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Kommentar zu
V. Die Supermächte und die westeuropäische
Sicherheit

Professor Trachtenberg deals with three important problems in the context of the German question since 1945: He addresses the question whether a serious risk of a nuclear conflict existed between East and West and what might have generated that conflict. He convincingly argues that the Western powers could live with the situation created by West German entry into the NATO alliance, while the Soviet Union could not have allowed Germany to become a great independent power again. So far so good. Germany was indeed a major problem of Soviet strategy, although we should not underestimate the Soviet inclination to think globally in political, economic, and ideological affairs. However, dealing with Germany as a potential threat to European security, there were hardly any differences between the Western powers and the Soviet Union. One can cite, for example, Acheson's and Dulles's repeated assurances to the Western European partners, but also to the Soviet leadership, Eisenhower's statements as NATO commander, and the Eisenhower-Zhukow talks in Geneva in 1955. And there were plenty of diplomatic contacts on different levels. All agreed that, after two European wars which had developed into world wars, there had to be security from Germany, but also for Germany. The Paris Agreements of 1954 guaranteed that West Germany would not be permitted the status of an independent Power comparable to the position it held in the interwar years. What has to be explained is why the Soviet Union did not accept Western security proposals from the Byrnes Plan in 1946 to the Berlin conference of 1954 and the Geneva Conference in 1955. It seems to me that the answer is missing. Soviet leaders were pursuing both Realpolitik and psychological and ideological warfare.

Trachtenberg argues persuasively that the conferences in London and Paris provided the basis for a West German settlement with the West. He overemphasizes French enthusiasm, however, and neglects American pressure on France to reach an agreement. For the West, the treaties meant the liquidation of World War II and the end of instability in Central Europe. But were they really considered aggressive by the Soviet Union? We don't know and will only know when we learn more about Russian decisionmaking. Perhaps Soviet policy was quite satisfied with

those developments. Now East Germany could be integrated into the Eastern Bloc despite the yearning of parts of the population in the GDR for German unity. Most likely the Soviets understood that the West European Powers were as much interested in the control of West Germany as was Moscow. The problem for the Soviet Union was the United States, or formulated differently the perception of West Germany as the aggressive American representative on the continent. Only if the United States identified with West German policy to regain the lost territories in the East and if "American and German imperialism and capitalism" should attempt to liberate Eastern Europe would there be a security problem and a threat to Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe. We all know that terms like "roll-back" and "liberation" were propaganda directed to the domestic audience in the United States as well as means in the psychological warfare against Soviet dominance in Eastern Europe. They were not meant to be serious in the age of containment. American policy toward the East German uprising in 1953, and toward Poland and Hungary in 1956, prove the case. American non-entanglement must have made it clear to the Soviet foreign policy apparatus that spheres of influence had been established.

The same applies to nuclear armaments, Trachtenberg's second argument. True enough, atomic weapons had been stationed in Germany since September 1953. But they were never exclusively under German control. That would have sent shock waves throughout Europe. The key to an atomic threat lay in the warheads under US control. Nobody could be as much interested in deterrence as the front-line state, Germany. However, even as a member of NATO German military representatives were during the fifties – and this is the period we are talking about – hardly informed about American nuclear plans. During the NATO maneuver "Black Lion" in 1957, representatives of the Bundeswehr learned for the first time that a total of 108 tactical nuclear weapons had been released for use in the combat areas, and they were shocked. Trachtenberg also presents another argument. He argues correctly that under the Eisenhower administration the concept of creating "a third force" played an important role in American thinking. However, beside offering a solution to domestic fiscal problems, the crucial idea behind Eisenhower's reasoning was that "a third force" created the chance of welding France, Germany, and the other West European countries closer together, politically, economically, and militarily.

Nevertheless, neither Eisenhower nor Dulles were willing to go so far as to suggest a unified and independent European atomic force. Their approach was different. European unification was not making further progress. The Geneva conferences had shown that there would be no new developments in the tangled German question. What would happen if the Germans became disillusioned and turned to the country that possessed the only key to unification, namely the Soviet Union? Thus whoever and whatever created a new impetus for European integration would receive full American support. The new issue was the creation of Euratom. There were no vested interests yet, and there was "an appeal of a peaceful atom for the public imagination". It hardly mattered whether French policy, or Belgian

concern about her bilateral agreements with the United States concerning uranium supplies, lay behind the initial move. The Eisenhower administration supported the peaceful use of atomic energy as a means of welding Western Europe closer together, notwithstanding problems with the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission. It was quite clear to foreign-policy elites in Washington, as Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak acknowledged, that the French proposal for European cooperation was at once an attempt to gain access to Belgian ores, control potential German aspirations in the field, prevent bilateral American-German agreements, and co-opt German financial resources in support of expensive French research efforts. In fact, when it became evident that French policymakers insisted on pushing their own nuclear program including nuclear weapons, this was widely considered a threat to a European solution. There was another reason why a cooperative European agency was necessary. To quote Admiral Strauss of the AEC: "The Commission assumed that involved in the project were as many doubtful characters from the security standpoint proportionately as were to be found in France generally." Rightly or wrongly, Robert Bowie, then director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, also felt that a security problem existed, but hoped to get around it if a new European agency selected personnel according to U.S. standards.

I have mentioned these examples showing that West Germany could participate in the peaceful use of atomic energy without enlarging on the economic preoccupations of Minister Ludwig Erhard, German industry, or Franz-Josef Strauß as the responsible minister. But there is one point I wish particularly to emphasize. Certainly, West Germany had the right to develop new rocket technology, even to produce delivery vehicles. Discussions about German nuclear weapons indeed took place. Chancellor Adenauer wanted them at some point. But German reliance on the American nuclear umbrella as well as earlier commitments by Adenauer not only prevented German production, but also excluded atomic warheads in German hands that would have proven unacceptable to the public in all European countries.

One last point. I do not see how the Eisenhower administration, by supporting the creation of Euratom, departed from what Trachtenberg calls "the basis of the Paris Agreements". Furthermore, if the Paris Agreements created security for the West, the same security could have been made available to the Soviet Union, as the discussions at the Geneva conferences show. Since Trachtenberg does not discuss Soviet intentions and policies, he reaches conclusions that appear to be lopsided. There was certainly a Soviet trauma about a militarized Germany dating from 1941, but this was also used to gain advantage in security diplomacy.

Cyril Buffet's paper takes a different approach. He places French policy toward Germany in the larger context of 20th century relations and deals broadly with political rivalries, national perceptions, political, economic, and security interests. This makes it difficult for a commentator to carp. Basically, I agree with his interpretation. He argues persuasively that remarkable changes characterize Franco-German relations: from arch-enemies and open hostility in the first half of the

20th century to cooperation, solidarity, and even privileged partnership. Buffet himself has contributed to this thesis by showing that the Berlin Blockade in 1948 signaled a significant change in French policy. True enough, the foundation for a rapprochement was laid in the experience of German occupation and the thinking of members of the Resistance, not only in France but all over Western Europe. Buffet also stresses that the context of reconciliation was totally different in the 1940s from that of the 1920s. The United States had not withdrawn from Europe. American military presence and economic aid were the pillars of reconstruction as well as security. A war-torn France suffering from German exploitation had no opportunity to recreate its traditional system of alliances in Eastern Europe, liberated and occupied by the Soviet Union, the new hegemonic power. The reorientation of French policy was certainly a slow process and did not develop without doubts or delays. Yet when it became evident that French policy could not head off an American model for the integration of Western Europe, out of necessity foreign-policy elites in Paris generated initiatives in order to influence and to participate in developments that lay in the French national interest. Welding Germany and France together under French tutelage in a European context augured the most promising results. In broad terms, French goals were to achieve political stability, economic reconstruction, and military security. After the experience of National Socialism and moral devastation, this unequal partnership meant for Germany regaining respectability and access to the west European community of nations, new opportunities for economic reconstruction, and military security against the Soviet Union. But there was more to it than this. Both Germany and France, as well as the other west European nations, recognized that the age of the nation-state was ending.