East-West conflict and writings on détente have tended to omit the multilateral dimension of UK policy. Making full use of recently declassified primary sources, the thesis has filled the empirical gap by taking a close look at London's part in the multilateralisation of détente in the early 1970s and the ensuing Helsinki process. The wealth of primary evidence consulted for this thesis has enabled a closer look both at the debates within Whitehall and at outside evaluations of British actions.

Third, the thesis has advanced previous scholarship by using British CSCE policy as evidence to explore two key themes: Britain's transformation into a European middle power and the relationship – the continuities and discontinuities – between détente and the Cold War. As this thesis has illustrated, these themes interacted in complex ways. The multilateralisation of détente coincided with

London's accession to the European Community. During the Helsinki process, the West Europeans emerged as an influential force, spearheading major initiatives that injected their mix of change and continuity into the CSCE, and locking horns with both superpowers. As noted above, the British, after a short trial period, participated actively in EPC. In transatlantic disputes, they tended to position themselves as a mediator, trying to diffuse tension through diplomatic finesse, while sticking to the substance of the West European approach. For example, when Kissinger tried to rush the talks to a quicker conclusion in 1974, British diplomacy contributed to maintaining transatlantic unity without sacrificing the substance of the EC approach. This approach blended 'conservatory' and 'transformative' détente seamlessly and can hence be seen as a multilateralisation of the change-through-rapprochement dynamic of Ostpolitik. However, in its emphasis on small-scale changes and cooperative diplomacy, it also resembles Britain's 'evolutionary' approach. In the multilateral setting in Helsinki, its emphasis on low-key yet tangible improvements coupled with a tough bargaining stance – the 'lemon strategy' – proved effective in wresting concessions from Warsaw Pact states and

Fourth, by combining a regime theoretical reworking of Trachtenberg's notion of the constructed peace with Wendt's concept of cultures of anarchy, the thesis has advanced a framework that links up the historians' study of détente to Cold War History and IR theory. This is the main contribution to the debate between International Historians and International Relations scholars. Understood as a rudimentary regime, the constructed peace helps explain how East-West relations attained a certain level of stability, despite the fact that the bipolar structure persisted and that the sources of conflict remained unresolved. The concept of cultures of anarchy offers a way of theorising macro-level change and can thus be used to define

both the Cold War and détente in general terms. Representing, respectively, a Hobbesian and a Lockean culture, Cold War and détente can be conceptualised as two different manifestations of the East-West conflict. Taken together, the constructed peace and cultures of anarchy provide a framework with which to explain the changes as well as the continuities that marked détente. The CSCE can be understood as the multilateral attempt to revise the constructed peace without slipping back into the volatility of a Hobbesian culture of anarchy.

Britain's role in the international politics of détente was a multi-faceted one. To do it justice, this thesis has adopted a historically grounded approach and an interpretative framework sensitive to the dynamics and ambivalences of London's part. The use of historical process-tracing has shown how Britain's comeback during the CSCE built on London's earlier role as pioneers of détente, which in turn fed on a long-standing tradition of accommodation. Throughout, British foreign policymakers championed a dual policy of deterrence and détente – a mix of balance-of-power Realpolitik and diplomacy, both of which are characteristic of a Lockean culture of anarchy. Once the balance between the two elements got lost, British policymakers made a conscious effort at restoring it. This explains both London's push towards an East-West rapprochement in the 1950s when the East-West conflict took on features of a Hobbesian culture of anarchy as well as London's growing scepticism in the late 1960s and early 1970s when pro-détente sentiment seemed to undermine Western vigilance and military preparedness.

To do this balancing act justice, the thesis has embedded the CSCE not just in the context of the history of British foreign policy, but also in the broader context of the East-West conflict. To see détente in general and the CSCE in particular as processes of revisiting the constructed peace captures the UK perspective well; it

reflects that British policy was driven by a complicated mix of conservatory and transformative goals. London sought to use the détente process to reinforce the stability of the spheres-of-influence settlement while at the same time planting the seeds of future change. British détente policy thus clearly reached beyond the status quo. Nonetheless, it is important to withstand the temptation to draw a straight line between transformative détente and the end of the Cold War. Implicit in the adoption of the constructed peace perspective is the rejection of a direct link between 1975 and 1989. Seeing détente from the former perspective surely makes for a less heroic tale than seeing détente in triumphalist terms – as a revolutionary policy in disguise – yet it best reflects the ambivalences and the nuances of British policy. The metaphorical juxtaposition of the ‘coral reef’ as opposed to the ‘prefabricated house’, used by the UK delegation to describe their approach to the CSCE negotiations, captures Britain’s transformative détente well. Quietly and incrementally and – literally – sentence by sentence, British diplomats contributed to the coral reef of détente without a master plan. They saw détente more as an open-ended process of revising a flawed yet stable architecture rather than a process of constructing a ‘prefabricated house’.

### **An Avenue for Future Research**

Historically grounded scholarship on the impact of the diplomacy of détente holds great potential for refining our understanding of international conflict management and transformation. The contribution of the CSCE and of détente more generally to the peaceful ending of the East-West conflict provides a rich source of evidence for the role that diplomacy can play in transforming even the most deeply entrenched culture of anarchy. However, in the absence of a serious dialogue between historians, conflict analysts, and practitioners, that field has so far been left in rather dubious

hands. Over the last five years, the CSCE has been proposed as a model for negotiations with authoritarian regimes in a host of lead editorials, most recently by Niall Ferguson in *Newsweek*.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, these proposals suffer from a serious lack of historical understanding and analytical clarity. Consequently, the cheap analogies they sell as policy advice might have disastrous consequences if taken seriously. Nevertheless, the study of détente and of the CSCE process would be an excellent subject for a dialogue between historians, political scientists and practitioners.

In allusion to Yeats' decree on life, one scholar of the Cold War has likened the East-West conflict to 'a long preparation for nothing'.<sup>2</sup> In view of the urgent research tasks ahead, this student of détente is not quite so fatalistic.

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<sup>1</sup> Niall Ferguson, 'How to Get Gaddafi: Mr. President, Don't Send Guns to the Libyans, Send Them a Piece of Paper', *Newsweek*, 13 March 2011. See also Robert Kagan, 'Time to Talk to Iran', *Washington Post*, 5 December 2007. Ray Takeyh, 'Beware of Iranians Bearing Talks', *Washington Post*, 27 September 2009. David Ignatius, 'It's Time to Engage With Iran', *Washington Post*, 26 May 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, p. 196.

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