



Carole Fink, Bernd Schaefer. *Ostpolitik, 1969–1974: European and Global Responses.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 289 S. \$85.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-89970-3.

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Reactions to Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik

Given the already existing literature on the origins, implementation, and goals of West Germany's *Ostpolitik*, the editors focus on the question of how Western allies of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), adversaries from the Warsaw Pact, and governments around the world reacted to it. *Ostpolitik* was not only of crucial importance to the history of the FRG; it also had an enormous impact on the East-West conflict and on intra-bloc relations. Furthermore, it aroused great interest worldwide. The German word *Ostpolitik* entered the international diplomatic language. Returning from a trip to Asia, Australia, and New Zealand in late 1971, defense minister Helmut Schmidt felt that *Ostpolitik* was approved globally. In 1975, shortly before he went to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) summit in Helsinki as federal chancellor, Schmidt argued that *Ostpolitik* had increased worldwide trust in West German politics and had enhanced the capability of the FRG in international affairs.

The hero in this book, however, is Willy Brandt and the time span under investigation is his chancellorship. Brandt's term as foreign minister in the Grand Coalition government between 1966 and 1969 is not included. Hence, the reaction towards the new *Ostpolitik* during its first phase is not dealt with or only touched upon. In particular, a chapter on Romania is missing although the government in Bucharest, in January 1967, opened the gates for Bonn in the East and also played an impor-

tant role in the autumn of 1969, when the second phase of *Ostpolitik* began. This having been said, the editors are to be praised for what they have achieved. There are three chapters on the Warsaw Pact (Andrey Edemskiy on the Soviet response to *Ostpolitik*, Krzysztof Ruchniewicz on Poland, and Oldřich Těma on Czechoslovakia) and two on North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies (Holger Klitzing on the United States and Marie-Pierre Rey on France). The second part of the book is dedicated to various countries in Asia (Bernd Schaefer on People's Republic of China, Meung-Hoan Noh on South Korea, and Amit Das Gupta on India), the Middle East (Carole Fink on Israel), Africa (Tilman Dederling on South Africa), and Europe (Milan Kosanovič on Yugoslavia).

In their introduction and general conclusion, the editors summarize the essence of *Ostpolitik*. There is only one chapter which deals with the policy of the Brandt government. William Gren Gray's piece on Bonn's attitude towards the nuclear question makes most interesting reading but does not really fit into the overall structure of the volume. Furthermore, Gray's topic has to be seen in a much wider context, namely the newly acquired status of the FRG as a medium-sized but major actor on a global scale. *Ostpolitik* was indispensable for this departure because it started the process of reconciliation with the East and, at least for the time being, no longer questioned the territorial status quo with two German states. But beyond that the West German foreign policy-

making elite had a clear vision of the enhanced status of the FRG in international affairs. The FRG was active in pursuing its national interests within NATO, vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and the other Warsaw Pact states, in its relationship with countries like India or China, and with the whole Third World. In other words, *Ostpolitik* was a central, but only one element in the FRG's foreign policy.

Instead of going into details of the individual chapters I will attempt to summarize the main findings. With hindsight *Ostpolitik* is regarded as a model for "peaceful change through diplomacy, trade, and human contacts" (p. 269). During Brandt's chancellorship, however, it provoked mixed feelings. On the one hand, the recognition of the European postwar order was welcome. On the other hand, high expectations in Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia as to the blessings of economic cooperation and the West German preparedness for financial aid were frustrated. The treaties with the Soviet Union, Poland, and Czechoslovakia were only a first step, which was far from enough to overcome the still existing differences.

The first reactions in Washington and Paris were uneasiness and some doubt about the reliability of the FRG as a NATO ally, notwithstanding the compatibility of *détente* and *Ostpolitik* in the last instance. China's and Israel's distrust and enmity toward the Soviet Union led them to criticize *Ostpolitik*. At the same time, they regarded good relations with the FRG as useful because of its economic power and technological know-how. But

again, this had nothing to do with *Ostpolitik*. The increasingly powerful and influential role of the FRG made the FRG an attractive partner in the international arena. India's relations with the FRG are also interesting in this respect.

At first sight, Brandt's communicative approach to international politics in general and especially to the conflict between East and West appealed strongly to both the South Korean and the South African regimes. But given the particular circumstances in the divided Korean nation and the divided South African society, it could not be applied to these conflicts.

Finally, according to the editors, one should differentiate between immediate and long-term results of *Ostpolitik*. The latter could be observed when the Soviet empire collapsed. Trade with the East and economic cooperation with communist countries demonstrated the "superiority of capitalism and became a mighty factor of psychological subversion" (p. 272). On the level of politics and ideology, Gorbachev, rather than feeling threatened by social democracy, viewed it "as one source of inspiration for reforms in his own country" (p. 273). Finally, Brandt's strategy of transformation and peaceful change proved to be successful. I sympathize with this assessment, being aware of course that this is not the only interpretation of why the East-West conflict ended peacefully.

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