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# Do all paths lead to Moscow? The NATO dual-track decision and the peace movement – a critique

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*This article presents elements of a novel approach to the study of social movements in a Cold War context. Using peace activism in West Germany during the 1980s as a case study, this article argues for a conceptualisation of social movement activism that moves beyond the ideological divides of the Cold War and a functional understanding of politics. Instead, this article highlights the multi-layered, fractured and contested nature of activism and shows how peace activists engaged in debates about the meanings of ‘peace’, ‘security’, and ‘democracy’ rather than merely representing ‘Communist’ interests.*

Since German unification and the collapse of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact in 1990/91, a master narrative of the West German and Western European peace movement of the 1980s has established itself almost without opposition amongst historians and social scientists. This narrative interprets these protest movements from within a Cold War framework, rather than providing us with analyses that are appropriate for the post-Cold War world. Within this Cold War framework, historians and political scientists have focused primarily on political ideologies as a key underlying factor for changes in policy making. They have usually been content with representing decision-making processes within governments as the representation of the government’s own rationality and the only available interpretative parameter. Partisanship has been an implicit or explicit corollary of this kind of work. Hence, scholars have often focused on assigning guilt, according to their own ideological preferences, for developments that they regard as the products of bad decision making.<sup>1</sup>

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In a post-Cold War world, historians should instead focus on reconstructing the ambivalences and underlying motifs of all political interventions during the Cold War. In particular, it is time to come to an understanding of Cold War international politics that regards social and political events within a country not merely as responses to specific challenges in foreign policy and international politics, but takes account of agency and decision making at all levels.<sup>2</sup> Some recent work has recently begun in the international history of the Cold War, especially with regard on the history of the Cold War outside the transatlantic arena has begun to work on this issue.<sup>3</sup> Our understanding of the place of social activism within a Cold War context, however, is still hampered by a conceptually out-dated, if not impoverished, understanding of popular protest that is still inspired by theories of mass protest and crowds from the 1950s.<sup>4</sup> In particular, activism against Western foreign and defence policies (such as nuclear armaments) is still frequently interpreted within the context of the Cold War ideological conflict between communism and liberal democracy rather than as a more complex phenomenon that involved a much broader engagement with the structures of domestic and international politics at the time.<sup>5</sup>

In this article, we intend to present elements of a case study of what elements of such an alternative approach might look like. In particular, we take seriously calls by international relations scholars over the last few decades to explore the impact of international relations on agency within, as well as shape and structures of, domestic political debates.<sup>6</sup> We focus on the debates about the West German peace movement in the late 1970s and 1980s. Here, the Cold War framework of interpretation has been especially powerful and persistent, as recent interventions by the Soviet foreign policy specialist Gerhard Wettig show. In two recent long articles in German and in English, Gerhard Wettig supports this interpretation of the origins and importance of the West German and, to a lesser extent, the Western European peace movements from the perspective of the Moscow politburo on the basis of unrivalled empirical evidence from Soviet archives.<sup>7</sup> Conceptually, however, Wettig's work highlights the blind spots and problematic assumptions of the Cold War narrative of peace movement activism. Peace movement activism appears as the direct result of a concerted campaign which followed instructions from the Kremlin and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) on the 'mass mobilisation' of the western public. Wettig claims that the CPSU gave "precise instructions" to representatives of the German Peace Union (DFU) which was closely linked to the German Communist Party (DKP) in the Federal Republic. Wettig also believes that Josef Weber, the head of the League of Germans (*Bund der Deutschen*, BdD), an earlier cover organisation for the banned Communist Party (KPD), "probably had a direct line to Moscow and was pulling the strings behind the scenes" during the preparation of the Krefeld Appeal and the West German peace movement's other campaigns.<sup>8</sup> While interpretations such as Wettig's are based on an impressive empirical knowledge of recently released Soviet materials and while they locate peace propaganda precisely within Soviet foreign policy in the last decade of the Cold War, these interpretations remain problematic. They hypothesise about the

impact of propaganda, when it would be much more apposite to discuss social movement activism.

Our objective is not to dismiss the empirical findings of this research. Instead, we wish to contribute to developing a better conceptual assessment of the role of peace movements in the last decade of the Cold War. We propose that historical research should undertake a social and cultural analysis of the engagement of communist groups in the peace movement, linking it to the diverse experiences of social movements in the 1970s which emerged all over Western Europe. What we need to explain, then, is not so much the fact that communists took part in peace movements. The relevant and interesting question is to understand why, in the 1980s, non-communist activists with little or no sympathies for state socialism in Eastern Europe decided to work together with communists whose affiliations they knew and why they were willing to take up slogans that resembled some of the official communist party slogans from east of the 'Iron Curtain'. This issue becomes even more salient as previous West German peace and anti-nuclear weapons movements, especially those of the 1950s and early 1960s, had maintained a safe distance to communist groups, both sociologically and symbolically.<sup>9</sup> This shift cannot be explained with reference to Soviet and GDR efforts to 'undermine' West German democracy, as such attempts had existed from the foundation of the Federal Republic onwards. Jeffrey Herf proposes a reading that rehearses contemporary arguments about shifts towards post-materialist values during the period of European détente in the 1970s and a concomitant lack of emphasis on the importance of democratic values for domestic politics. This was essentially the position of US policymakers at the time, and Ronald Inglehart, one of the main proponents of such an interpretation, played a key role in advising the US government on how to react to these problems created by the growth by what he and others called a 'successor generation'.<sup>10</sup>

Our analysis suggests a more differentiated and complex interpretation: the peace movement did not merely emerge in response to the break-up of détente. Instead, we argue that activists, already dissatisfied with the specific kind of democracy under which they lived (around parliamentary procedures, political parties, corporatist arrangements and a technocratic approach to politics) regarded peace activism as the appropriate issue to voice their concerns. In other words, we regard the peace movements as a 'symptom' of larger shifts in international relations and domestic politics at the time, rather than direct representations of a major threat to the transatlantic community of values through Soviet propaganda. Phenomena like the peace movement are hard to explain using the functionalist rhetoric of traditional political science, which sees democracy as a matter for party-political debates between 'left' and 'right', and usually conceptualises political engagement primarily as the realisation of 'interests'.<sup>11</sup> With this perspective, inspired by approaches from social and cultural history, historical research would gain a new ability to explain how the peace movements not only expressed fundamental opposition to the Cold War order, but also intervened in political debates on the appropriate forms of democratic participation, rejecting the idea that 'democracy' is a parliamentary system of

representation which is mediated and organised by political parties as the key actors.<sup>12</sup> This means that we should not ignore the participation of communists and communist groups in the peace movement altogether, or exclude the Moscow-controlled World Peace Council from analysis. Such an approach is the trademark of a peace history that owes much to the activism of the peace movement, for example that presented by Lawrence Wittner in his monumental trilogy on the history of the global protest movement against nuclear weapons.<sup>13</sup>

Our critique examines the empirical and conceptual weaknesses of Wettig's interpretation of the peace movement (section I) as a case study for the key problems, before we discuss ways in which the history of the NATO dual-track decision might be portrayed against the background of new approaches to Cold War research (section II). In section III, we summarise our argument.

### **I. The legend of the remote-controlled peace movement**

The first problem with Wettig's portrayal of the 'anti-missile movement' is the name 'anti-missile movement' itself and the chronology this implies.<sup>14</sup> This movement did not only emerge in the aftermath of the NATO dual-track decision on the 12 December 1979 and the 'campaign that then began' under Soviet influence. The peace movement – as the protesters referred to themselves – had already gained considerable momentum by the mid-1970s. One impetus for this was the link to protests against civilian uses of nuclear energy, which culminated spectacularly in the occupation of a reactor site in Wyhl, a village in the region of Baden. The predominantly conservative local population near the French border was the driving force behind these protests which also fostered international contacts with France. Through its widespread coverage in the media, the protest soon attracted attention all across the Federal Republic.<sup>15</sup> Concerns were raised about contamination with nuclear radiation that could be emitted even from warheads in storage. These formed connecting threads to the efforts to reduce the number of nuclear weapons. The iconography of the anti-nuclear movement therefore casually linked both uses of nuclear power. A radioactive mushroom cloud, for example, was depicted rising above the cooling towers of a nuclear power station.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, however, it was the impetus from the global ecumenical movement that, primarily within West German Protestantism, caused public engagement to intensify. In Württemberg in 1976, for example, a group called 'Living Without Armaments' (*Ohne Rüstung Leben*) began its work. The group had its roots in the World Congress of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Nairobi in 1975. The council's members had pledged to work for a world without weapons. 'Pro Ecumene' (*Pro-Ökumene*), a group within the Protestant Church in the state of Württemberg, put disarmament on their agenda and developed the 'Living Without Armaments' initiative, which made a public appeal in 1978. They invited citizens of the Federal Republic to sign a pledge stating that they wanted to live without the protection of weapons. Even before the dual-track decision, this campaign that had originally begun in the Stuttgart area

found a resonance all over West Germany. About 25,000 pledges were signed by 1983. The group 'Living without Armaments' was well connected in Protestant circles, and became an important pillar in the consultation groups of the peace movement during the Euromissiles crisis.<sup>17</sup> The Protestant campaign *Aktion Sühnezeichen-Friedensdienste*, whose title called for peace services as a sign of atonement, should also be mentioned in this context. Following the example of the protests organised by the Dutch Inter-Church Peace Council (IKV), the campaign had already made engagement against nuclear weapons a central part of its political work before 1979.<sup>18</sup>

Wettig's analysis, in particular, goes too far in interpreting the popular mobilisation after the dual-track decision as the result of a propaganda campaign controlled by Moscow. Such theories overstate the influence of communists in the coordination of the peace movement and tend to reproduce the self-perception of the Kremlin and the Soviet security apparatus. They ignore that the question of Soviet influence was a controversial topic of debate in the peace movement itself at the time and part of what social scientists have called 'framing contests'. Such 'framing contests' involved debates about aims, campaigns, and forms of protest.<sup>19</sup> 'Frames' are semantics that structure people's perceptions of threats and are used collectively by activists; frames also point to solutions to the diagnosed problems.<sup>20</sup>

Frames work 'in a cognitive sense, as perception filters, while in an emotional sense they establish communities by creating shared models of interpretation. Two elements are decisive in this context for successful mobilisation: First, protest movements must adopt frames that already exist among the general public; second, they must develop their own frames in order to portray themselves as a protest movement.'<sup>21</sup>

This process goes hand-in-hand with conflicts both inside and outside the movements and it points to a complexity of aims and motivations that the traditional rendering of protests in the Cold War tend to ignore.

Wilfried von Bredow and Rudolf H. Brocke, who have analysed published sources and interviewed numerous activists, concluded as early as in 1987 that 'although political influence on the peace movement from this direction cannot be denied, it was nowhere near strong enough for one to speak of communist "control" of the peace movement.' They also point to an informal coalition between groups close to the SPD and DKP. This coalition was not, however, based on their aims for peace, but on a joint opposition to the strategies of protest and self-presentation and the 'anti-bourgeois attitudes' used by groups of the 'autonomous' left.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, Udo Baron concludes that the DKP was unable to 'force its policies onto the peace movement with the help of KOFAZ or to expand their support.'<sup>23</sup> Baron further argues that several important members of the Green Party, such as Petra Kelly and Gert Bastian, consciously opposed the attempts of the DKP to co-opt them. An important wing of the Greens attempted to make contact with independent peace movements in the GDR and explicitly protested against the build-up of arms and environmental destruction in Warsaw Pact countries.<sup>24</sup>

This position led to conflicts in the co-ordinating committee of the peace movement, where representatives of the Greens criticised the role of the DKP.

Nevertheless, it is clear that Gert Bastian, even after he and Petra Kelly had left the Krefeld Appeal in January 1984, rejected the 'accusation that the initiative was being controlled by communists' and explicitly advocated more cooperation with communists.<sup>25</sup> This demonstrates that the many members of the peace movement who did not belong to the DKP were not forced into cooperation with communists, but specifically sought out such collaboration. After all, one of the aims of the peace movement, and of Petra Kelly in particular, was to overcome the confrontation between the power blocs by freeing itself from the anti-communist consensus of the Federal Republic. This involved looking for common ground with communists while continuing to articulate differences of opinion.<sup>26</sup>

A look at the decision-making processes in the peace movement's coordinating bodies demonstrates that the idea the movement was remotely controlled by Moscow or seduced by communists is untenable. It is even less plausible if we consider the millions of committed activists, as well as occasional and potential supporters, and the ways in which they perceived the threats to peace. Surveys show that 2.7% of all adults in the Federal Republic considered themselves to be active participants in the peace movement in the 1980s, the highest percentage in the five West European countries surveyed. Forty-five percent of West Germans considered themselves to be potential activists.<sup>27</sup> Participation was not only expressed in opinion polls, but also practised on the streets. About 300,000 people rallied on 10 October 1981 at the Hofgarten in Bonn for the first massive public outing of the movement against the double-track solution, and for the largest demonstration in German history overall. Almost 700 groups and associations supported this demonstration, and only a minority of them was affiliated with the DKP. In October 1983, public support for the movement peaked, when about 1 million West Germans took to the streets in rallies in Bonn, Ulm, Hamburg and Berlin.<sup>28</sup>

Studies of the numerous written and pictorial sources available, as well as opinion polls which give an insight into the framing of the peace movement, show a highly complex patchwork of motivations for participation and modes of perception among members of the peace movement. The fear that the USA was preparing to turn Europe into a potential battleground for a nuclear war was only one of many motivations for people to participate in the protest movement. At least three other important groups of motives can be identified, which functioned as perception filters and enabled the joint mobilisation of the many different wings of the peace movement.<sup>29</sup> Particularly in the social-democratic wing of the peace movement, and especially among members of the Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB), it was not peace, but international development, that was seen as the best answer to the threat of war. According to this view, both superpowers were equally responsible for the escalation of the nuclear arms race. These protestors saw the most significant consequence of this race as the waste of important resources which could be better deployed in the Third World.<sup>30</sup>

A second important group of motives saw the potential danger of nuclear war in Europe not as the result of planned aggression from the USA, but as a general



consequence of the conflict between the power blocs and the logic of nuclear deterrence which this perpetuated. Therefore, the aim of the peace movement was to bring about a 'détente from below' which would lead the people of Europe on both sides of the Iron Curtain to come together in autonomous forms of political organisation against the superpowers.<sup>31</sup> This form of framing found its most important institutional expression in END (European Nuclear Disarmament), an association of the individuals and groups linked to the peace movement on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The British activists E.P. Thompson and Ken Coates were instrumental in END's foundation in 1980; Mary Kaldor also played an important role. From the beginning, however, it was an extremely fragile construct, and one that had only limited agency. Alongside the problems with involving East European activists, this was due, in particular, to the refusal of a majority of the CND, the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament established in 1958, to seek contact with independent peace groups in Eastern Europe. Their refusal was due to the influence of traditional Marxists and members of the British Communist Party in the ranks of the CND, a fact which also proves that the communist influence on the peace movement was much greater in Britain than it was in the Federal Republic.<sup>32</sup>

In West Germany, it was primarily the wing of the peace movement represented by the Greens whose criticism amounted to a general critique of the confrontation between the power blocs. Representatives of the feminist arm of the Greens such as Petra Kelly, and of the women's peace movement which had both significant autonomy and links to the Greens, motivated their activism with a general critique of the power-bloc confrontation and of the nuclear arms race. They saw these as the result of a specifically masculine aggression and the delusional belief in man's ability to control the world.<sup>33</sup> These groups directed their political critique primarily against the stationing of US intermediate-range missiles, and important campaigns by the women's peace movement took place on US military bases in the Federal Republic.<sup>34</sup> However, the shared framework of interpretation, which drew together women who were very different in terms of their social backgrounds and political orientation, was a general criticism of the masculine style of politics induced by the Cold War. At the centre of their protests stood the attempt to counter the 'politics of necessity' (*Sachzwänge*) with a form of politics oriented towards subjective involvement and the need to form a community based on emotions.<sup>35</sup> It was also representatives of the Greens who repeatedly initiated joint activities with representatives of independent peace initiatives in the Warsaw Pact states, or who sought opportunities to represent their position there. To this end, Petra Kelly travelled with other Green Party members of the *Bundestag* in May 1983 to East Berlin and unfurled banners on the Alexanderplatz with slogans such as 'Swords into Ploughshares' and 'Disarmament in East and West'. After the police had confiscated the banners and forced the group to return to West Berlin, Erich Honecker felt forced to offer a public apology for the attack on representatives of the *Bundestag* by the GDR's police force.<sup>36</sup>

A third important cluster of motives represented in the West German peace movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s is encapsulated in the slogan 'Make Peace



Without Weapons.’ This set of motives was represented first and foremost by Christian peace initiatives of both denominations, which advocated non-violent campaigns.<sup>37</sup> Its apocalyptic message, however, influenced wider parts of the peace movement.<sup>38</sup> This was a mode of perception that was not based on international political judgements, but on religious or moral authority. According to this perception, humankind was on the verge not of a nuclear war, but rather of an outright nuclear catastrophe that would bring about the self-destruction of the human species. In this view, it was less significant that small-scale nuclear attacks were also extremely destructive. At stake was nothing less than the ‘survival of humankind,’ as Catholic veteran pacifist Carl Amery (1922-2005), who had already supported the campaign ‘Fight against Atomic Death’ in the late 1950s and the early Easter Marches in the 1960s, argued. Crucial for Amery was the prospect that a nuclear inferno would undermine Western notions of ‘freedom,’ as the ‘very substance of freedom’ was about to be destroyed. Regardless of who carried the political blame, the most important task for activists was to create a form of society based on the abolition of violence.<sup>39</sup> This was to be achieved through all forms of demilitarisation, including unilateral disarmament, and through a reform of moral consciousness.

This means that there were at least three important frames with which the peace movement could portray itself as a protest movement. The common thread of all these frameworks of perception, for which the peace activists drew upon existing public opinions, was the ‘master frame’ of anti-Americanism. This allowed the trigger for the protests – the dual-track decision – to be embedded within a wider ideological context.<sup>40</sup> Even within the peace movement, however, anti-American framing was never undisputed and straightforward. Highly gendered images and metaphors of American ‘power-craziness’ and unrelenting drive for military aggression prevailed. But many activists also acknowledged positive traditions of the ‘other’ America, both in spatial and in political and cultural terms: a political and ideological anti-Americanism often sat alongside the active endorsement of social and cultural Americanisation and the approval of what activists regarded as ‘good’ American democratic traditions of civil disobedience. The peace movement attached itself to modes of perception that were latent and widespread among the West German public. These portrayed the USA as an aggressive political and cultural superpower, whose specific form of modern society posed a threat to typical German forms of community building (*Vergemeinschaftung*).<sup>41</sup>

One typical perception was the charge that ‘America’ gave a negative example to the world as a ‘consumerist and throw-away-society.’ Such views resonated not only among the sympathisers of the Greens, but also among the West German population more generally. It was supported by 60% of all respondents in an Allensbach-poll conducted in May 1981. This view was based on the perception that Germans were contributing towards a *Gemeinschaft* which was not based on consumerism, but on a distinctively modern ethic of work and responsibility, which included the use of modern ‘alternative’ technologies.<sup>42</sup> US policy, on the other hand, seemed to be driven by the ‘dirty business tricks of Wall-Street,’ as Freimut Duve, an SPD MP on

the left- wing of the party, pointed out. His formulation invoked the stock exchange as a classical symbol for a morally irresponsible form of sociability, where individuals were only bound together by material interests.<sup>43</sup>

Such frameworks of perception also formed the backdrop to the negative view of US foreign and defence policy among the West German public. In an opinion survey in 1982, no fewer than 43% of those questioned agreed with the statement that the Reagan government's policies on the Eastern bloc were too hard-line. A majority of those questioned in the Federal Republic also agreed in numerous surveys that US policy was increasing the likelihood of war, rather than serving the interests of peace, and that both states were driving the arms race in equal measure.<sup>44</sup>

Hence, rather than regarding peace movement frames as the result of Soviet propaganda, it would be much more plausible to analyse it as an engagement with the nature of the North Atlantic alliance in general and US propaganda in particular. Leading representatives of the Reagan government, not least the president himself, played into the hands of anti-Americanism with the militaristic terminology that featured in many of their public speeches. This offered the peace movement important symbols that would help them to construct a community of activists. The 'Alternative List', for example – the West Berlin branch of the Green party –, called for a 'demonstration against Haig in Berlin' with the motto: 'There is nothing more important than peace.'<sup>45</sup> This was a play on the words of US Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, who on 12 January 1981 had announced to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations that 'there are more important things than living in peace.'<sup>46</sup> In the same vein, the *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, a monthly journal close to the DKP, printed this particular quote and others from high-ranking US politicians to drive home the propagandistic point that US policy was driven by war-mongers.<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, despite their anti-Americanism, only very few supporters of the peace movement thought it was viable for Germany to position itself equidistantly between the two superpowers.<sup>48</sup>

## II. The NATO dual-track decision and the historiography of the Cold War

A further problem with traditional approaches to peace protest in the Cold War is that the connection between the international context in which the NATO dual-track decision came into being and the peace movement's political and social resonance are given only passing treatment. Leopoldo Nuti's concept of a 'crisis of détente' from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s offers a plausible starting point for exploring such connections.<sup>49</sup> West European governments – and Helmut Schmidt's West German government in particular – never gave up on pursuing policies of détente, while pursuing the goal of military parity between the two blocs. Détente thus appears as a continuation of bloc confrontation through means beyond the arms race. European détente encountered a crisis over the course of the 1970s and the 1980s as this division of labour between détente as political strategy and defence as military strategy came to be de-coupled at both the governmental and societal levels. From the perspective of

many Europeans, the US administrations under presidents Carter and Reagan appeared to pursue a hard-line and confrontational ideological and political stance vis-à-vis all communist countries, while seemingly abandoning the pursuit of détente.<sup>50</sup> Within the West German government in the late 1970s, it was paradoxically Hans-Dietrich Genscher's Foreign Office that tended to agree with this line, whereas secretary of defence Hans Apel sought to maintain the combination of détente and the continuation of the arms race. At the level of West German society, the division of labour itself came under attack: defence and détente, in the eyes of many in the West German public, no longer meant security. Instead, the two trends within international politics now seemed to imply the indefinite continuation of the Cold War. Yet the purported aim of détente was to overcome the Cold War, regardless of short-term declarations by some who wished to preserve it.<sup>51</sup>

Eckart Conze has argued that the emergence of the peace movement reflected a fundamental security dilemma within NATO.<sup>52</sup> The political meaning of concepts such as 'security,' and of more specific ones such as 'military security,' is not simply given. Rather, diverse conceptions and semantics of security compete with one another in a society. These all contain both different interpretations of the present, and completely different interpretations of a possible future.<sup>53</sup> The debates on the NATO dual-track decision made reference to an international debate about implementing a broader concept of security which was directly linked to the international experiences of crisis in the 1970s.<sup>54</sup> The experience of the oil price shock, as well as the increasing discussion of environmental risks that did not stop at national boundaries, had led to a rethinking of traditional notions of 'national security' by Schmidt's government. Even liberal conservatives like Hermann Lübke warned of the 'black wall of the future.'<sup>55</sup> Characteristic of the debates of the 1980s was the fact that, in contrast to the 1950s and 1960s, the protests against nuclear weapons went hand in hand with a warning of the dangers that arose from peaceful uses of nuclear power. These protests intensified again in the aftermath of the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl in April 1986 and led to the strengthening of an independent peace and ecological movement in the GDR and other Eastern European states.<sup>56</sup>

Against this background, the debate surrounding the NATO dual-track decision can be seen in a different light: as the symptom of a fundamental crisis of solidarity in the North Atlantic alliance. It led to bitter debates in Western governments and societies, in which wholly different concepts of security clashed with one another.<sup>57</sup> As Helga Haftendorn had already shown in the mid-1980s, the NATO dual-track decision was about far more than just the nuclear arms race.<sup>58</sup> Rather, the objective of both Schmidt's social-liberal government and Kohl's Christian-liberal coalition was to maintain the credibility of the Western nuclear strategy. In the view of the West German government, this equilibrium was endangered by the development and deployment by the Soviet Union of a new generation of intermediate-range missiles (SS-20), which had no counterpart in the West. Schmidt and his government feared, above all else, that the American nuclear strategy could no longer serve as a credible deterrent. This, they thought, was a result of the policy of global détente that the US

had pursued from the mid-1970s onwards and which threatened to detach European and American security policy from one another. The topic of European security had been neglected by the bilateral and multilateral negotiations between East and West; it had also played no role in the negotiations over strategic weapons systems during the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. Although the confidence-building measures that formed part of the talks in preparation for the Helsinki Accords had implications for international security, they did not address the questions of military security that Schmidt and the German public were concerned about directly, and the negotiations on reducing the land forces in Europe (the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction) similarly failed to engage with Schmidt's concerns.<sup>59</sup> While the Western European states tried to find an answer to this situation in NATO's Nuclear Planning Group, the US government changed its nuclear policy in the mid-1970s in a way that was designed to achieve a strategic balance with the Soviet Union and that, from the perspective of the West German government, appeared to give reduced strategic significance to the nuclear weapons stationed in Europe.<sup>60</sup>

The coming to office of the Carter administration in January 1977 made these problems even clearer, as it led to growing distrust between the Schmidt and Carter administrations.<sup>61</sup> These perceptions, which soon filtered into West German society, were the result of a review of the US nuclear doctrine and defence policy that James Schlesinger carried out as secretary of defence between 1973 and 1975 and that was concluded by Schlesinger's successor Donald Rumsfeld from November 1975 onwards.<sup>62</sup> One aspect of that review of theatre nuclear forces was the conclusion that the existing nuclear weapons stationed in Europe (the theatre nuclear forces) could not actually be used in battle as their warheads were too powerful and because they would therefore only be of limited operational use. As this made their actual use unlikely, it would weaken their deterrence effect vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Schlesinger therefore argued for smaller and cleaner nuclear weapons, and the neutron bomb – with its significantly reduced heat and pressure waves – appeared to be just such a device that could be used against the overwhelming manpower of Soviet tank battalions. President Ford endorsed Schlesinger's report in the amended form that Rumsfeld had presented to him and passed it on to the Carter administration. At the beginning of June 1977, the details were leaked in a *Washington Post* article.<sup>63</sup>

It was against this extremely complex background that news of the development of the neutron bomb could have such a political impact in the Federal Republic. The origins of the first large peace movement can be traced back to this episode: a polemic written by the politician Egon Bahr in the SPD members' newspaper, *Vorwärts*, in direct response to the discussions about the neutron bomb. Bahr argued that morals and ethics were more important than solidarity within the Western alliance. He stated that the use of nuclear weapons would mean the end of both German states, giving his arguments an impressive resonance.<sup>64</sup>

The controversy about the neutron bomb was a crucial rehearsal for the debate about the double track decision two years later. The debate about the neutron bomb brought home graphically to a broad West German society what the implications of the 'balance

of terror' and 'mutually assured destruction' were.<sup>65</sup> This also appeared to suggest that the US government was willing to engage in nuclear war in Europe, fought with the new weapons, and which would 'regionalise' the danger of nuclear war – an assessment that was shared by some of the key players in the Schmidt government.<sup>66</sup>

Helmut Schmidt's speech at the London International Institute of Strategic Studies in October 1977 should be seen in this context: Schmidt was not driven by the demand that new weapons systems should be introduced, but by the fear that the strategic limitations that the US and the Soviet Union wanted to place on armaments would come at the cost of the security interests of Europeans. Schmidt therefore emphasised the demand for political and military balance as a precondition for security and détente.<sup>67</sup> Correspondingly, the NATO dual-track decision, taken roughly two years later after a set of complex negotiations, was about re-establishing an intricate military balance between East and West: it offered measures to limit the number of weapons through negotiations with the Soviet Union, while holding open the possibility of countering the Soviet SS-20s with the deployment of equivalent inter-mediate range missiles in Western Europe.<sup>68</sup>

Opposition to the NATO dual-track decision, then, was also the result of the complexity and ambivalence of Schmidt's London speech and of the NATO dual-track decision. In domestic politics, too, the Schmidt government had to face arguments on two fronts – on the one hand from the CDU/CSU opposition for whom the arms build-up had priority; on the other hand from parts of the SPD led by the Party's leader in the *Bundestag*, Herbert Wehner, and the expert for *Ostpolitik*, Egon Bahr, who called for negotiations on disarmament to be given priority.<sup>69</sup>

In short, Schmidt feared that the United States would either give up Western Europe, or use it as a nuclear battleground. This conflict was already part of the structure of NATO. The introduction of a strategy of 'flexible response' as NATO strategy over the course of the 1960s had further increased this dilemma.<sup>70</sup> Critics of the strategy argued that it made war, possibly escalating into nuclear war, on German territory more likely, although a strategic balance of forces prevailed internationally. The various combat exercises that had simulated such wars from the early 1960s onwards had shown that quite starkly, and Schmidt had engaged with such ideas critically in his own work on nuclear strategy.<sup>71</sup>

Schmidt, therefore, shared some concerns with peace movement activists. Both were concerned about what they regarded as the uncoupling of transatlantic security and about a possible end to détente.<sup>72</sup> The Carter administration's strategic shift towards the technological improvement of nuclear hardware and its increasingly hardline stance towards the Soviet Union appeared to suggest that détente was at risk. The Chancellor saw a political threat to Western Europe because the Soviet Union could put NATO under pressure while the USA, according to the conditions of strategic parity, might be confined to the role of spectator. Peace movement activists, meanwhile, saw this situation as an acute threat to the very survival of Germany and Europe: unlike Schmidt, they did not hold a technocratic view of government and disagreed with his position that the risk of nuclear war could be managed.

They propagated a form of politics that was based on individual and often localised participation in order to protect what they regarded as a threat to their 'lifeworlds' by an anonymous bureaucratic 'system'.<sup>73</sup> NATO's dual track decision was one of the symbolic battlegrounds where differences in the understanding of democratic participation were discussed.

This reflected a functional differentiation which is inherent in the politics of modern societies. Decision-making divides the world into those who take the decisions and those who are affected by them. While the decision-makers considered the calculable risks that they had to take, those affected primarily considered the dangers of these decisions. These were two sides of the same coin, but the functional differentiation of the political system made it impossible to bring them together.<sup>74</sup> Even elections do not bring these two perspectives closer together, as they are only momentary snapshots of shifting opinions, and are usually not fought on a single issue that is crucial for protest movement mobilisation. The March 1983 federal elections were a case in point. Although campaigning took place at the peak of peace movement mobilisation, the Christian Democratic Party, which had gained power in 1982 and was the most fervent supporter of the dual-track solution, achieved a solid majority. From a peace movement perspective, the only tangible difference was that the Greens were able to pass the 5% threshold for the first time, and could send 27 deputies to the *Bundestag*.

The effects of functional differentiation also drove peace movement activists during the 1980s to emphasise their 'fears,' as they tried to empower themselves to act outside the structures of the political system.<sup>75</sup> This is what gave the question of an 'alternative security policy' that was raised by the Krefeld Appeal such substantial resonance in the Federal Republic.<sup>76</sup> Over the course of ensuing debates, the expectations among large parts of the West German population in matters of security became increasingly distanced from the discourse of the military experts in the government, the army and in NATO.<sup>77</sup> The fears that already existed among the populace were further fuelled by texts such as the book by the NATO general, Sir John Hackett, *A World in Flames. The Third World War: Europe as a Theatre*.<sup>78</sup> A sense that the security decisions might have a direct personal impact motivated many activists to take part in the protests against the arms build-up.<sup>79</sup>

Even those *Bundeswehr* generals who cannot be suspected of having left-wing sympathies were influenced by this ambivalence. Although this was not apparent from the *Bundeswehr*'s official statements, it was reflected in internal developments. Klaus Naumann has written appropriately about the 'divided reality of the West German military forces in the Cold War'.<sup>80</sup> This could be seen in the means the *Bundeswehr* used to deal with the ambivalence of the nuclear deterrent. Many generals compensated for their fear of nuclear weapons with their trust in the system of nuclear deterrence. General Wolfgang Altenburg, for example, the Inspector General of the *Bundeswehr* from 1983 to 1986 and an important advocate of the NATO dual-track decision, summarised his attitude in 1981 as follows: 'If you think I am someone who sleeps well at night, then you are wrong. I feel sick and depressed so often that I sometimes become a burden to my family.'<sup>81</sup> The fact that high-ranking officers expressed qualms that



resembled those of the peace movement about the deployment of a new generation of nuclear weapons in West Germany and in western Europe should caution us against interpreting expressions of fear amongst peace activists – and the activism of former generals such as Gert Bastian – as emotions whipped up by communist propaganda, an argument that harks back to images of communism in West German political culture as ‘emotional’ and ‘irrational’ in the early to mid-1950s.<sup>82</sup>

Fundamentally, the emergence of the peace movement and its campaigns revealed a basic scepticism towards the promise of security made by the West German state. This scepticism partly reflected the failure of old-style social planning models in the 1970s, and had already been apparent in the environmental movement.<sup>83</sup> It was the corollary of the creation of a West German ‘security state’ (Joachim Hirsch) whose expansion can be seen from the end of the 1970s. In the struggle against terrorism, the Federal Republic had developed a political culture which was based on a non-violent definition of statehood, but simultaneously de-mystified the state and its ability to solve problems.<sup>84</sup> In other words, in dealing with the threat posed by left-wing terrorist groups, both West German politicians and the wider public came to understand the role of state agencies as characterised by non-violent means of conflict resolution: police forces across the different West German states shifted their policing operations from heavy-handed confrontational tactics towards crowd control. West Germans, therefore, came to understand the role of the federal state increasingly as an agency that managed social and political conflicts. At the same time, however, many within the West German public no longer expected that the West German state – faced with a series of economic, financial, military and domestic political crises – was indeed able to live-up to these expectations.<sup>85</sup>

The controversy about NATO’s double-track decision was an essential part of the debates about how to maintain the West German state’s claims to create ‘security’. They were situated in a time that contemporaries perceived as one of ‘crisis,’ as the pillars of the post-war West German political system – its economic prowess, its corporatism in economic life and its stable party-political landscape – appeared to face major challenges. The West German governments under Schmidt and his successor Helmut Kohl developed their version of how to address this issue: Schmidt by seeking to maintain technocratic government, Kohl by emphasising shared values within the Atlantic community.

The debates and protests that surrounded the NATO dual-track decision also raise fundamental questions about the historicisation of concepts such as ‘state’ and ‘democracy’ in the shadow of the nuclear threat. Peace movement activists developed their own visions of West German democracy, which they hoped would mean more involvement from grassroots actors, be explicitly based around the value of non-violence at home and abroad and be able to overcome the binary world view of the Cold War. This is why working together with communist activists possessed such great meaning for West German peace activists: it symbolised the end of the Cold War divisions within their own communities, through their own activism. The Committee for Peace, Disarmament and Co-operation was consciously involved in these



developments. With Klaus Naumann, we might interpret this shift as a 'special path to the West' (*Sonderweg nach Westen*) which was taken, amid numerous internal debates, even by communist groups. Paradoxically, the conflict surrounding the dual-track decision led communist groups who saw themselves as fundamentally opposed to the Federal Republic to advocate a Western model of the state that they thought had not yet been realised in their home country.<sup>86</sup>

### III. Conclusion

Our article has argued for an account of peace movement activism in the Cold War that moves beyond an instrumental and functionalist analysis of political activism as campaigning that reflects specific political interests expressed by rational actors. Instead, we have sketched out a multi-faceted, multi-level and constructivist analysis of the interactions between policy makers (who never acted in a vacuum), social movements and the mass media, to name only the most important dimensions. Only such a perspective, which takes the cultural context and the performative aspects of decision-making both at the top and at the grassroots level into account and that is interested in exploring the connections between international relations and domestic politics can do justice to the complexity of the relations between protest, policy-making and public opinion during the Euromissiles crisis.<sup>87</sup> Such an approach would ultimately also help to historicise the Cold War. In his novel, *Rabbit at Rest*, John Updike's protagonist, the retired car salesman Harry 'Rabbit' Angstrom, mourns the passing of the Cold War: 'The cold war. It gave you a reason to get up in the morning. [ . . . ] Without the cold war, what's the point of being an American?'<sup>88</sup> This dictum can be adapted to the history of divided Germany, as the master narrative of a West German peace movement wholly oriented towards Moscow shows. Over twenty years after the fall of the wall and thirty years after the dual-track decision, historians should no longer use the coordinate system of the Cold War to make sense of historical events. Instead of fighting the ideological battles of the 1980s all over again, historical research should devote itself to the ambiguous and paradoxical nature of the old Federal Republic's last two decades, in order to examine how the controversies and protests of that era mixed the concerns and questions raised by domestic and foreign policy. Only thus can we see what the Cold War meant for West Germany's political culture and society, beyond the debates on anti-communism. The emergence of the peace movement reflected in a unique way the consolidation of the Federal Republic's political culture in the controversies over security and peace. To this day, it determines the political culture of the reunited Germany, which is calibrated along the lines of peace and security.<sup>89</sup>

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## Notes

- [1] See Anders Stephanson, 'Commentary: Ideology and neorealist mirrors,' *Diplomatic History* 17 (1993): 285–95.
- [2] See the suggestions in Andreas Wenger and Jeremi Suri, 'At the Crossroads of Diplomatic and Social History: The Nuclear Revolution, Dissent, and Détente,' *Cold War History* 1 (2001): 1–42, although they still argue from within the action/reaction pattern.
- [3] See Matthew Connelly, 'Taking Off the Cold War Lens: Visions of North-South Conflict during the Algerian War for Independence,' *American Historical Review* 105 (2000): 739–69; Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- [4] See, for example, Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior*, (New York: Free Press, 1962).
- [5] Jeffrey Herf, *War by other Means. Soviet Power, West German Resistance, and the Battle of the Euromissiles*, (New York: Free Press, 1991), 3, 67–82, 233; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 5: 1949–1990 (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2008), 249–50, Heinrich August Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen. Vol 2: Deutsche Geschichte vom Dritten Reich' bis zur Wiedervereinigung* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2000), 373.
- [6] Peter Gourevitch, 'The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics,' *International Organization*, 32 (1978): 881–912.
- [7] Gerhard Wettig, 'Die Sowjetunion in der Auseinandersetzung über den NATO-Doppelbeschuß 1979–1983,' *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 57 (2009): 217–59. In the following, all page numbers in brackets refer to the German version of this text. Cf. also the slightly different English version of the same text: 'The last Soviet Offensive in the Cold War. Emergence and Development of the Campaign against NATO Euromissiles, 1979–1983,' *Cold War History* 9 (2009): 79–110.
- [8] In the English version of his article, Wettig points out, that the peace movement 'as a whole was never communist-controlled': Wettig, 'The last Soviet Offensive,' 92–3. For similarly accentuated interpretations see Jürgen Maruhn and Manfred Wilke, eds., *Die verführte Friedensbewegung. Der Einfluss des Ostens auf die Nachrüstungsdebatte* (Munich: Olzog, 2002); Udo Baron, *Kalter Krieg und heißer Frieden. Der Einfluss der SED und ihrer westdeutschen Verbündeten auf die Partei 'Die Grünen'* (Münster: Lit, 2003); Michael Ploetz and Hans-Peter Müller, *Ferngelenkte Friedensbewegung? DDR und UdSSR im Kampf gegen den NATO-Doppelbeschuß* (Münster. Hamburg: Lit, 2004).
- [9] See Holger Nehring, *The Politics of Security. British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons, 1957–1964* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), ch. 2.
- [10] See Alan Platt, ed., *The Atlantic Alliance. Perspectives from the Successor Generation* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1983), 1–5, 8.
- [11] Belinda Davis, 'What's Left? Popular Participation in Postwar Europe,' *American Historical Review*, 113 (2008): 363–90, here 379. On the broader historiographical context, cf. Benjamin Ziemann, 'Situating Peace Movements in the Political Culture of the Cold War. Introduction,' in *Peace Movements in Western Europe, Japan and the USA during the Cold War*, ed. idem (Essen: Klartext, 2007), 11–38, here 16–9.
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- [22] Wilfried von Bredow and Rudolf H. Brocke, *Krise und Protest. Ursprünge und Elemente der Friedensbewegung in Westeuropa*, (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1987), 156. Cf. also Thomas Leif, *Die strategische (Ohn-) Macht der Friedensbewegung. Kommunikations- und Entscheidungsstrukturen in den achtziger Jahren* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990), 142–7.
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- [24] *Ibid.*, 85–6.; Thomas Klein, 'Frieden und Gerechtigkeit'. *Die Politisierung der Unabhängigen Friedensbewegung in Ost-Berlin während der achtziger Jahre* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006), 178; Stephen Milder, 'Thinking Globally, Acting (Trans)Locally: Petra Kelly and the Transnational Roots of West German Green Politics,' *Central European History* 43 (2010): 301–26.
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- [26] See in great detail Saskia Richter, *Die Aktivistin. Das Leben der Petra Kelly* (Munich, DVA 2010), 150–6.
- [27] Dieter Rucht, 'Peace Movements in Context: A Sociological Perspective,' in *Peace Movements*, ed. Ziemann, 267–79, here 272; Hans Rattinger and Petra Heinlein, *Sicherheitspolitik in der öffentlichen Meinung. Umfrageergebnisse für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland bis zum 'heißen Herbst 1983'* (Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Autorenverlag, 1986), 132.
- [28] Richter, *Die Aktivistin*, 146.
- [29] Matthias Finger, 'The New Peace Movement and its Conception of Political Commitment,' in *Towards a Comparative Analysis of Peace Movements*, ed. Katsuya Kodama and Unto Vesa (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1990), 217–33.
- [30] Finger, 'The New Peace Movement,' 219; Alice Holmes Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace. German Peace Movements since 1945* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 158–63.
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- [37] Finger, 'The New Peace Movement,' 221–2.; Holmes Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace*, 163–5.
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- [40] Bonacker and Schmitt, 'Politischer Protest,' 209.
- [41] See, with further references, Ziemann, 'A Quantum of Solace,' 374-80; Dorothee Sölle, 'Man kann die Sonne nicht verhaften,' in *Frauen für den Frieden*, ed. Quistorp, 59-63, here 60-1.; see also Jan C. Behrends, Árpád von Klimó, and Patrice G. Poutrus, 'Antiamerikanismus und die europäische Moderne. Zur Einleitung,' in *Anti-Amerikanismus im 20. Jahrhundert. Studien zu Ost- und Westeuropa*, ed. idem (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz, 2005), 10-33.
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- [58] See Helga Haftendorn, 'Das doppelte Mißverständnis. Zur Vorgeschichte des NATO-Doppelbeschlusses von 1979,' *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 33 (1985): 244–87, here 246.
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- [81] Günter Geschke, 'Der General und das Friedens-Gefühl,' *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt*, 1 Nov. 1981: 5; Klaus Naumann, *Generale in der Demokratie. Generationengeschichtliche Studien zur Bundeswehrelite* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2007), 228.
- [82] Till Kössler, *Abschied von der Revolution. Kommunisten und Gesellschaft in Westdeutschland, 1945–1968* (Düsseldorf: Droste 2005), 234.
- [83] See as a survey article Detlef Siegfried, 'Demokratie und Alltag. Neuere Literatur zur Politisierung des Privaten in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,' *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 46 (2006): 737–50.
- [84] Holger Nehring, 'The Era of Non-Violence: 'Terrorism' and the Emergence of Conceptions of Non-Violent Statehood in Western Europe, 1967–1983,' *European Review of History* 14 (2007): 343–71.
- [85] See Martin H. Geyer, 'Rahmenbedingungen. Unsicherheit als Normalität,' in: *Geschichte der Sozialpolitik in Deutschland seit 1945*, vol. 6: *Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1974–1982. Neue Herausforderungen, wachsende Unsicherheiten*, ed. idem (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2008), 1–109.
- [86] Klaus Naumann, 'Auf einem Sonderweg nach Westen. Die 'Blätter' in den achtziger Jahren,' *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* 4/2008: 71–82.
- [87] For general reflections on such a multi-dimensional approach see Thomas Mergel, 'Überlegungen zu einer Kulturgeschichte der Politik,' *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002): 574–606.
- [88] John Updike, *Rabbit Angstom. A tetralogy* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 1370, 1452.
- [89] See also Holger Nehring, *Die letzte Schlacht des Kalten Krieges. Friedensbewegungen in der deutschen Politik der achtziger Jahre* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2012).

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