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The real years of Europe?: US-West European relations during the Ford administration

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The Real Years of Europe?

US-West European Relations during the Ford administration[1]

A three year Presidency constitutes little time to define an era in international affairs. When the President in question inherits a dominant Secretary of State from his much better known predecessor and shows little of the command of world politics that would have been needed to wrest foreign policy leadership from the established expert, the prospects of the Presidency being regarded as a defining moment are poor indeed. It is therefore unsurprising that, as will be discussed below, the Ford Presidency has been largely passed over by those working on the history of US-European relations. And yet this article will argue that somewhat counter-intuitively the three short years of the Ford Presidency were actually a period of considerable importance in Transatlantic relations. This was less to do with Gerald Ford's personal contribution than the circumstances he inherited, the constellation of European leaders with whom he and Henry Kissinger found themselves working, and the collective need for leaders on both side of the Atlantic to confront the most serious economic downturn since the Second World War. The outcome, however, was not only a moment of striking Transatlantic cooperation which would stand in stark contrast to the much more problematic periods immediately before and immediately after the Ford Presidency – it would also be a phase of cooperation that would leave a series of legacies which would alter the overall pattern of Transatlantic relations well beyond the 1970s.

The current historiography on Transatlantic relations has little to say about the Ford Presidency. A fairly sizeable literature has recently sprung up on relations between the United States and its European allies during the Nixon era. Several recent studies have thus tackled the notorious 'Year of Europe' affair – the most sophisticated treatments being that by Daniel Möckli and the forthcoming book by Aurélie Gfeller.[2] Catherine Hynes and Niklas Rossbach also tackle the same episode,

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[2] Daniel Möckli, *European foreign policy during the Cold War: Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the dream of political unity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008). Aurélie Gfeller, *Building a Political Europe:*

albeit from a somewhat narrower United Kingdom-centred perspective, and the Anglo-American dimension of the affair is also the subject of several chapters in edited volumes and journal articles.[3] There are also three relevant chapters in the Matthias Schulz and Thomas A. Schwartz edited volume, *The Strained Alliance*.[4] And Marc Trachtenberg has recently explored the episode in the context of a wider exploration of Franco-American relations during this period.[5] In all of these cases, however, their treatment extends no further than 1974 and Richard Nixon's resignation. Naturally the literature primarily focused on Kissinger does also talk about the Secretary of State and Europe. Even here, however, the main interest seems overwhelmingly the sound and fury of the Nixon years and much less Kissinger's period as Secretary of State to Ford. Jussi Hanhimaki's *A Flawed Architect* for instance covers East-West negotiations, triangular diplomacy, the Middle East, and Angola at some length in its Ford sections, but barely mentions Ford and Kissinger's approach to Western Europe between 1974 and 1976.[6]

The literature on the United States and European integration is little better. Schwartz stops short at the end of the Johnson era as does Guderzo, and Winand rounds off her analysis even earlier.[7] A little has been written about Nixon's downgrading of the relationship with the European institutions (building in part on Robert Schaetzel's contemporary denunciation of this) but most such works have not taken the analysis beyond the early Nixon years.[8] And Dimitri Grygowski's survey of

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France, Europe and the World during the Pompidou-Giscard Era (New York: Berghahn Books, forthcoming). See also Alastair Horne, *Kissinger 1973, The Crucial Year* (New York: Simon & Schuster).

[3] Catherine Hynes, *The year that never was: Heath, the Nixon administration and the year of Europe* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2009); Niklas H. Rossbach, *Heath, Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special Relationship: Britain, the US and the EC, 1969-74* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Alex Spelling, "Edward Heath and Anglo–American Relations 1970–1974: A Reappraisal," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 20, no. 4 (2009): 638; Keith Hamilton, "Britain, France, and America's Year of Europe, 1973," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 17, no. 4 (2006): 871-895.

[4] See the chapters by Mockli, Noble and Hilfrich in Matthias Schulz and Thomas Alan Schwartz, *The Strained Alliance: US-European Relations from Nixon to Carter*, Publications of the German Historical Institute (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 195–256.

[5] Marc Trachtenberg, "The French Factor in U.S. Foreign Policy during the Nixon-Pompidou Period, 1969–1974," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 13, no. 1 (2011): 4-59.

[6] Jussi M. Hanhimäki, *The flawed architect: Henry Kissinger and American foreign policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[7] Thomas Alan Schwartz, *Lyndon Johnson and Europe: In the Shadow of Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Massimiliano Guderzo, *Interesse nazionale e responsabilità globale: gli Stati Uniti, l'Alleanza atlantica e l'integrazione europea negli anni di Johnson 1963-69* (Florence: Aida, 2000); Pascaline Winand, *Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the United States of Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996).

[8] N. Piers Ludlow, "Transatlantic relations in the Johnson and Nixon eras: The crisis that didn't happen – and what it suggests about the one that did," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 8, no. 1 (March 2010):

the US and European monetary integration, while confirming that there was something of a rethink during the Nixon years, focuses most of his early chapters on either the US-European row surrounding the Nixon shocks of 1971 and their impact on plans for monetary union, or on US responses to the launch of the European Monetary System at the very end of the decade.[9] The intervening period is passed over in silence. Similarly both Duccio Basosi's and Hubert Zimmermann's work on monetary relations examines the 1969-73 period but not that which followed, although Basosi has also written on the late 1970s.[10] Meanwhile one of the few texts currently to attempt an overview of US-European relations over the whole postwar period, Geir Lundestad's useful, but slim *Empire by 'Integration'*, deals with the Ford period in a couple of sentences – the chapter breakdown includes sections on the Nixon 'rethink' and the troubles of the Carter period, but nothing on the period in between.[11]

This article will argue, however, that despite this lack of scholarly attention the brief Ford period *did* matter in terms of West-West relations. Indeed, it will go further and argue that the Ford years were a time when, in a largely pragmatic and unspectacular way, the whole architecture of Transatlantic relations was rearranged, creating structures and features that would endure well beyond the Ford and Kissinger double-act into the Carter, Reagan, Bush and Clinton eras. In so doing, it draws upon research conducted in the Ford Presidential Library, in the collection of Nixon Presidential materials (held until recently in the National Archives in Washington DC although since transferred to the Nixon Presidential Library in California), and upon a variety of sources available online. Throughout the perspective is that of an expert on Western Europe looking at US sources as much for what they demonstrate about the jockeying for power and influence amongst the different states of Western Europe as for what they show about US foreign policy *per se*. The arguments advanced are thus

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44-55; J. Robert Schaetzel, *The unhinged alliance: America and the European Community* (New York: Policy books, 1975).

[9] Dimitri Grygowski, *Les États-Unis et l'unification monétaire de l'Europe* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009).

[10] Duccio Basosi, *Il governo del dollaro. Interdipendenza economica e potere statunitense negli anni di Richard Nixon 1969-1973* (Florence: Polistampa, 2006); Duccio Basosi, "Principle or power? Jimmy Carter's ambivalent endorsement of the European Monetary System, 1977–1979," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 8, no. 1 (March 2010): 6-18; Hubert Zimmermann, "Unraveling the Ties That Really Bind: The Dissolution of the Transatlantic Monetary Order and European Monetary Cooperation, 1965-1973" in Schulz and Schwartz, *The Strained Alliance*, 125–144.

[11] Geir Lundestad, *"Empire" by Integration: The United States and European Integration, 1945-1997* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

primarily intended as a contribution to the discussion of the West-West diplomacy of the Cold War, the patterns of Transatlantic dialogue and the evolving nature of international governance.

Rebuilding Transatlantic trust

The first and most obvious transformation of Transatlantic relations during the Ford period was the rebuilding of mutual trust and confidence after the highly bruising latter stages of the previous presidency. Richard Nixon had initially made a real effort to foster dialogue with Western European governments. The briefs for his first visit to Europe in early 1969 noted that 'you will be the first American President to undertake a working trip to Western Europe in the last five and one-half years' – and highlighted the positive European response to the announced American intention 'to listen not to lecture'.[12] Particular care, moreover, had been given to the need to rebuild a relationship of trust and cooperation with the French.[13] The March 1, 1969 meeting between Nixon and President Charles de Gaulle – the *bête noir* of the previous Democrat administrations - was thus both constructive and amicable.[14] But despite the good intentions on both sides, the successful Nixon visit was not the prelude an easy phase of US-West European relations. On the contrary, Western European governments grew frustrated with the way in which the initial priorities of the Nixon administration lay elsewhere – Vietnam of course, but also the opening to China and détente with the Soviet Union – and the new, more nationalistic edge to US economic and monetary policies. The Americans meanwhile, and especially Kissinger, seemed highly sensitive to any sign that the Europeans were ganging up on the US. The terminal agonies of the Bretton Woods monetary system and the European attempt to shield themselves from these problems by creating a regional zone of exchange rate stability, were thus accompanied by a level of Transatlantic resentment and mutual sniping that cast doubt on the longstanding US policy of

[12] NARA, Nixon Presidential Materials (NPM – now at Nixon Presidential Library, California), NSC Subject Files, Box 443, President Nixon's Trip to Europe, Feb-Mar 1969 General Background materials folder, Rogers' Memorandum for the President, undated.
[13] Marc Trachtenberg, "The French Factor in U.S. Foreign Policy during the Nixon-Pompidou Period, 1969–1974," 5–9.
[14] See http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/jan10/088.pdf

supporting European integration for political reasons and regardless of the economic costs.[15]

Kissinger's belated and poorly handled attempt to address these uncertainties through his 'Year of Europe' initiative only made matters worse. Not only did the National Security Advisor misjudge the tone of the speech – most notoriously with the passage that, in contrasting Europe's 'regional interests' with the United States' 'global responsibilities', seemed to endorse a reality that all European leaders were keen to change – but his central message, namely that Transatlantic problems needed to be dealt with 'comprehensively' proved counterproductive.[16] For a holistic approach would maximise American bargaining strength and European weakness. The economic gap between the US and Western Europe had narrowed considerably over the postwar decades. On economic matters, the Europeans could with some justification expect to be considered as near equals by the US. The military balance by contrast had if anything become even more uneven, not least because of the way in which nuclear arsenals had become the key yardstick of international power. An approach that lumped together economic, political and security questions also entirely overlooked the way in which the gradual integration of Europe meant that in some policy fields, such as trade, the newly enlarged European Community had to deal as a single entity with the US whereas in others the individual European states retained their full autonomy. A single undifferentiated dialogue was hence not practical. The very suggestion of one however only confirmed the suspicions of those many Europeans who had long feared that Kissinger neither liked nor understood the integration process. The European response, meanwhile, namely to respond to Kissinger's call for a new Atlantic charter by drafting one collectively, only frustrated the Americans further and made yet more explicit Kissinger's impatience with European cooperation.[17] The slow-moving realities of European collective diplomacy and their inevitable corollary that presentational responsibilities would fall to whoever held the six-month rotating EC presidency – in this case Denmark - collided head-on with the preferences of a US foreign policy supremo who favoured secretive bilateral bargaining and who had notoriously little patience for small state representatives. As

[15] William Glenn Gray, "Floating the System: Germany, the United States, and the Breakdown of Bretton Woods, 1969–1973," *Diplomatic History* 31, no. 2 (April 1, 2007): 295-323.
[16] The full text of the speech is at http://www.ena.lu/address_given_henry_kissinger_new_york_23_april_1973-020003978.html
[17] Daniel Möckli, *European foreign policy during the Cold War: Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the dream of political unity* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 151–179.

Kissinger complained: 'there is no real negotiation, since the Europeans state their position, we state ours, and then the Europeans go away to work out their response after which the whole process is repeated. Thus, whereas we had hoped that the Common Market would lead to better relations with the U.S., we are now forced into a type of consultation that is worse than we have with any other country.'[18] An attempt to improve Transatlantic relations thus went disastrously awry, accentuating rather than mitigating the structural problems the initiative had been intended to address. It has been pointed out with some justification that there is scarcely a period when relations between the United States and Europe have *not* been described as being 'in crisis' – a state of affairs which might have something to do with the fact that it is always much easier to make a speech, place an article, or sell a book with 'crisis' in the title, than one with 'status quo', 'calm' or still worse 'consolidation'. But if any period can justifiably claim to be one of Transatlantic crisis it is the Nixon years from 1970 to 1973.

The process of mending fences had, admittedly, begun before Gerald Ford took office. The rapid disappearance from the political scene in the first months of 1974 of all three of the European leaders most involved in the Year of Europe spat - Georges Pompidou, Willy Brandt and Edward Heath - through death, resignation and electoral defeat respectively, proved extremely helpful in drawing a line under the affair. That their replacements, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Helmut Schmidt, and Harold Wilson were all more Atlanticist in their leanings made this near simultaneous cast change even more significant.[19] But the full extent of the transformation would only become apparent once Nixon himself had left office in August. The healing of the Transatlantic rifts can thus be accurately associated with the Ford era.

First and least surprising of the changes in Western European policy towards Transatlantic relations, was the effort by the new Labour government in Britain to undo any suggestion that Britain was de-emphasising the special relationship in the interest of closer ties to its new Community partners. Over recent years a lively historiographical debate has sprung up about how far Edward Heath actually went in redirecting the United Kingdom's foreign policy priorities away from the United States and towards Europe. Kissinger himself had been one of those responsible for

[18] http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/trachtenberg/ffus/00928.pdf
[19] For Kissinger's positive reaction to the changes see Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor (henceforward FPL), National Security Advisor (NSA), Memoranda of Conversations 1973-7 (MemCons), Box 4, Cabinet meeting, June 21, 1974

popularising the notion that Heath forewent close ties to Nixon in favour of greater European commitment.[20] Nor was this just a line taken in his memoirs: in 1974 itself, he described Heath to Nixon as 'the only British leader who was indifferent to the United States. All the rest preferred ties to the U.S. rather than to Europe.'[21] But a succession of younger scholars have challenged this established view, suggesting instead that the pull of Washington over London remained strong and that a great deal of Anglo-American cooperation continued unhindered.[22] While this new work does go a long way towards demonstrating that the Conservative leader did not deliberately seek to weaken links with the US, however, it in no way disproves Heath's commitment to greater European involvement. The effort to lead Britain into the EEC was the foreign policy priority of the premiership and even before the UK had formally become a member, Heath participated enthusiastically in the collective European effort to create a more unified foreign policy. At a time of Transatlantic tension and US impatience with the practical effects of European integration, such a pro-European stance was bound to create problems between London and Washington. As a result, Heath's replacement by a Wilson-led government that was much less pro-European – almost the first action of the incoming Labour team was to request a 'renegotiation' of Britain's terms of entry[23] – lessened some of the difficulties in the Anglo-American relationship. It was true admittedly that neither Ford nor Kissinger appear to have had much time for Harold Wilson himself. The Secretary of State, typically, dismissed the new British Prime Minister as a 'sneaky, devious character' and 'a greasy sort of man'.[24] The bilateral encounters at the top level were often rather unfocused and unproductive during the Ford period.[25] And it was also the case, as will be stressed below, that the growing economic woes of the United Kingdom under Wilson's leadership, tended to marginalise the British in the Transatlantic

[20] Alex Spelling, "Edward Heath and Anglo–American Relations 1970–1974: A Reappraisal," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 20, no. 4 (2009): 639; Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), 933.
[21] FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 4, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft conversation, Aug. 14, 1974
[22] Spelling, "Edward Heath and Anglo–American Relations 1970–1974"; Rossbach, *Heath, Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special Relationship*; Thomas Robb, "Henry Kissinger, Great Britain and the 'Year of Europe': The 'Tangled Skein'," *Contemporary British History* 24, no. 3 (September 2010): 297-318.
[23] Aoife Collins, "The Cabinet Office, Tony Benn and the Renegotiation of Britain's Terms of Entry into the European Community, 1974–1975," *Contemporary British History* 24, no. 4 (December 2010): 471-491.
[24] FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 4, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft conversation, Aug. 14, 1974
[25] See FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 9, Ford, Kissinger, Wilson, Callaghan conversation, Jan. 30, 1975 & Jan. 31, 1975; MemCons, Box 12, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Sonnenfeldt, Wilson, Callaghan & Hunt, May 30, 1975; MemCons, Box 14, Ford, Kissinger, Sonnenfeldt, Wilson & Callaghan, July 30, 1975

dialogue about how best to respond to the global recession. But Kissinger did quickly strike up a stronger relationship with James Callaghan, the British Foreign Secretary, and Anglo-American conversations about political and security related developments rapidly regained a high degree of trust and shared interest.[26] 1974 until 1976 may not feature prominently in any list of periods when the 'special relationship' has been at its most intimate or intense. It was nonetheless a marked improvement on the period that had gone immediately before.

Second and of still greater significance for what was to follow was the improvement in relations between the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany. Helmut Schmidt was a much more reassuring figure than Willy Brandt had been, with neither the suspect leftist leanings of the former Chancellor, nor his desire to prioritise dealings with both Eastern Europe and his Western European partners over the Bonn-Washington relationship.[27] He and Kissinger moreover were friends and sparring partners of long-standing: Kissinger told Ford that he had first met him in 1957 as 'a brash young senator from Hesse'.[28] This is impossible to verify, but certainly as early as 1969 a note from Helmut Sonnenfeldt of the National Security Council to the National Security Advisor urged Kissinger 'to utilize your personal relationship with Schmidt to make some basic points about the US-German relationship.'[29] The Defence Minister and then, from July 1972 the Minister of Finance, had in other words become the interlocutor whom Kissinger could most trust in a West German government towards which his feeling were decidedly mixed. Once Schmidt became Chancellor this level of trust became even more important. And the links between them were strengthened by their shared interest in strategic affairs and by Kissinger's evident respect for Schmidt's economic expertise – and made light of the misgivings that the US policy maker often had towards left-wing political figures. Kissinger indeed commented to Gaston Thorn, the Luxembourg Prime Minister, that the only reason why Schmidt had joined the left of centre SPD

[26] For Kissinger's evident pleasure that Callaghan had become Foreign Secretary, see FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 4, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft conversation, Aug. 14, 1974. For an example of interaction between the two over Cyprus, see http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d114

[27] Gottfried Niedhart, "US Detente and West German Ostpolitik: Parallels and Frictions" and Bernd Schaefer, "The Nixon Administration and West German Ostpolitik, 1969-73" in Schulz and Schwartz, *The Strained Alliance*, 23–64.

[28] FPL. NSA, MemCons, Box 7, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft conversation, Dec. 3, 1974.

[29] NARA, NPM, NSC Country Files, Box 682, Europe, Germany Vol. III, July 1969 – November 1969 (2 of 3), Sonnenfeldt to Kissinger, Nov. 5, 1969

was that 'because he entered politics in Hamburg and realized that he could only be elected there if he was a Socialist.'[30] Similar interests, a common streak of ruthlessness, a shared tendency to speak their mind regardless of the consequences, and a comparable degree of impatience with bureaucratic or diplomatic niceties, were more than enough to compensate for the party political difference between the two men.

More substantively Kissinger also wasted no time in telling the incoming President that West Germany was the European country which would matter most over the coming years and that Schmidt was hence the fellow leader with whom a strong relationship was most essential. In August 1974, the German Chancellor was characterised as 'our strongest ally in Europe'[31]; two weeks, later, in the euphoria that followed a successful bilateral meeting between Ford and Schmidt, Kissinger asserted: 'With the two of you working together, the West, the alliance is going to be alright' and celebrated the 'miraculous change from Brandt and Scheel.'[32] And this auspicious start does seem to have been followed by an unusually close and friendly collaboration between US and German leaders in the following two years. Revealingly Schmidt entitles the relevant section of his memoirs 'Freundschaft mit Gerald Ford' – friendship with Gerald Ford - and the feeling seems to have been reciprocated on the American side.[33]

To some extent this emphasis on the importance of US-German relations could be seen as a 'rebound' from the early Kissinger years when both Nixon and his foreign policy guru had perceived France as the key player in Europe only to see their overtures towards de Gaulle and then Pompidou go disastrously wrong.[34] The Federal Republic might thus be a more reliable partner than the French. Rather more significant though was probably Germany's burgeoning economic strength – essential at a moment in international relations when so many of the most pressing challenges were economic - its new foreign policy self-confidence, and its ability to act as an intermediary and guide in Washington's careful and fairly systematic effort to rebuild

[30] FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 12, Breakfast meeting between Thorn, Wurth, Helminger, Ford, Kissinger & Hartman, May 29, 1975.
[31] FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 5, Cabinet meeting, Aug. 26, 1974.
[32] FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 5, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft meeting, Sept. 6, 1974.
[33] Helmut Schmidt, *Menschen und Mächte* (Berlin: Siedler, 1987), 202–221; Gerald R. Ford, *A time to heal: the autobiography of Gerald R. Ford* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 220–221.
[34] Marc Trachtenberg, "The French Factor in U.S. Foreign Policy during the Nixon-Pompidou Period, 1969–1974."

its relationship with the French. Giscard and Schmidt were known to be very close (the two men had served simultaneously as Finance Ministers in the early 1970s and had emerged from this most difficult of economic periods with friendship and mutual respect intact) and both Kissinger and Ford would frequently consult the Chancellor about the best means of reaching out to the new French President.[35] Schmidt's work as an intermediary between Washington and Paris was for instance an essential part of the preparations that led to the successful Martinique summit of December 1974 at which a number of long-standing Franco-American differences were (temporarily) resolved.[36]

Rebuilding relations with France was the third and most gradual part of undoing the difficulties of the Nixon years. Giscard d'Estaing was immediately seen as an easier person to deal with than Pompidou had been; Jean Sauvagnargues his new Foreign Minister, greatly preferable to his predecessor, Michel Jobert. (It helped of course that both Giscard and Sauvagnargues were, unusually for French leaders, perfectly comfortable speaking English.)[37] The way in which an ongoing rift with the French could infect the wider Transatlantic relationship was also well understood in Washington, hence Ford's warning to Kenneth Rush, his new appointee as US Ambassador to France, that 'on occasion they [the French] try to get Europe together organized against us'.[38] But such was the level of mutual mistrust that it would take some time before ties could be entirely rebuilt. The earlier Ford era memoranda of conversations thus feature Kissinger outbursts about French behaviour which would not have looked out of place in the worst phases of the Nixon years.[39] The French refusal to participate in the structures which Kissinger had set up to coordinate the Western consumers' response to the Arab oil price hike was also a source of discord between the US and France which would take quite some time to heal.[40] And the very

[35] Elizabeth J. Benning, "Economic Power and Political Leadership: The Federal Republic, the West and the Re-shaping of the International Economic System,1972-1976" (London School of Economics, 2011); Michèle Weinachter, *Valéry Giscard d'Estaing et l'Allemagne: le double rêve inachevé* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004); Hélène Miard-Delacroix, *Partenaires de choix?: le chancelier Helmut Schmidt et la France, 1974-1982* (Berne: P. Lang, 1993); Helmut Schmidt, *Menschen und Mächte: Die Deutschen und ihre Nachbarn* (Berlin: Siedler, 1990), 185–222.
[36] Benning, "Economic Power and Political Leadership: The Federal Republic, the West and the Re-shaping of the International Economic System,1972-1976," 139–143.
[37] FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 4, Cabinet meeting, June 21, 1974.
[38] FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 7, Ford, Rush, Scowcroft meeting, Nov. 8, 1974.
[39] See esp. FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 5, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft meeting, Aug. 28. 1974; but also Box 7, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft meeting, Dec. 3, 1974.
[40] For a non-meeting of minds on the subject, see FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 6, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcraft, Sauvagnargues and Kosciusko-Morizet meeting, Sept. 28, 1974. For the background see

ostentatious French distancing of themselves from any NATO centred initiative also went on irritating the Americans throughout the period.[41] In the Spring of 1975 – i.e. some time after the initial breakthrough had been made in US-French relations – Kissinger could still tell Ford, à propos of Giscard's reluctance to attend a NATO summit, 'It is a disgrace. To think he can meet with the Communists but not the Allies. I can point out to the Ambassador that you would not take it lightly' – a sentiment the President seemed to endorse, adding 'I personally resent it.'[42] All of these features of Franco-American relations were made more difficult, furthermore, by Giscard's lack of a sufficiently large personal political base to free himself from dependence on Gaullist support. The French President had to go on appearing loyal to some aspects of the Gaullist foreign policy tradition even when his interests and his instincts would have pushed him in the opposite direction.[43]

Despite all of these problems the 1974 to 1976 period saw a dramatic improvement in Franco-American relations, beginning with the successful Martinique meeting between the two Presidents, continuing with Ford's productive participation in the Rambouillet summit suggested and hosted by Giscard, and culminating with a visit to Washington in May 1976 in the course of which the French President was quite open about his desire to be cooperative with the US.[44] The somewhat effusive claim by Ambassador Rush to Ford in January 1977 that 'at Martinique you laid the basis for the best U.S. –French relations ever' should probably be viewed with all the scepticism necessary when interpreting a farewell visit to an outgoing president by an ambassador whom he had appointed.[45] But rather more trustworthy was the spectacle a month or two earlier of Kissinger advising the President not to side with his own Secretary of Commerce, Frederick Dent, in a row over the US tariff on cognac, so as to avoid a fight with France in his last few weeks in office.[46] The contrast with the

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Fiona Venn, 'International Co-operation versus National Self-Interest: the United States and Europe during the 1973-1974 Oil Crisis' in Kathleen Burke & Melvyn Stokes (eds.), *The United States and the European Alliance since 1945* (Oxford: Berg, 1999)

[41] FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 11, Ford, Findley, Scowcroft meeting, Apr. 24, 1975 & Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft meeting, May 9, 1975.

[42] FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 11, Ford, Kissinger meeting, Apr. 18, 1975.

[43] The Americans were aware of this potential problem from the outset: see FPL, NSA Country files for Europe and Canada, Box 3, France (1), Issues paper for the Secretary's briefing of the President, Aug. 21, 1974.

[44] For Martinique see FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 8; for the May 1976 summit, box 19. The Rambouillet meeting will be discussed below.

[45] FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 21, Ford, Rush, Scowcroft meeting, Jan. 14, 1977.

[46] FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 21, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft meeting, November or December 1976.

bellicose and combative language that Kissinger had been using about France two years earlier could hardly have been more stark.

Also important in this general trend towards better bilateral relations between Washington and its main European allies, was the way in which Kissinger himself appeared to have learnt the dangers of trying too hard to play one European power off against another. One of the most insidious aspects of the Year of Europe affair had been the National Security Advisor's tendency to use his various back-channels to the main European leaders to convey a subtly different message to each. Needless to say such Machiavellian games had played directly to the somewhat competitive element that has always existed in West European jockeying for influence, intimacy and trust in Washington and had made it still more difficult for Paris, Bonn and London to devise a common stance towards the US. During the Ford period, however, there are few signs of this game continuing. Instead, Transatlantic transparency was helped both by the trend towards direct communication either between leaders themselves or their foreign ministers rather than through unofficial back channels, and by the growing number of multilateral encounters. If the key problems of the day were going to be discussed *à quatre, à cinq, à six,* or *à sept* (the issue of how many countries should be included in multilateral discussions will be looked at below), there was little point in trying to arouse suspicions in one European capital about the behaviour of their partners since such mistrust would only serve to snarl up multilateral diplomacy in which the US itself was directly engaged.

Towards a political directorate?

In his stimulating study of the early years of European Political Cooperation (EPC), the mechanism for foreign policy coordination created by the EC member states in the early 1970s, Daniel Möckli paints a generally convincing picture of the way in which the short-lived hopes of genuine European foreign policy emancipation from Nixon's America faded in the course of 1974. In particular he argues that the so-called Gymnich compromise of June 10, 1974 (named after the German castle where the foreign ministers of the nine EC member states – the Nine - gathered to hammer out a compromise on the issue of how the EPC should relate to the US) made it all but inconceivable that the Nine would take a united stance to which the US was opposed. Under the new rules an item could only remain on the EPC agenda were the Nine in agreement about how to handle consultation with the US. A single loyally Atlanticist

member state could thus force an issue which displeased the US off the European agenda. The radical vision of multilateral cooperation within Europe enabling the Nine to acquire the collective strength to say 'no' to US leadership, thus faded in the face of the British, but also the German and even the French, desire to rebuild bilateral links with the United Sates.[47]

By stopping his analysis at the end of the Nixon presidency, however, Möckli rather overlooks the way in which this very bilateralism also brought about a significant change in the pattern of Transatlantic relations. The abortive end to a truly revolutionary change in Transatlantic change did not, to put it slightly differently, lead to a simple return to the *status quo ante* but instead to a less radical, but still important, alteration in the pattern of ties between the US and Western Europe. For in the course of 1974-6 bilateral discussions between Washington and the three largest European capitals became more intense, and more equal in terms of the relative standing of the three European powers involved, than ever before. Furthermore, the Americans fell into a habit of Transatlantic consultation that European partners had periodically sought (and fleetingly believed they had attained) but which before the 1970s the Americans had always fought shy of institutionalising.[48] The NSC country files of the Ford Administration thus reveal a pattern of growing consultation and discussion between Kissinger and the foreign ministers of Britain, Germany and France. At first the French were excluded from much of this correspondence. Thus in August of 1974, at the height of the Cyprus crisis, Kissinger had written in fairly similar terms to both Callaghan and Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the West German foreign minister – but not yet Sauvagnargues – appealing for any ideas they might have on how to resolve the crisis.[49] But in the course of 1975 the steady improvement of US-French relations turned these ad hoc three-way consultations into a much more regular pattern of four-power discussions, involving regular meetings, both official and ministerial, as well as intensive correspondence. A September 1975 brief from Kissinger to the President underlined quite how far these had developed:

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[47] Möckli, *European foreign policy during the Cold War*, 315–322.
[48] Matthew Jones, "Anglo-American relations after Suez, the rise and decline of the working group experiment, and the French challenge to NATO, 1957-59," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 14, no. 1 (March 2003): 49-79.
[49] The letter to Callaghan is at http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d144; for that to Genscher, FPL, NSC Country Files, Germany State Dept Tels, From SECSTATE – NODIS (1), State 186660, Aug. 24, 1974.

> 'Taking up a suggestion put forward by UK Foreign Secretary Callaghan, I convened two extended dinner meetings in New York on September 5 and 24 [1975] with my French, British and West German colleagues, to discuss the sensitive questions of NATO's Southern Flank, specifically Portugal, Spain, Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey. The next such meeting will take place during the December NATO Ministerial in Brussels. In the meantime, senior officials of the four foreign ministries will meet, as they have twice in the past two weeks, to follow up the Ministerial discussions and to prepare analyses for the next meeting. The initial purpose of these sessions was to exchange assessments, develop common policies, and coordinate out actions in Southern Europe.
>
> The foreign ministers are, however, ranging much more broadly over Western interests and policies and as a result a de facto political steering group is emerging. This is something the French have in various ways been seeking since de Gaulle in the early sixties; yet at the same time they are extremely sensitive about these meeting, both because of likely domestic Gaullist and left-wing criticism if they become known, and because of resentment among the smaller members of the Nine. For us, these meetings give us what we struggled for fruitlessly during the "year of Europe" – organic association in which we work jointly on common problems.'[50]

So why had a model of Transatlantic dialogue that both the British and the French had sought in vain in the 1950s (albeit without German participation), and which Kissinger had suggested in 1973 only to have the idea indignantly rejected by the Europeans, come to partial fruition by 1975?[51]

It helped of course that the 1974-6 period was one in which the United States felt severely over-stretched and where the executive was acutely conscious of the way in which an assertive Congress was intent upon (and partially successful in) clipping the foreign policy making wings of President and Secretary of State. In circumstances where Congress had disregarded Presidential pleas and imposed an arms embargo upon Turkey that only added to instability in the Eastern Mediterranean, it made

[50] FPL, NSA Country Files, Box 3, France (6), Kissinger to Ford, Meeting with French Foreign Minister Sauvagnargues, Sept. 27, 1975. Emphasis in the original.
[51] For the earlier US suggestion of a similar pattern of dialogue, see Marc Trachtenberg, "The French Factor in U.S. Foreign Policy during the Nixon-Pompidou Period, 1969–1974," 56.

logical sense to use European allies as intermediaries in the struggle to avoid either Greek-Turkish confrontation or Turkey abandoning the alliance entirely.[52] It also helped that the problems in the Eastern Mediterranean were not the only primarily European crisis of the period.[53] The aftermath of Portugal's Carnation Revolution, the fate of Spain once the ailing General Franco died, and the issue of whether or not the electorally weakened Italian Christian Democrats would bow to pressure and conclude the much discussed *compromesso storico* bringing the Italian Communist party (PCI) into government, were all pressing concerns, and all issues on which European allies had means of influence and sources of information that complemented those of the United States.[54] Even the still mistrusted Willy Brandt was listened to with interest - if not much agreement - when he talked about his contacts with Mario Suarez and other Portuguese democratic leaders.[55] Cooperation in Europe's own backyard made sense, especially once the Europeans had largely abandoned their unwelcome attempts to engage themselves politically into the Middle Eastern peace process.

It was not just on European affairs that the US, and Britain, France and Germany established their new pattern of regular consultation and cooperation. Had it been, after all, it might have offended those same European sensibilities which had been so riled by the tactless contrast that Kissinger had drawn in his Year of Europe speech between America's global responsibilities and Europe's regional interests. But in fact joint discussion and planning also encompassed African affairs: Giscard was able to interest the Americans in his idea of a generalised increase in aid towards sub-Saharan Africa;[56] the US was well aware and intent on exploiting Britain's long-standing links with southern Africa;[57] and Washington was very conscious that the Federal Republic was one of the few Western countries with deep enough pockets to

[52] The depth of Ford's frustration over the line taken by Congress on aid to Turkey is well captured by the conversation he had with the British opposition leader, Margaret Thatcher, in which he termed it 'the worst decision I have seen in my 26 years in Washington'. FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 15, Ford, Thatcher, Ramsbotham and Scowcroft meeting, Sept. 18, 1975.
[53] Antonio Varsori and Migani, Guia, *Europe in the International Arena during the 1970s. Entering a Different World* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2011), 301–374.
[54] Mario Del Pero et al., *Democrazie: l'Europa meridionale e la fine delle dittature* (Florence: Le Monnier, 2010).
[55] FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 10, Brandt, Ford, von Staden, Kissinger & Scowcroft meeting, Mar. 27, 1975; the briefing materials for this meeting are in NSA Country Files, Box 5, Germany (4).
[56] FPL, NSA, MemCons, Box 19, Ford, Giscard, Kissinger, Sauvagnargues & Scowcroft meeting, May 17, 1976.
[57] See the range of Anglo-American consultations over Rhodesia: FPL, NSA Country Files, Box 15, To SECSTATE – NODIS (4), multiple telegrams, July 1976 onwards.

provide aid in Angola and elsewhere.[58] And the main European allies were equally central to the much more general debate about how the global economy might be revived and how the imbalances and stresses triggered by the oil crisis might be resolved. The United States could not address these problems alone and was hence keen to involve the big three European powers - and the Japanese - as much as was possible.

Another factor which facilitated the emergence of this quasi political directorate was the temporary near equivalence of power of the three Western European powers and the widening of the gap between them and their closest European challenger. In terms of objective power, the Federal Republic of Germany was undeniably the strongest of the European big three. The 1970s were a time when its relative economic strength reached its apogee (its share of world trade rivalled that of the United States during the first part of the decade and would not be overtaken by that of Japan until the late 1970s) and economic power was backed up by budgetary wealth, the consequent ability to avoid the type of aid and defence spending cut-backs that other states were obliged to make during the economic downturn, and a newly acquired readiness to speak its mind in international affairs. That it also had a Chancellor who was unusually expert on the type of economic issues that loomed so large on the international agenda, but could also speak with authority and knowledge on pressing security issues, again only accentuated the Federal Republic's burgeoning influence.[59] But for all its new found power, Germany of the 1970s remained a country highly conscious of the weight of the past and of its anomalous and divided state, and very loath to punch its full weight whether in Europe or beyond. It therefore went on being instinctively drawn towards cooperation with the other major Western powers rather than more hazardous unilateral operations. To put it in musical terms, Germany for all its new found confidence, was more at home as a chamber musician than as a soloist. It was therefore very ready to play harmoniously with Britain and France – as well, ideally, as with the Americans also - rather than striking out on its own.

If the 1970s were the apogee of German relative power, they were the nadir for British strength and influence. The British economy has seldom performed worse

[58] See the discussion of German aid for Egypt, Zaire and Zambia in FPL, NSA Country Files, Box 7, To SECSTATE - NODIS (5), Robinson to Kissinger, Bonn 04046, Mar. 11, 1976.
[59] Benning, "Economic Power and Political Leadership: The Federal Republic, the West and the Re-shaping of the International Economic System,1972-1976."

than it did between 1973 and the end of the decade; British internal politics has rarely been as fractious and divided. 1976 after all was famously the year in which the IMF had to be called in to rescue the British economy, while the decade also saw both the Labour Party and the Conservatives fall prey to deep internal divisions and engage in increasingly bitter contestations with each other.[60] The hoped-for solution to Britain's economic and political woes, namely EEC membership, had turned out moreover to be source of further controversy and further dissatisfaction rather than the promised panacea. No sooner had the British entered 'Europe' than they found themselves at odds with their supposed new partners, engaged in a lengthy but ultimately almost entirely fruitless renegotiation of the terms of membership, and deeply divided amongst themselves as to whether Heath's great achievement was a backwards or forwards step.[61] Britain's turbulent career as the leader of the European Community/Union's awkward squad had begun. But for all these problems Britain retained enough of the habits and reflexes of a former great power, especially when dealing with Washington, to go on acting as one of the European big three. The multiple levels of the dialogue between British and American officials that have always been the special relationship's core strength persisted even at the height of the United Kingdom's most troubled decade, enabling London to play a role in the Transatlantic debate out of all proportion to its objective strengths. This was particularly the case when discussion centred on political and security affairs rather than economics.

The French meanwhile occupied an intermediate position between German economic strength and British economic weakness. Had the 'realities behind diplomacy', to use Paul Kennedy's phrase, been the sole factor in determining the Transatlantic power hierarchy, France would have been some way behind Germany for much of the 1970s but some way ahead of Britain.[62] Its economic performance lay some distance behind the former and some way ahead of the latter. As it was however its position was equally affected by several less objective measures. Thus the Franco-American relationship both derived strength from *and* was weakened by the legacy of previous tension between Paris and Washington. Ford and Kissinger

[60] Mark D Harmon, *The British Labour government and the 1976 IMF crisis* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997).
[61] John W. Young, *Britain and European unity, 1945-1999* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 111–120.
[62] Paul M. Kennedy, *The realities behind diplomacy: background influences on British external policy, 1865-1980* (London: Fontana Press, 1989).

were that much more assiduous in their efforts to flatter, charm and woo Giscard, because of their awareness that French goodwill was much less automatic than that of Britain or Germany. For similar reasons they were ready to tolerate a series of anomalies and inconsistencies in France's pro-Atlantic stance that would not have been as easily accepted had they involved either London or Bonn – notably France's ongoing refusal to participate fully in the international structures devised to respond to the oil crisis. But the exceptionalism of the Washington-Paris entente of the mid-1970s also meant that the relationship was more fragile and less deep than either the special relationship or the ties between Washington and Bonn. When the socialist leader François Mitterrand sought to arrange a meeting with Ford in August 1975 for instance, the NSC advice on the subject rather pointedly observed that no pattern of regular meetings existed with the leader of the French opposition, in marked contrast to the state of affairs with Britain and Germany, where both Margaret Thatcher and Helmut Kohl had been received at the White House.[63] As a result, Mitterrand did not meet the President. The durability of Franco-American rapprochement were Giscard to lose power was hence open to considerable doubt.

The net effect of all this was, however, to make the 1970s a period of remarkable equality in terms of all three key bilateral Transatlantic relationships. Whether measured in terms of the frequency of the meetings, the numbers of subjects discussed, or the willingness to share secrets, each of the European big three was treated in pretty similar fashion by the Ford administration. Naturally differences remained. The Germans were thus the partners of choice for most economic affairs; Britain's strength meanwhile remained security and intelligence cooperation. And as argued above, the newness of the Franco-American entente gave an edge and an intensity to high level encounters between the US and France which was largely absent from the more 'normal' discussion between the US and Germany or the US and Britain. But the overall effect was to create a more balanced situation between the three powers than had prevailed in most earlier periods and to lessen (although never to eliminate entirely) the jealously and rivalry between the United States' three European lieutenants. And this balance was further strengthened by the fact that the only other European power which might have aspired to join the 'big three', namely Italy was going through such a period of economic and political disaster that its

[63] FPL, NSA Country Files, Box 3, France (5), Clift memorandum for Secretary Kissinger, Aug. 11, 1975.

claims for equal treatment were exceptionally weak. It is true admittedly that the Italians did successfully argue their way into the early economic summits on the grounds that exclusion from high level international dialogue would weaken still further the prestige of the ruling Christian Democrats and thereby accentuate Italy's internal weaknesses.[64] But while Aldo Moro and his successors would attend the Rambouillet and Puerto Rico summits (and all other subsequent G6 or G7 meetings), Italy was in most other respects more the object of concerned Transatlantic dialogue than a fully fledged participant. In the wake of the Puerto Rico summit for example the United States, the British, the Germans and the French met secretly in Paris for an emergency discussion of how to put together an economic aid package for Italy to be offered to Rome only in return for a cast iron pledge that the PCI would not be invited to join the Italian government.[65]

Economic summitry and the downplaying of NATO

The other fundamental alteration in the international architecture that was to take place during the Ford years was the advent of regular multilateral summitry between the main five, then six, and finally seven Western powers. Bilateral economic consultation across the Atlantic was of course a feature of the Western system that stretched back to the Marshall Plan. The overarching economic framework moreover had been assured since the Second World War by the Bretton Woods institutions – particularly the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – and, for trade matters, by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Since 1960, moreover, this economic architecture had been supplemented by an institution for multilateral economic coordination amongst the main Western powers in the shape of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The latter's remit had remained somewhat limited, however, and had rarely led to the type of high level political meetings that might have profoundly altered the economic behaviour of the bigger powers. High-level economic coordination remained something of a rarity outside of the European Community – and even within the early EEC, member states

[64] FPL, NSA MemCons, Box 14, Ford, Kissinger, Hartman, Sonnenfeldt, Moro, Rumor, Manzini & Vallauri meeting, Helsinki, Aug. 1, 1975 and Box 15, Ford, Rumor, Gaja, Scowcroft meeting, Sept. 23, 1975.
[65] Antonio Varsori, "Puerto Rico (1976): le potenze occidentali e il problema comunista in Italia", *Ventunesimo Secolo*, year 8, number 16 (Oct. 2008).

retained essentially free hands when it came to most macro-economic decision making.

The collapse of the Bretton Woods structures in the early 1970s was to change this picture dramatically. With the monetary stability of the earlier era gone, and with a darkening economic outlook across the West made darker still by the oil crises, economic discussions amongst the big powers could no longer be left to mere technicians. Instead, first the finance ministers of the leading powers began to gather informally – in a forum dubbed 'the library group' – and then, from 1975 onwards, the Heads of State and government themselves began to meet for what would soon become a regularised meeting every six months.[66]

The initiative for economic summitry came from the European side, with the proposal being launched officially by Giscard, although it is unclear whether the original idea should be traced to the French President or the German Chancellor.[67] It was certainly something that both leaders discussed bilaterally before the proposal was made public and Schmidt energetically backed the French scheme once launched. Furthermore, it was the German leader who was largely responsible for turning the initial French suggestion of a monetary summit – a notion that would almost certainly not have been acceptable to most of France's partners – into the much more appealing and further reaching idea of a summit covering economic affairs more broadly defined.[68] But nothing would happen without American participation, so the reaction of Ford and his advisors was crucial. This does not appear to have been entirely straightforward. William Simon, the Treasury Secretary and many of his officials seem initially to have been opposed.[69] In the end, however, Simon's misgivings were overridden and Ford's assent was given. Western summitry had begun, the first major gathering occurring at Rambouillet in December 1975.[70]

This was a major development. For a start it placed a much greater obligation on each leading Western government to consult about the main aspects of its economic policy. It was true of course that the G5, G6 and G7 imposed no formal

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[66] Harold James, *International Monetary Cooperation Since Bretton Woods* (Washington, D.C: International Monetary Fund, 1996), 266–270.
[67] Johannes von Karczewski, *"Weltwirtschaft ist unser Schicksal": Helmut Schmidt und die Schaffung der Weltwirtschaftsgipfel* (Bonn: Dietz, 2008), 111–127.
[68] Benning, "Economic Power and Political Leadership: The Federal Republic, the West and the Re-shaping of the International Economic System,1972-1976," 195–205.
[69] *ibid.*, 201.
[70] For the US record of discussions at Rambouillet, see http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v31/ch3, documents 122-125

obligation on any of its participants. Any participant could in theory walk away from the meeting and then do precisely the opposite of what had been agreed collectively. More seriously perhaps, the lack of well-developed structures for following up decisions taken at Western summit level, did mean that compliance with what had been decided was less thorough than was the case in comparable European structures which did have well-established enforcement mechanisms. But the start of summitry nonetheless signalled a major change. First it highlighted the fact that economic affairs and in particular a response to the global crisis was *the* priority field of governmental action. Second it reinforced the personal commitment of individual Western leaders to economic policy decision-making. Neither domestic economic policy-making nor international coordination of efforts to fight inflation, combat energy shortages, or re-start economic growth were any longer matters that could be left to finance ministers and their staffs. This in turn made it less likely, although not impossible, that individual countries would carry out major economic policy changes without giving any advance warning to their foreign counterparts – it is a genuinely open question whether the Nixon shocks of 1971 could have been carried out in an era of regular Western economic summitry. Third, economic summitry drew a much more clear-cut line between the big and the small players in the world economy than previous decision-making structures. Giscard's vision of the summits as an informal fireside chat involving just the key leaders would fade over time as the membership gradually rose, as the structure became more bureaucratized, and as the size of each national delegation increased inexorably.[71] But the basic notion of singling out a small group of key countries as those primarily responsible for the direction and health of the international economy remained and was an important departure from previous practice. Fourth, and of particular importance for the argument of this article, the advent of summitry represented a remarkable acknowledgement of Europe's weight in global economic decision making. Four of the six participants at Rambouillet were Western European (Germany, France, Britain and Italy; the two non-Europeans were the US and Japan) and while the Canadians would participate from the Puerto Rico summit of June 1976 onwards, this move away from European over-representation was more than off-set by the subsequent agreements to permit the participation of first the European Commission President and then, from the early

[71] Robert D Putnam and Nicholas Bayne, *Hanging together: the seven-power summits* (London: Heinemann for the Royal Institute of International Affairs,, 1984), 44–58.

1980s onwards, also of the country representing the rotating Presidency of the EC.[72] At most G7 summits from 1982 onwards, three non-European leaders were flanked by five or six Europeans (the number varied depending on whether the EC Presidency was held by one of the larger four EC member states who would be going to the G7 anyway or one of the smaller countries who did not normally attend). In meetings which did not operate by means of formal votes this European over-population need not have mattered too much. But given the way that the G7 was a forum which emphasised debate, discussion and peer pressure, the extraordinarily high number of European 'peers' undoubtedly had an impact on the sort of concerns that were likely to be brought to the G7 table and upon the decisions taken or not taken.

Finally, the start of regular summitry signalled an important change in the way that the Americans conceptualised both their ties with Europe and the means by which they exercised leadership. Up until the mid-1970s most American leaders and foreign policy decision-makers perceived NATO as being the most vital institutional Transatlantic bridge. The regularity with which the NATO Secretary General visited the White House would be one illustration of this fact; the way in which US Presidents periodically used NATO summits to meet as many European leaders as possible in a short period of time, another.[73] And the role played by NATO in resisting the Gaullist challenge of the mid-1960s would only provide further confirmation.[74] But economic summitry abruptly altered this pattern. Suddenly it was the G7 that most regularly brought US Presidents into direct contact with their European counterparts and that gradual move towards equipping NATO with the wherewithal and the expertise to become a forum for economic as well as security debate – a trend to which Möckli's otherwise excellent study wrongly attaches some importance[75] – came to naught. NATO representatives indeed became quite anxious at what was taking place, with at least one permanent representative complaining at the way in which even issues such as East-West trade (an economic topic with a very

[72] Roy Jenkins, *European diary, 1977-1981* (London: Collins, 1989), 20–2. See also Giuliano Garavini, "The Battle for the Participation of the European Community in the G7 (1975-1977)", *Journal of European Integration History*, 12/1 (2006), 141-158.
[73] The March 1969 visit to Europe by President Nixon referred to above is a case in point. Revealingly, however, the meeting with de Gaulle while occurring in the same visit did *not* take place on the margins of the NATO meeting.
[74] Andreas. Wenger, "Crisis and Opportunity: NATO's Transformation and the Multilateralization of Detente, 1966-1968," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 6, no. 1 (2004): 22-74; James Ellison, *The United States, Britain and the transatlantic crisis: rising to the Gaullist challenge, 1963-68* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
[75] Möckli, *European foreign policy during the Cold War*, 336–337.

clear Cold War edge) were now debated at the G7 rather than within the structures of the Atlantic Alliance.[76]

At one level this transformation was primarily the product of a changed international environment in which economic challenges had become more important than security issues.[77] Moving the key locus for Transatlantic dialogue away from NATO and towards a new structure primarily conceived to discuss economic affairs, made sense at a time when the principal threat to the West came not from Soviet invasion but instead from the type of internal economic dislocation which was likely to push ever greater numbers of western voters towards communist parties.[78] But as important was the way in which France ceased to be seen by the US and its main allies as a likely source of turbulence within the Western bloc – the state of affairs that had characterised most of the period when de Gaulle had been in power, but also, to a lesser extent, the Pompidou years – but instead as an important part of the solution. NATO's usefulness as a vehicle for solving the West's difficulties during the 1970s was restricted by French sensitivity to participation in any initiative which bore a NATO label and by the tendency of senior French representatives to absent themselves from key NATO meetings. Giscard for example did not attend the NATO summit in 1974 (despite its billing as a major celebration marking the Alliance's first 25 years) and only travelled to Brussels in 1975 to attend a dinner hosted by the Belgian King that was not formally part of the NATO summit.[79] The French also blocked a Canadian suggestion that NATO summits be convened on an annual basis.[80] So if France was to be brought into any collective Western response to the economic crisis and not to allowed to be a potentially disruptive outside influence, new structures distinct from NATO needed to be devised. G7 was part of the answer.

One final institutional change that dates from this period which deserves to be mentioned is the advent, from the end of 1974 onwards, of institutionalised European summitry, with the creation of the European Council.[81] This was clearly of major importance for the subsequent trajectory of European integration history – indeed it

[76] FPL, NSA MemCons, Box 20, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft meeting, July 7, 1976
[77] Benning, "Economic Power and Political Leadership: The Federal Republic, the West and the Re-shaping of the International Economic System,1972-1976."
[78] Schmidt was particularly prone to pessimism along these lines. See e.g. FPL, NSA MemCons, Box 14, Schmidt, Genscher, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft meeting, July 27, 1975.
[79] FPL, NSA MemCons, Box 12, Cabinet meeting, June 4, 1975.
[80] *ibid.*
[81] Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, "Filling the EEC leadership vacuum? The creation of the European Council in 1974," *Cold War History* 10, no. 3 (August 2010): 315-339.

was arguably the single most important institutional change in the EC/EU since the 1957 Treaty of Rome. But it was also a step which mattered in Atlantic terms. For a start it made it more likely that those multiple European powers that attended Atlantic level gatherings would do so with a greater degree of coordination of their individual national positions. The issue of European over-representation in other words became even more acute given the fact that on quite a few of the issues that were likely to be discussed at G7 level, the four, five or six European representatives would be bound to a predetermined common position. But is also mattered because of the way that European summitry softened the division between those European powers that were included in the putative political directorate with the United States and/or in the G5, G6 or G7 and those that were not.[82] Belgium or the Netherlands for instance would know that they had a valuable additional forum in which to press their views on those European countries that were represented in the highest level of dialogue with the United States and an occasion when they could seek to bind the hands of Europe's global level representatives by means of prior collective European decisions. This did not stop the smaller European countries from lobbying, ultimately with some success, for the G7 circle to be widened to include both the European Commission and the EC Presidency. But it did make rather easier to swallow the new, rather more naked, hierarchy which had appeared amongst the Western powers.

An enduring impact?

Ford's term of office was a short one and by 1977 he and Kissinger had lost power and had been replaced by Jimmy Carter who would take US foreign policy in general and relations with Western Europe in particular in a series of rather different directions. The Transatlantic convergence of the period analysed in this article, would be replaced by arguments over whose responsibility it was to inject growth and dynamism into the world economy, disputes over security matters (particularly the neutron bomb affair), and, most fundamentally, the start of a real divergence between a US view of the Cold War that increasingly rejected détente and a Western European

[82] An indication of the sensitivity of this issue for the smaller European countries is provided by the Luxembourg and Belgian *demarches* about the potential of the Puerto Rico summit to damage the EC, see FPL, NSA Country Files, Luxembourg, Hormats to Scowcroft, June 7, 1976, Sonnenfeldt to Kissinger, undated but enclosing, Sonnenfeldt-Meisch conversation, June 5, 1976 & Sonnenfeldt to Kissinger, June 4, 1976.

approach that continued to value the concept.[83] It could therefore be asked whether it is worthwhile getting excited about a series of institutional and attitudinal changes made in the course of one of the shortest US presidencies of the twentieth century.

There are at least three reasons why the changes outlined above do deserve to be reflected upon. The first is that the general US foreign policy approach to Western Europe and the behaviour of Henry Kissinger during the Ford period, and in particular Kissinger's seeming readiness to accept a much greater degree of multilateralism and international consultation than he had been comfortable with during the Nixon years, does suggest that a significant change occurred. For Kissinger as Ford's Secretary of State appears to have been significantly more of a team-player than he had been under Nixon. Whether this reflects Ford's moderating influence, the sobering effect of Nixon's resignation, the greater strictures imposed upon US foreign policy by an ever more powerful Congress, the accumulated learning from mistakes made in the earlier period, or something else entirely is a judgement best left to those better versed in the internal workings of the US administration. But that there was a real change in Kissinger's behaviour and approach to West-West diplomacy at least in the course of the 1974-6 period seems to be beyond dispute.

The second historiographical impact of the above analysis is to erode still further the notion that the 1970s were little more than an extended foreign policy and economic disaster for Western Europe. This has long been an assertion that has been open to question, despite the undeniable economic and political difficulties experienced by many Western European states in the aftermath of 1973 economic downturn: in the integration history field for instance, the identification of the 1970s as 'a dismal decade' overlooks the four crucial developments of the period, namely the first enlargement (1973), the creation of the European Council (1974/5), the move towards the direct elections of the European Parliament and the launch of the European Monetary System, both 1979. But what this article also suggests is that the 1970s were a time when Western Europe actually gained in collective weight on the world stage rather than lost influence. It is true of course that the radical vision of the early 1970s, centred upon the idea that a united Europe could become a truly emancipated foreign policy actor equipped not only with a single voice in world

[83] Kristina Spohr Readman, "Germany and the Politics of the Neutron Bomb, 1975–1979," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 21, no. 2 (2010): 259; Klaus Wiegrefe, *Das Zerwürfnis: Helmut Schmidt, Jimmy Carter und die Krise der deutsch-amerikanische Beziehungen* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2005).

affairs, but also a single currency, soon faded. But its replacement by an international system in which the United States had fallen into the habit of regularly consulting all of Europe's big three on many of the key foreign policy issues of the day, and in which the US had agreed to participate in a system of economic summitry in which Western Europe was almost grotesquely over-represented, still represented a highly significant advance from the pattern of purely bilateral consultations with Britain, sometimes with Germany, and occasionally with France that had characterised the first twenty five years of the Cold War. The lengthy economic crises of the 1970s and early 1980s and the way in which their latter stages were marked by a much stronger than average performance by the Japanese and by a much quicker US recovery under Reagan than was the case in Western Europe, would certainly lead in the medium term to a structural weakening of Western Europe's position in the world; but in institutional terms at least, the 1970s were somewhat paradoxically characterised by a significant strengthening of Western Europe's position. This strengthening constituted the belated institutional response to Western Europe's dramatic economic and political recovery since 1945.

Finally and most importantly, most of the changes that are described in this article would appear to have been remarkably enduring. No formal political directorate admittedly ever emerged. And the intensity of individual bilateral dialogues between Washington and the European big three would wax and wane on the bases of the issues of the moment and the personal chemistry between the US and European leaders. But from a first reading of the Reagan papers at least the same pattern of regular consultation with Britain, Germany *and* France which had begun under Ford does seem to have endured into the 1980s and probably, in the light of the recent releases of documents on Germany unification, up until the end of the Cold War and maybe beyond.[84] Likewise economic summitry continued with Europe continuing to be disproportionately over-represented up until the very recent move to replace the G7, or G8 as it had become, with the G20. Indeed the increased dynamism of the European integration process during the post-1985 period at least almost certainly meant that the solid phalanx of Europeans who turned up at every

[84] For a first assessment of Western European-US relations in the Reagan period, see a volume under preparation by Kiran Patel and Ken Weisbrode. Hanns Jürgen Küsters, Daniel Hofmann, and Germany (West). Bundeskanzleramt, *Deutsche Einheit: Sonderedition aus den Akten des Bundeskanzleramtes 1989/90* (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 1998); Patrick Salmon, *German Unification 1989-1990: Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series III* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2009).

G7/8 meeting was even more likely to act in a fairly unified fashion and punch significantly above their global demographic or economic weight. As a result, it is fair to conclude that the international architecture of the final stages of the Cold War, both in security terms and as far as the management of the world economy was concerned, was surprisingly Eurocentric. This may have been an era of the global Cold War[85] – but the institutional mechanisms that the West devised to respond to the global challenge were overwhelmingly centred on the continent where the East-West conflict had begun.

[85] Odd Arne Westad, *The global Cold War: third world interventions and the making of our times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).