

# INTRODUCTION



*Ostpolitik* marked a turning point in European history after the Second World War. It contributed decisively to propelling East–West confrontation towards negotiation and dialogue in the early 1970s and set the stage for European developments over the following two decades. *Ostpolitik* is a German term literally meaning ‘Eastern policy’ but in English is usually applied to the policy initiated by Willy Brandt, the West German chancellor from 1969 to 1974. *Ostpolitik* was a complex and, at the time, a highly controversial endeavour and met with both high acclaim and harsh opposition. From a scholarly viewpoint, Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* included several distinctive features that may be summarized in three main points. (1) As an integral part of East–West détente in the 1960s and 1970s, *Ostpolitik* was the West German contribution to relaxing Cold War tensions by normalizing political relations with the East. (2) *Ostpolitik* was an attempt to prepare the reunification of Germany in the long term, through a ‘policy of small steps’. (3) *Ostpolitik* aimed to address the consequences of the Nazi past and to initiate a process of reconciliation with the peoples of Eastern Europe. Because of its historical significance, a multitude of academics have researched and analysed *Ostpolitik* from various perspectives. The overwhelming majority of historical and political accounts scrutinize the first two points while the third element – reconciliation – has attracted much less attention. Perhaps this is due to the reluctance of political scientists and scholars of political history to work with the term ‘reconciliation’, which sits somewhat uneasily with notions of power politics. By contrast, scholars interested in peace and conflict research have long discovered the wider relevance of Willy Brandt’s actions for reconciliation and often perceive him as a role model. Yet these books and articles tend to adopt a selective approach and to describe only specific elements of Brandt’s contribution to reconciliation as chancellor. Arguably, if the political background and the long-term historical development of *Ostpolitik* are not included in the analysis, the interpretation of Brandt’s reconciliation policy remains either incomplete or inadequate. This book brings

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RECONCILIATION ROAD: Willy Brandt, *Ostpolitik* and the Quest for European Peace

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together the two approaches of historical and peace research and offers a comprehensive historical account of Brandt's Ostpolitik from the viewpoint of reconciliation, covering the years from the mid-1950s until the end of the Cold War. The analytical guideline of reconciliation is particularly pertinent for addressing the long-term orientation of Ostpolitik and its inherent ambiguities. In the context of this book, I understand reconciliation as a process that starts when opponents come together, address the common past and envisage the possibility of a future 'we'. All levels of society play their role in such a process of transforming a relationship of enmity, passing through the first step of coexistence towards mutual appreciation and friendship.

The policy and objectives of a single individual – Willy Brandt – are very much the focus of this book. With the aid of his office he developed a new Ostpolitik, implemented it as chancellor and left its legacy to his successors. Hence, before focusing on the main topic, Ostpolitik and reconciliation, a biographical sketch of Brandt seems appropriate to summarize his career and some personal elements of his life. The following chapters provide only little biographical detail. Willy Brandt was not actually his birth name but the *Kampfname* (fighting name) he adopted as an anti-Nazi activist in the early 1930s; it became his official name when he regained German citizenship in 1948. He was born Herbert Ernst Karl Frahm on 18 December 1913 in Lübeck, where northern Germany meets the Baltic Sea. His mother, Martha Frahm, was a nineteen-year old shop assistant and his father, John Möller, a bookkeeper from Hamburg who was wounded in the First World War and partly lost his memory.<sup>1</sup> Father and son never met. Herbert grew up in modest circumstances in a working-class district of Lübeck with his mother's stepfather, the truck driver Ludwig Frahm, assuming the role of a father figure. Following Ludwig Frahm's lead young Herbert became involved in the activities of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and soon rose to a leading position within the party's youth branch. Increasingly critical of the SPD's acquiescence to the German government led by Heinrich Brüning, in October 1931 Herbert left the SPD and joined the radically left-wing Socialist Workers' Party of Germany (SAP). When Adolf Hitler seized power in January 1933 the now illegal SAP decided to continue the fight against Nazism and Herbert Frahm started to use the cover name Willy Brandt to protect himself as a local leader in the 'anti-fascist struggle'.<sup>2</sup> In an effort to strengthen ties with the Norwegian Labour Party and to save him from impending arrest by the Nazi authorities, in April 1933 the SAP leadership sent the nineteen-year old Herbert/Willy as their representative to Oslo.

Willy Brandt spent almost the entire duration of the 'Third Reich' in Scandinavian exile. He quickly learned fluent Norwegian, applied him-

self unstintingly to the activities of the Norwegian Labour Party and published extensively to unmask the evils committed by Hitler's dictatorial regime.<sup>3</sup> In the process his political convictions grew closer to the programme of the Norwegian Labour Party and the Scandinavian type of social democracy. In October 1936 Brandt ventured on a trip to Berlin to establish contact with the SAP's underground resistance and under a false identity stayed in the German capital for two months. His travels also included a visit to Spain as a political observer of the civil war, from March to June 1937. After the German government revoked his citizenship, Brandt obtained a Norwegian passport. In April 1940, Nazi forces occupied Norway and he narrowly escaped from Oslo. To avoid being identified he let himself be captured in a Norwegian uniform and spent four weeks in a Nazi prisoner of war camp, unrecognized, and upon his release fled to neutral Sweden. His pregnant girlfriend Carlota Thorkildsen stayed behind, joining Brandt in Stockholm by May 1941 – together with their baby daughter Ninja – and marrying him two weeks later. They separated in early 1945. Brandt worked as a journalist in Stockholm until the end of the war and published extensively. In Stockholm he also forged lasting friendships with prominent European social democrats (e.g. Bruno Kreisky, Alva Myrdal) and in October 1944 formally rejoined the SPD. Six months after the end of the war, in November 1945, he returned to Germany as a Norwegian journalist reporting on the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg and eventually accepted a job as press attaché at the Norwegian military mission in Berlin. His partner Rut Bergaust, originally from Norway, followed him from Stockholm to Berlin.<sup>4</sup>

Brandt was a first-hand witness to the rise of the Cold War between the wartime allies and to the partition of Germany into two states in 1949. Berlin became an island surrounded by East Germany. The city officially remained under the quadripartite authority of the Soviet Union, the United States, the United Kingdom and France (the 'Four Powers') and in reality, was divided into an Eastern and a Western part. Brandt had moved to Berlin in order to contribute to Germany's reconstruction and left the Norwegian mission after one year for a position as representative of the SPD executive committee in Berlin. In this capacity he served as liaison between the Western allies and the city administration during the eleven-month 'Berlin blockade' of 1948–49, when the Soviet government unsuccessfully tried to sever the ties between West Berlin and the Western zones of Germany. Following elections, Brandt assumed local political responsibilities within the SPD and in September 1949 became a Berlin member of the *Bundestag*, the newly created West German parliament. His career accelerated after his election as president of West Berlin's state parliament in 1955. The Brandt family also expanded. Rut and Willy were

married in September 1948 and one month later celebrated the birth of their first child, Peter. Their second son, Lars, was born in June 1951 and some ten years later, in October 1961, a third son, Matthias, completed the family. Upon his election as mayor of West Berlin in October 1957, Willy Brandt gained national and international recognition as a perspicacious and resolute leader in the face of East–West crises. In November 1958 he vehemently rejected the Soviet initiative to transform Berlin into a demilitarized ‘free city’ and rallied the protesters against the construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961. Brandt exerted increasing influence over the political orientation and reformation of his party, away from Marxist influence on economic policy and towards the SPD’s wholehearted support for NATO. Brandt was elected chairman of the SPD in February 1964 and held that position for twenty-three years. He was the social democratic candidate for the West German chancellorship in 1961 and again in the 1965 elections. Both times he achieved respectable results but lost to the candidates of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Konrad Adenauer and Ludwig Erhard. Following a governmental crisis and the collapse of Erhard’s government, in December 1966 Brandt became West German foreign minister and vice chancellor in a grand coalition government headed by Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger (CDU). The three-year term as foreign minister was Brandt’s opportunity to acquire governmental experience and to put his political ideas to the test, notably the new approach to Eastern policy he had been developing since the 1950s.

The Bundestag elections of September 1969 gave Brandt the opportunity to form a social-liberal coalition with the Free Democratic Party (FDP) and to become West Germany’s first social democratic chancellor, holding a slight majority over the CDU/CSU opposition. The first years of his chancellorship were characterized by the implementation and success of his new Ostpolitik, for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in December 1971. Despite international acclaim, Brandt’s revolutionary policy of seeking dialogue and even close contact with the leaders of the Cold War enemy provoked fierce domestic controversies.<sup>5</sup> The opposition accused Brandt of betraying vital German interests by recognizing the postwar loss of German territories to Poland and Czechoslovakia, of prolonging the division of Germany by recognizing East Germany as a state and of extending Soviet influence over Western Europe through friendly interaction. In May 1972, the CDU/CSU attempted to oust Brandt and elect a new chancellor but failed in the Bundestag by two votes. The subsequent election of a new parliament resulted in a safe majority for the social-liberal coalition. In 1972–74, Ostpolitik had ceased to dominate Brandt’s political activities. Domestic matters, the first enlargement of the European Community (on 1 January 1973), the collapse of the international

monetary system and the Arab–Israeli War of October 1973 rose to the top of the political agenda.

After a staff member of his inner circle was exposed as an East German spy, Brandt relinquished the chancellorship in May 1974 but remained politically active as chairman of the SPD (until 1987) and as president of the Socialist International (1976–92). Following his separation from Rut Brandt in 1979, Willy Brandt moved in with his new partner, the historian Brigitte Seebacher. They settled in Unkel near Bonn, married in 1983 and stayed together until Willy's death. In international politics, Brandt earned recognition as the chairman of the independent 'North-South Commission', which was founded in September 1977 with a view to developing solutions to the conflict between the rich countries of the industrialized North and the poor countries of the developing South. Moreover, Brandt remained active behind the scenes during the rapid transformation of East–West relations in the late 1980s and lived to see the fall of the Berlin Wall, in November 1989. Chancellor Helmut Kohl (CDU) invited Brandt as a guest of honour to the celebration of German unity on 3 October 1990 in recognition of his contributions to overcoming the division of Germany. Willy Brandt died on 8 October 1992 in Unkel, at the age of seventy-eight and was buried in Berlin.

One man – and indeed European politicians were almost exclusively male in Brandt's time – may have a limited influence on the evolution of his country and its foreign relations.<sup>6</sup> And yet, during the Cold War, individual political leaders played particularly significant roles, as their abilities or inabilities to explore alternatives to war under critical circumstances often implied far-reaching consequences for their countries.<sup>7</sup> Depending on the stages of his career, Brandt was also part of larger networks, notably the party structure of the SPD, the political leadership in West Berlin, the West German government with its administration and the Western frameworks of NATO and the European Community. Loyal and close collaborators accompanied Brandt on his political journey; for example, Heinrich Albertz, Egon Bahr, Klaus Schütz and Dietrich Spangenberg in Berlin; Egon Bahr, Horst Ehmke, Katharina Focke, Klaus Harpprecht and Thea Wernicke in Bonn; and Peter Glotz, Klaus Lindenberg, Rita Lintz and Klaus-Henning Rosen after Brandt's chancellorship, to name but a few. But for the development of Ostpolitik and its conceptual elements, which is of primary importance here, in addition to Willy Brandt only the name of Egon Bahr stands out.<sup>8</sup> With a background in journalism, Bahr became Brandt's spokesman in 1960 and quickly rose to become his adviser on foreign policy. On instruction from his boss, Bahr drafted the key memoranda, official declarations and many important speeches on Ostpolitik and in the early 1970s acted as Brandt's main negotiator in the contacts

with Eastern leaders. Thus, for present purposes, the political thoughts of Willy Brandt will be at the centre and special attention will be paid to the role of Egon Bahr.

This book is primarily a work of history and uses style and methodologies from historical research. Adopting a chronological approach, it retraces the conception, implementation and development of Brandt's Ostpolitik from the mid-1950s until the early 1990s. While an abundance of historical publications analyse the years of Brandt's chancellorship, reviews of his Ostpolitik over longer periods are rarer – in German language and even more so in English.<sup>9</sup> For a conclusive analysis of Ostpolitik, it seems beneficial to cover a longer research period than just Brandt's chancellorship. After all, the seeds of some important elements of his later Ostpolitik were sown in the 1950s and 1960s and explicitly designed as a long-term approach with anticipated results stretching beyond his own years in office.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Ostpolitik evolved over time and adapted to international developments, with Brandt's political constraints changing apace with his functions. Arguably, the viewpoint of reconciliation is applicable to analysing the longer term evolution of Brandt's Ostpolitik from coexistence to the projection of reconciliation and the implementation of a new conciliatory policy, encompassing a transitory relapse to coexistence before the radical transformation of the East–West conflict at the end of the Cold War. Hence, in addition to the historical approach, the book introduces theoretical notions of reconciliation from peace and conflict studies to add a new layer of interpretation to the scholarly analyses of Ostpolitik. Ideally, the book is thus intended to contribute fresh theoretical elements to historical research and to provide a concrete example of reconciliation policy for the field of peace and conflict studies, which tends to emphasize theory-driven and normative research on reconciliation. Practical studies of reconciliation are decidedly fewer in number and rarely stretch back farther than the 1990s.<sup>11</sup> Since the book applies theoretical thinking from the relatively new academic field of peace and conflict studies to an atypical context, the Cold War, my analytical approach is at the risk of satisfying neither camp, historians or peace researchers, but at the same time offers the promise of innovation.

The main argument of the book is that West German Ostpolitik as proposed by Willy Brandt was a policy of reconciliation. This argument includes two elements. First, from Brandt's viewpoint reconciliation was an integral part and driving force of the entire endeavour of Ostpolitik and not just a subsidiary aspect emerging from time to time. Second, from the academic viewpoint Brandt's understanding of Ostpolitik and the practical policy he initiated were in several ways consistent with today's scholarly approaches to reconciliation. The analysis will show that

Brandt habitually, and at important junctures in his political career, used the term 'reconciliation', including those years when he held governmental positions (1966–74). The objective of reconciling East and West was a long-term attempt to overcome the division of Europe, and in this sense Brandt perceived reconciliation as a means to transcend the Cold War. To avoid any misunderstanding, it is important to stress that Brandt did not seek a convergence of the Eastern and Western political systems. Rather, he firmly advocated the values of Western, pluralistic democracies based on the ideal of individual freedom and considered the Eastern and Western systems to be 'irreconcilable'.<sup>12</sup> Brandt was acutely aware of the inherent contradiction between his projection of a common, pan-European future and his acknowledgement that communist<sup>13</sup> ideology and Western-style democracy were fundamentally incompatible. Indeed, the whole project of Ostpolitik was fraught with contradictions and ambivalence. Brandt endeavoured to come to terms with Germany's Nazi past but did so through contacts with authoritarian regimes. He formally recognized East Germany and at the same time aimed to prepare for German unification, anticipating that the East German State would ultimately collapse. According to Brandt's policy declarations, Ostpolitik could only be successful with West Germany firmly anchored within the Atlantic Alliance, yet his office drafted plans for the longer-term dissolution of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Ambivalence even extended to Willy Brandt's character, according to what Lars Brandt wrote about his father: 'If all contradictions were removed from this man, not much would have been left of him.'<sup>14</sup>

Against this background, I argue that theoretical precepts of reconciliation offer a suitable tool for the analysis of Brandt's Ostpolitik and its ambivalences. Following Andrew Schaap's book *Political Reconciliation*, which serves as a theoretical guideline here, launching a reconciliation process actually presupposes the ability of a political actor to hold together the seemingly contradictory and irreconcilable.<sup>15</sup> Along the same line of thought, initiating a reconciliation process assumes no consensus between the opponents as regards political values and this applies to Brandt's approach when launching Ostpolitik. Likewise, if analysed from a reconciliation viewpoint, recognition appears as an obstacle to reconciliation and at the same time as an indispensable condition towards this end. In other words, the road to reconciliation is fraught with tensions and contradictions, just like Brandt's Ostpolitik. Bahr's programmatic plans for the dissolution of the military alliances provoked public consternation in the early 1970s and even today continue to generate heated debates among the academic community. While some scholars argue that the replacement of the Warsaw Pact and NATO through a new European security system was an integral part of Ostpolitik, others maintain that

Brandt did not in the least consider abandoning NATO.<sup>16</sup> The argument proposed and developed in this book is that Brandt took a keen interest in this issue yet remained ambivalent about it for most of his career. At times he actively explored the possibility of a new European security system and at other times he merely wished to keep this option open for the future. But he never pursued the creation of a European security system single-mindedly to its logical conclusion. From the reconciliation viewpoint, Bahr's long-term plans involving the abolition of the military blocs were significant even though they remained unrealized. They exemplified the aspiration not only to improve East–West relations but, *de facto*, to eventually abolish the Iron Curtain. The idea of replacing the military alliances with a pan-European security system manifested the objective of institutionalizing a European 'we', encompassing both East and West.

To put the topic into perspective, reconciliation was only one aim of Ostpolitik. According to Brandt's explanations he pursued three closely related objectives. (1) Overcoming the East–West division of Europe in the long term by establishing as many contacts as possible across the Iron Curtain. (2) Taking responsibility for the German Nazi past and 'footing the bill for Hitler'<sup>17</sup> in order to open the way towards reconciliation with the peoples of Eastern Europe. (3) Preparing the unification of the two parts of Germany in an atmosphere of willingness and co-operation by generating a new relationship between Eastern and Western Europe. These three elements were inextricably linked, as illustrated by Brandt's statement that 'the division of Germany is the result of Hitlerism and a corollary to the conflict between East and West'.<sup>18</sup> Hence the objective of reconciliation depended on the transformation of East–West relations and the discovery of a (non-threatening) solution to the division of Germany. Therefore, the analysis needs to include all three elements and their conceptual development by Brandt and his office. The fact that the pursuit of German unity served as political motivation and domestic legitimization of Ostpolitik in no way detracts from the objective of reconciliation. Without linkage to national interests it might be difficult if not impossible to sustain a policy of reconciliation over a long time period.

The vast majority of scholars consider Brandt's policy successful and beneficial for Germany and the political developments in Europe, while a small minority of academics hold that the role of Ostpolitik is overrated and amounted merely to accepting the status quo in Europe and 'assuaging domestic political pressure' in West Germany.<sup>19</sup> This book favours the majority opinion. Ostpolitik did not achieve all its short-term objectives, but in the long run it contributed in several ways to opening the road towards reconciliation. Recent academic discussions on Willy Brandt have raised a wide range of topics, such as his relations with Latin America



as an elder statesman, his role in the European integration process, his significance for social policy in Germany and the evolution of how Brandt was perceived in different countries, to mention only a few examples.<sup>20</sup> Academic analyses of his policy from the viewpoint of reconciliation are rare indeed, considering that various people tend to associate Brandt with reconciliation. For example, German President Christian Wulff stated in 2010 that he perceived Brandt as a ‘man of the power of freedom but first and foremost of reconciliation’.<sup>21</sup>

Only one specific initiative in Willy Brandt’s political career has been perceived as an act of reconciliation by the entire academic community and has received much attention; his personal decision to kneel down at the Warsaw Ghetto memorial during his official state visit to Poland in December 1970. At the time, the photo of the kneeling chancellor modified the international perception of the Germans and the gesture contributed decisively to opening the road towards Polish–German reconciliation. Since then the photo has become a popular illustration in academic publications on state apology, which demonstrates the lasting symbolic power of the gesture.<sup>22</sup> In contrast to less positively received state apologies in the 1990s, for example that by the Australian government to the aboriginal population, Brandt’s *Kniefall* (falling to his knees) of 1970 is widely described as sincere and well-timed. The literature comparing in particular how the German and Japanese governments dealt with past war crimes uses Brandt’s gesture as a model for sincere contrition.<sup>23</sup> Defending a minority opinion, Jennifer Lind holds that for Japan it would be counter-productive to follow Brandt’s German example, due to stark differences in the domestic and international context.<sup>24</sup> The analysis presented here supports Lind’s call for caution, in the sense that the symbolic power of the *Kniefall* was related to Brandt’s personal history as an anti-Nazi activist and the (hostile) political conditions in which he performed the act; and, importantly, that it was an expression of a distinctively German culture of dealing with the past that had gradually evolved since the end of the Second World War and embodied influences from Christianity. In the overall context of this book, Brandt’s reconciliation policy included, but was not confined to, an apology for Nazi crimes, as symbolized by the *Kniefall*. Against this background, it seems appropriate to give more weight to reconciliation in academic analyses of Ostpolitik by writing a book on the topic.

The sources used for this book include archival documents, published primary sources, memoirs, academic literature and a small number of interviews with contemporary witnesses. Among the archival sources, the personal papers of Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr stored at the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Bonn were the most fruitful for present purposes. The

archival collections of the *Auswärtiges Amt* (the German Foreign Ministry) in Berlin, the CDU archives in Sankt Augustin, the FDP archives in Gummersbach and the German Federal Archives in Koblenz were consulted, likewise the personal papers of SPD personalities like Helmut Schmidt and Horst Ehmke. However, only very few sources found in the latter collections proved relevant for the context discussed here. To illustrate specific reactions to Brandt's Ostpolitik and constraints imposed by the Western allies, the book quotes documents from governmental archives in the United States, France and the United Kingdom. A large number of sources pertinent to Brandt's Ostpolitik have been published, notably in the ten-volume document collection *Willy Brandt: Berliner Ausgabe, in Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (for the years 1966–74) and *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*. Brandt also published numerous books and articles during his lifetime. From the array of academic analyses of Ostpolitik, the publications by Wolfgang Schmidt, Gottfried Niedhart and Lily Gardner Feldman deserve special mention here. Schmidt's work (in German) covers the entire period of Brandt's thoughts on Ostpolitik from 1948 until 1992, describes many of the aspects discussed in this book and concludes that Brandt's contributions to reconciliation ranked among his foremost achievements – however without delving into the question as to what exactly reconciliation entails. Niedhart's publications (in English and German) focus especially on the years from 1966 to 1974 and emphasize the beneficial effect of Ostpolitik for European peace, albeit without focusing on reconciliation. Feldman, a political scientist, is among the very few scholars who have characterized Brandt's entire Ostpolitik as a reconciliation policy. Her work contains wide-ranging historical accounts of West German reconciliation efforts at various levels and notably by non-governmental actors but also includes detail about Brandt's reconciliation policy as chancellor.<sup>25</sup>

This book uses endnotes largely to indicate the sources consulted and only rarely to give additional information. The text is meant to stand alone without the endnotes and also to be accessible to non-historians. While the focus is on Ostpolitik, reconciliation and Willy Brandt, selected historical events and developments are summarized to illustrate the context. Due to the relatively long period covered by the book, the selection of historical background information inevitably remains limited.

The following chapters trace the inception and implementation of Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik in chronological order, with reconciliation remaining the main focus of analysis. Chapter 1 addresses the notion of *reconciliation* from scholarly perspectives and here the work by Andrew Schaap serves as a theoretical guideline. Schaap posits that reconciliation begins when opponents come together to address the past and envisage the possibility

of a future 'we'. He further stresses that the outcome of reconciliation processes is inherently unpredictable and depends on creative and unceasing negotiation, with a future horizon that is constantly evolving. Moving towards a more pragmatic point of reference, the classic distinction by peace researcher John Paul Lederach is introduced to exemplify the contributions to reconciliation by different levels of society; the role of top leaders particularly in launching a new process, the creation of networks and institutionalized contacts at middle-range levels and the embrace of reconciliation by the people at the grassroots level, which in the long term often proves decisive. All three levels of society came to play their roles at different stages of Brandt's Ostpolitik. Moreover, David Crocker's useful distinction between 'thin' (simple coexistence) and 'thick' reconciliation is presented, alongside its practical and more detailed adaptation by Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall. They propose different stages of reconciliation and temporal progression, from ending violence to overcoming polarization and celebrating difference.

Chapter 2 addresses Brandt's promotion of East–West *coexistence*, starting in 1955, and follows the inception of his future Ostpolitik while he was mayor of West Berlin (1957–66). Likening the East–West conflict to the European wars between Catholics and Protestants in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Brandt advocated peaceful coexistence as a guiding principle to avoid a major conflict between the two camps and their irreconcilable ideologies. He understood coexistence not as entailing political neutrality but as a constant struggle between East and West that 'involved everything except the big war'.<sup>26</sup> Brandt's embrace of coexistence was influenced by contemporary debates, yet he continued to promote the concept even after the late 1950s, when it had lost much of its international appeal. Many scholars describe coexistence as the first step towards reconciliation, in the sense that opponents become aware of their mutual interest in avoiding war and ensuring common survival. At the same time, coexistence focuses primarily on security and avoidance of armed conflict and therefore tends to ignore the divisive issues that reconciliation aims to transform. The analysis shows that Brandt's policy did not stop at the passive indifference of coexistence but evolved towards an active engagement with the East. After the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the first concrete measure of his Ostpolitik was to support contacts at the grassroots level and to organize meetings for families divided by the Wall. In parallel, Brandt and his close aid, Egon Bahr, started to build up a secret network of contacts with Soviet diplomats at the middle-range level.

Chapter 3 covers the period from December 1966 until October 1969, when Brandt was West German foreign minister and addresses the emerg-

ing German culture of *coming to terms with the past*. Much in line with French and US observations, Brandt now perceived Soviet policy as being less aggressive and no longer threatening Western Europe. This international evolution enabled Brandt to move away from a policy dominated by security concerns towards a more ambitious approach of co-operation with the East. He publicly declared that ‘what we want is the reconciliation of the European peoples and thus also true peace with the Soviet Union’.<sup>27</sup> But in a context of deep-seated Cold War hostility, where West Germany and the United States figured as the Eastern countries’ foremost enemies, the communist leaders did not allow Brandt’s efforts to go very far. His practical achievements as foreign minister were confined to establishing diplomatic relations and launching economic co-operation with Romania and Yugoslavia, both countries on the periphery of the Eastern camp. From the viewpoint of political philosophy, Brandt’s visits to Bucharest and Belgrade exemplified his attempt to rehumanize the demonized other and to project the possibility of a future ‘we’ in the sense of ‘we Europeans’. In addition to envisaging a common future for Eastern and Western Europe he also addressed the German Nazi past and – in accordance with the appeal by the philosopher Karl Jaspers – accepted the political consequences of the deeds committed by the Hitler regime. In parallel, during the 1960s, West German society (finally) engaged in a wide-ranging debate on the Nazi era and thereby opened the way for a policy of public apology and atonement, which Brandt as West German chancellor was about to initiate.

The first part of his chancellorship and the official launch of a new West German Ostpolitik are the topic of Chapter 4, which includes Brandt’s formal *recognition* of East Germany and of Europe’s postwar borders. The period from October 1969 until late 1971 was also the zenith of his career as a politician, characterized by his groundbreaking summit meetings with Soviet, Polish and East German leaders. Given that reconciliation processes ought to involve all levels of society, the analysis outlines the roles played by top leaders and the significance of high-profile summits in launching a new policy of reconciliation. In abstract terms, the summits represented the creation of a political space where antagonists came together to address their common past and to discuss the possibility of a common future. Following extensive negotiations at lower levels, at the summits the former enemies agreed on the principles that would frame their future interaction. Notably, these principles found expression in the Treaty of Moscow (August 1970) and the Treaty of Warsaw (December 1970). These treaties officially drew a line under the long-standing hostility between West Germany and the Eastern camp and articulated their understanding on controversial border issues. Brandt’s chief negotiator of the Treaty of

Moscow, Egon Bahr, explained to the Soviet prime minister in the preparatory phase that the treaty was, beyond the formal aspects, an attempt to prepare reconciliation. According to Brandt's plans, the Treaty of Warsaw was likewise meant to become the starting point of a German–Polish reconciliation process that would involve all levels of society. He pursued the same goal with Czechoslovakia but achieved only modest and belated results with the signing of the Treaty of Prague. East Germany, even though not a victim of Nazi aggression, nevertheless played a crucial role in the overall objective of East–West reconciliation. Brandt's two summit meetings with the East German prime minister seemed initially to produce few results but eventually led to consistent negotiations on lower levels, the creation of a common infrastructure and eventually to a treaty facilitating East–West encounters at the grassroots level.

Chapter 5 stretches until the end of Brandt's chancellorship in May 1974 and focuses on the objective of Ostpolitik to set in motion *reconciliation at lower levels* by generating and institutionalizing East–West networks at the middle-range and grassroots levels, both bilaterally and multilaterally. Not the top leaders but the negotiators behind the scenes took the lead in these activities, which yielded results that proved significant in the longer term. Nevertheless, the dynamics of West German Ostpolitik began to lose momentum in 1972 and did not develop entirely as Brandt had hoped. The turn of events demonstrated the risk and unpredictability inherent in reconciliation processes as the initial action depends on the reactions of others and therefore cannot predetermine future developments. Bilateral negotiations between West Germany and the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and East Germany involved varying types of co-operation and progressed at differing speeds. Overall, these bilateral arrangements produced an increase in trade and travel across the Iron Curtain, the latter often limited to Western travellers visiting the East. At the multilateral level Brandt's government aimed to create pan-European structures in order to overcome the East–West division of Europe in the long-term. Ostpolitik accomplished pivotal groundwork for the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), which started in November 1972 and culminated in the Helsinki Final Act of August 1975. The CSCE framework was indeed pan-European but failed to incorporate negotiations on military security and disarmament, which was a major flaw from Brandt's perspective. At the same time, it became clear that the idea of overcoming the military division of Europe met with unequivocal rejection from Brandt's Western partners and proved anathema as long as the Cold War persisted.

Chapter 6 deals with Brandt's attempts as an elder statesman to pass on the legacy of Ostpolitik and to mend East–West fences, until the ending

of the Cold War. The late 1970s and early 1980s saw a revival of Cold War confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States and temporarily turned the clocks back to the objective of coexistence. Once again security considerations and the imperative to avoid a major armed conflict dominated the European agendas, including Brandt's. Paradoxically, in a changed environment, his efforts to keep the promises of Ostpolitik now created tensions with human rights movements in the East, which Brandt's policy had been instrumental in bringing about. These tensions became most apparent in relations with the very country with which he most fervently continued to promote reconciliation, Poland. The question of how to preserve the founding act and original spirit of a reconciliation policy is indeed a common dilemma among promoters of *reconciliation in the second generation*. More influential than Brandt's actions in the 1980s were the long-term effects of his original Ostpolitik. The fundamental political reforms introduced by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev seemed like an indirect corollary to Brandt's earlier endeavour to encourage the gradual transformation of the East through constant contact and dialogue. The end of the Cold War likewise manifested analogies with Brandt's expectation that the Eastern system would eventually fall as part of an 'historical process' but not as a result of external, military pressure.<sup>28</sup> At the time of Brandt's death in October 1992, reconciliation between (a now united) Germany and the Eastern European peoples was far from complete. But in a changed and favourable international environment the new generation of reconciliation campaigns could build on the foundations laid by Brandt's Ostpolitik.

## Notes

1. G. Schöllgen, *Willy Brandt: Die Biographie* (Munich: Ullstein, 2003), 13.
2. Entries of 30 January and 11 March 1933, official online biography, <https://www.willy-brandt-biography.com/t/1933-1939/> (last accessed 30 March 2020).
3. Ø. Stenersen, I. Libæk and A. Sveen, *The Nobel Peace Prize: Laureates 1901–2016* (Oslo: The Norwegian Nobel Institute, 2018), 278–79.
4. The variety of biographies includes H. Miard-Delacroix, *Willy Brandt: Life of a Statesman* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2016). H.J. Noack, *Willy Brandt: ein Leben, ein Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2013). E. Lorenz, *Willy Brandt: Deutscher – Europäer – Weltbürger* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2012). H. Grebing, *Willy Brandt: der andere Deutsche* (Munich: Fink, 2008). B. Seebacher, *Willy Brandt* (Munich: Piper, 2006). Schöllgen, *Willy Brandt*. P. Merseburger, *Willy Brandt 1913–1992: Visionär und Realist* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2002). C. Stern, *Willy Brandt* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2002). B. Marshall, *Willy Brandt: A Political Biography* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1997).

5. On the personal level, during his career Brandt was spurned for being an illegitimate child, an emigrant who had fled Nazi Germany, an exile who had worn a foreign (Norwegian) uniform, a womanizer and a weak individual who drank too much.
6. On feminist approaches to international politics, see L.J. Shepherd, *Gender Matters in Global Politics: A Feminist Introduction to International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2010).
7. For more detail, see D. Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings that Shaped the Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin, 2008).
8. On Bahr's role for Brandt's Ostpolitik, see A. Vogtmeier, *Egon Bahr und die deutsche Frage: Zur Entwicklung der sozialdemokratischen Ost- und Deutschlandpolitik vom Kriegsende bis zur Vereinigung* (Bonn: Dietz, 1996). G. Niedhart, 'Transformation through Communication and the Quest for Peaceful Change', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18(3) (2016), 14–59.
9. Influential books include T. Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (London: Vintage, 1994). P. Bender, *Die 'Neue Ostpolitik' und ihre Folgen: Vom Mauerbau bis zur Vereinigung* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1996) (first published 1986).
10. W. Schmidt, *Kalter Krieg, Koexistenz und kleine Schritte: Willy Brandt und die Deutschlandpolitik 1948–1963* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2001). P. Speicher, *The Berlin Origins of Brandt's Ostpolitik, 1957–1966* (University of Cambridge: unpublished PhD thesis, 2001).
11. For more detail and further references, see O. Ramsbotham, T. Woodhouse and H. Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016).
12. Brandt speech at SIPRI, Stockholm, 18 September 1987, in H. Grebing, G. Schöllgen and H.A. Winkler (eds), *Willy Brandt: Berliner Ausgabe* (Bonn: Dietz, 2009), 10: 323.
13. In the absence of valid alternatives to the terms 'communist' and 'communism', the book follows Brandt's vocabulary in this respect.
14. L. Brandt, *Andenken* (Munich: Hanser, 2006), 21.
15. A. Schaap, *Political Reconciliation* (London: Routledge, 2005), 92.
16. See for example the positions defended by Georges-Henri Soutou on the one hand and Andreas Wilkens on the other. G.H. Soutou, *La guerre de Cinquante Ans: Les relations Est–Ouest 1943–1990* (Paris: Fayard, 2001). A. Wilkens, 'New Ostpolitik and European Integration: Concept and Policies in the Brandt Era', in N.P. Ludlow (ed.), *European Integration and the Cold War: Ostpolitik – Westpolitik, 1965–1973* (London: Routledge, 2007), 67–80.
17. W. Brandt, *Friedenspolitik in Europa* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1968), 19.
18. Brandt speech, SPD party congress in Cologne, 27 May 1962, in W. Brandt, *Auf der Zinne der Partei: Parteitagsreden 1960 bis 1983* (Berlin: Dietz, 1984), 63.
19. M. Kramer, 'Editor's Note', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18(3) (2016), 2 (quote). For a recent debate on the issue and further references, see G. Fujii (ed.), *H-Diplo Forum on 'CSCE, the German Question, and the Eastern Bloc'*, 1 June 2017, <http://tiny.cc/AR701> (last accessed 30 March 2020).
20. B. Rother and K. Larres (eds), *Willy Brandt and International Relations: Europe, the USA, and Latin America, 1974–1992* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018). A. Wilkens (ed.), *Wir sind auf dem richtigen Weg: Willy Brandt und die europäische Einigung* (Bonn: Dietz, 2010). B. Rother (ed.), *Willy Brandt: Neue Fragen, Neue Erkenntnisse* (Bonn: Dietz, 2011).
21. Wulff speech in Warsaw, 7 December 2010, in J. Andrychowicz, K. Konarek, B. Sendhardt and A. Traczyk (eds), *Europa Kontinent der Versöhnung? 40 Jahre nach dem Besuch Willy Brandts in Warschau* (Warsaw: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2012), 6.

22. For example, the photo is used as the front cover illustration of G. Negash, *Apologia Politica: States and Their Apologies by Proxy* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006); and J. Lind, *Sorry States: Apologies in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).
23. G.D. Dodds, 'Governmental Apologies and Political Reconciliation: Promise and Pitfalls', in B. Charbonneau and G. Parent (eds), *Peacebuilding, Memory and Reconciliation: Bridging Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2012), 133, 143. Y. He, *The Search for Reconciliation: Sino-Japanese and German-Polish Relations since World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 78. S.E. Heo, *Reconciling Enemy States in Europe and Asia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012), 85–86.
24. Lind, *Sorry States*, viii, 179–83. J. Lind, 'The Perils of Apology: What Japan Shouldn't Learn from Germany', *Foreign Affairs* 88(3) (2009), 132–46. Cf. L.G. Feldman, *Germany's Foreign Policy of Reconciliation: From Enmity to Amity* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 334–44.
25. See especially W. Schmidt, 'Willy Brandts Ost- und Deutschlandpolitik', in B. Rother (ed.), *Willy Brandts Außenpolitik* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2014), 161–257. Schmidt, *Kalter Krieg*. G. Niedhart, "'The Transformation of the Other Side': Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik and the Liberal Peace Concept', in F. Bozo, N.P. Ludlow and M.P. Rey (eds), *Visions of the End of the Cold War in Europe, 1945-1990* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 149–62. Feldman, *Policy of Reconciliation*.
26. Brandt radio speech, 'Wo uns der Schuh drückt', *Berliner Rundfunk*, 12 December 1960, box 108, A3, Willy-Brandt-Archiv im Archiv der sozialen Demokratie, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Bonn (WBA).
27. Brandt speech to the Bundestag, plenary session 05/180, 20 June 1968, 9,702, <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btp/05/05180.pdf> (last accessed 30 March 2020).
28. Brandt statement to the US Congress, 29 September 1983, *Berliner Ausgabe* 10: 171 (quote).