

Brandt's ostpolitik essay sample

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After the events of the Cuban Missile Crisis, tensions worldwide, including within Europe, eased significantly, all sides agreeing to work towards a policy of détente. The leader of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), or West Germany as it was named at that time, Willy Brandt, decided to review the policies that the FRG had up till this point held regarding Eastern Europe. Under the Hallstein Doctrine, relations with Eastern Europe had basically ground to a halt during the mid-fifties, so Brandt in 1970, along with his foreign minister Walter Scheel, agreed to hold negotiations with the leaders of the East.

This policy of improving relations with the Eastern communist bloc was known as Ostpolitik. The aims of this policy were mainly to leave future reunification with the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as a possibility, as well as to stabilize relations with the opposing side during the postwar period. The main aspects of Ostpolitik were the five treaties signed from 1970-1972; the treaties between the FRG, USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the GDR, especially the Mosc and then the Four Power Agreement on Berlin. Brandt's aims were mainly achieved through the negotiation of treaties.

The main treaty that this policy represented for the FRG was the Moscow Treaty, as it looked to achieve both of Brandt's main aims, secure the possibility of reunification with the GDR as well as improve ties with the leader of the Eastern bloc, the USSR. The Moscow Treaty declared that both the USSR and the FRG had no claims on territories located in other states, and that the FRG accepted the fact that they were not to challenge Poland's or the inner German border. The treaty also stipulated that the FRG would agree to negotiate treaties with Poland, the GDR and Czechoslovakia. It did

not mention that the GDR was officially recognized as a state by the FRG, however it was agreed that later on both Germanies would be accepted into the United Nations. The Soviets were also given a letter from the West Germans where it stated that the FRG would work towards -peace in Europe where “ the German people regains its unity in free self-determination”.

This explains what the FRG gained out of a seemingly biased treaty leaning towards the USSR; the successfully dropped hints that the FRG wished to see reunification later on. Also, the FRG managed to use the word “ inviolable” rather than the Soviet chosen word “ immutable” when describing the frontiers, as immutable means “ unchangeable”, whereas “ inviolable” leaves room for future negotiations as to borders. This agreement allowed Brandt to work cooperatively with the Soviets, conceding to points which would not affect the FRG perversely in any way, while ensuring that the option to reunify remained open in the future. This achieved both of Brandt's goals of clearing the air with the leader of the Eastern bloc and easing the pathway for future reunification with the GDR.

The Four Power negotiations over Berlin represented another milestone in Brandt's policies. Berlin still remained the thorn in the sides of all the powers, with the question of access to it a constant quandary for the USSR, the US, Britain, and France. The aims of the Western Allies were that West Berlin should be officially linked with the FG, and that the West should have free access to it. As both sides' reputations were on the line with as sensitive a subject as Berlin, which had long been a point of contention for the duration of the Cold War. This explains the Soviet anxiety to appear as if

they were not making significant concessions, however they were eager as well to for tensions to ease, and especially wary of angering the US, who were working on relations with the Soviets' nemesis at the time, China. As for the Western Allies, they were confident of the upper hand due to their exploiting of the deteriorating relations between the USSR and China in 1969-1970 with President Nixon being the first US President to visit China.

The terms of the Four Powers agreement saw the Soviets concede "unimpeded traffic between West Berlin and the FRG, recognition of West Berlin's ties with the FRG, and finally, the right for West Berliners to visit East Berlin". On the Western side, they agreed that West Berlin was not an official part of the FRG. As for Willy Brandt and his aims, the Four Power Treaty was another Ostpolitik success as it showed that even though the FRG was attempting to strengthen relations with the East, this policy did not compromise their links with the West, whose involvement in these negotiations signified their solidarity with the FRG. This went hand in hand with Brandt's aims of maintaining stable relations with the postwar world. Furthermore, the concessions made by the Soviets that freed up access to West Berlin for the FRG and the Western Allies made it seem even more plausible that in the future reconciliation with the GDR was possible. In this way, Brandt's main aims were accomplished using the Four Power Treaty on Berlin.

Lastly, the Four Power Treaty led the way for the negotiations of the Basic Treaty, which was the treaty involving direct contact between the FRG and the GDR. The policy of Ostpolitik was mainly created to improve ties with the

East Germans, the “ brothers” of the West Germans. The treaty posed some risks for the GDR, as it would expose them further to the economic and social conditions in place in the FRG. This could pose disastrous complications for the public of the GDR who would then learn about the lifestyles of their Western compatriots. Honecker, the leader of the GDR at the time, was wary about the possibility of Social Democratisation by Brandt towards the GDR, or the attempt to convert the East to be more like the FRG. Basically, the Basic Treaty stipulated that the FRG recognized the GDR as a “ separate and sovereign” state, both to be represented in the United Nations. However the FRG did emphasize their belief that both states had common German citizenship and reemphasized that they would be pushing for reunification in the future. Again, Willy Brandt was aiming for openness between the two states, and succeeded to the extent that communication was established, however he did not truly secure any guarantee any promise of reunification.

The policies of the FRG and Willy Brandt regarding Eastern Europe were a significant step in the history of the Cold War, as it signified the thawing of relations between the East and the West, and can almost be considered to precipitate the end of the Cold War in the end. Ostpolitik was a cornerstone of German history, especially with regards to its separation. Willy Brandt's aims with his policy were to open up the possibility of German reunification in the future, as well as to maintain positive relations with the rest of the postwar world. Using the treaties and agreements in Ostpolitik, Brandt chose to seek to achieve his aims through diplomacy and cooperation.

Sources:

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*All information was taken from the history textbook, with information merely confirmed by the websites.