CHAPTER 6. Phase II: From No.2 in the Eastern Bloc to Just Another Isolation:

The "Policy of Self-Assertion"

Even though East Berlin had achieved its major foreign policy goal of the "Policy of Recognition" in the 1970s, Bonn still maintained some reservations with regard to full diplomatic recognition of the GDR and East German citizenship. As a consequence, East Germany's international status and further establishment as an equal member of the international state community still remained the major focal point of East German international engagement. All in all, one may speak not of the end, but rather of a transformation and diversification of the "Policy of Recognition" into a "Policy of Self-Assertion" based on a variety of foreign policy strategies. This policy change could first be detected in the 1960s, when the future Secretary-General of the SED, Erich Honecker, became considerably more active in foreign policy making, paving the way for his future political course.

Phase II of the GDR's foreign policy again can be characterized by two sub-phases which gradually merged into one another. After the GDR was established as an equal member of the international community of states, their "High Times of Diplomacy" would last for about a decade. Then, the internal weaknesses of the GDR, most prominently the SED's lack of political legitimacy amid a pressing economic crisis, became more and more apparent. Whereas foreign trade during the second sub-phase of the "Phase of Recognition" had been used to promote political ends, this relationship was somewhat reversed now and ideological principles had yielded to economic pragmatism. And due to the growing economic and political problems of the late 1970s, the GDR gradually expanded its foreign policy on trade relations outside the Eastern Bloc to delay East German economic decline. Decay caused by insufficient flexibility of both the political and the economic systems exponentially accelerated in the late 1980s:[1] When Gorbachev initiated a policy change toward more transparency (Glasnost) and reform (Perestroika),[2] the East

1 | Judt, 2008, 501.

2 | Courtois (Ed.), 2010, 83f; For a detailed account on the reforms: Kotz/Weir, 1997, 63-130.

German regime was neither willing nor able to maintain its closeness to the guarantor of its existence and as such did not follow the Soviet Union on its new political and economic path.

In accordance with the first phase, the analysis of the second phase of the GDR's foreign policy focuses on the two major external determinants: The dominance of the Soviet Union and East Berlin's confrontation with the "other Germany." The "other Germany" had served as a consistently reactive determinant for the GDR's foreign policy during the "Phase of Recognition," whereas Moscow actively shaped East Berlin's foreign affairs as a directive determinant. This allocation profoundly changed after the establishment of official relations between the two German states. The mechanisms of consultation between the SED and CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) had become sufficiently routine after Moscow replaced Ulbricht with the less precarious and more loyal Honecker. Moscow settled for observing the GDR's activities and providing emphatic "advice" if needed, instead of outright intervention.

1. Keeping the Distance from Bonn – Oscillating Between "Rapprochement" and "Dissociation"[3]

The second phase of the GDR's foreign policy is characterized by East Berlin's constant effort to balance its "rapprochement" with the "imperialist Germany,"[4] while keeping the distance necessary for justifying the GDR's existence as the "better Germany." In the early years of the "New Eastern Policy" and Bahr's notion of "change through rapprochement,"[5] the motives of West Germany's policy change towards East Berlin were not fully clear to the SED regime. Thus, Ulbricht's initial reaction was not only to keep his distance to Bonn, but even to increase it: "When Brandt implements a new 'Ostpolitik' now, we'll execute a new 'Westpolitik,' one they haven't seen before."[6] As a reply to Brandt's "Unity of the Nation," Ulbricht created the "Two Nations Hypothesis," one of which was a "socialist and German nation state"[7] in its own right, the "belated nation"[8] in socialist terms. The new constitution of 1974 removed the last references to the

3 | Scholtyseck, 2003, 30.

4 | Ibid., 33.

5 | Bahr, Egon, 1963, Akademische Akademie Tutzing, in: Haftendorn, 2001, 191.

6 | "Wenn Brandt eine neue Ostpolitik macht, dann machen wir eine neue Westpolitik, und zwar eine, die sich gewaschen hat." Ulbricht, Walter, 1969, in: Scholtyseck, 2003, 28.

7 | Hacker, 1987; Schroeder, 1999, 206.

8 | Helmut Plessner on the role of the "belated nation" ("verspätete Nation") and the emergence of Nation-Socialism in Germany, see: Bialas, 2010, 245ff. On the efforts to establish a separate "socialist German nation" and the "Two-Nations Hypothesis" in the GDR, see: Hacker, 1987; Schroeder, 1999, 206.

former unified Germany. Considering the "Grundlagenvertrag" and the following "policy of two German nations," it is no wonder that the stagnation of the détente on the international level was mirrored on the inner-German level as well.

The GDR also attempted to distance themselves from Bonn by trying to make their economic model more attractive. Higher salaries and more availability of consumer goods were used to motivate workers, with the hope that this socialist version of "bread and circuses"[9] would increase productivity. While Ulbricht had always kept spending in line with revenues, Honecker significantly overstretched the GDR's economic abilities. From the late 1960s onward, the GDR's economic difficulties grew in number and severity while attempts to modernize the rigid system failed. When Ulbricht was replaced, hopes were high for political and economic change for the better. In reality, however, Honecker put an end to all "tentative attempts of reform."[10] As a willing acolyte of the USSR, his economic policies also strictly followed the Kremlin's course. As early as 1972 Honecker removed the remnants of any independent entrepreneurship and in doing so shut down the "last resorts of the bourgeois milieu."[11] At the time, Honecker had already realized the gravity of the looming economic crisis: "We might as well declare bankruptcy."[12] Regardless, the Secretary-General decided to keep these problems from the population and instead of austerity plans, he introduced extensive social policies.

In June 1971, Honecker announced "unity of economic and social policy"[13] to improve social benefits and the standard of living. The shortage of consumer goods was to be eased by short-term imports and mostly Western loans instead of long-term investments. At the time this "socialism of consumption"[14] seemed to aim at nothing more than the appeasement of the population and to subsist in the shadow of the economic "wonderland" in West Germany. Social benefits were tied not to economic performance, but rather to the "SED's will to survive."[15] In combination with successes in the international sphere, these policies were supposed to mollify East Germany's population and uphold the reign of the SED. However, the effort only accelerated the recession. The economic problems of the 1970s erupted as a full-blown crisis in the early 1980s, significantly affecting the GDR's activities in the developing world.

Honecker's social offensive was in large part financed by political loans from Bonn. Thus the improvement in the GDR's relations with its Western sibling

9 | Schroeder, 1999, 199.

10 | Schroeder, 2006, 89.

11 | Neubert, 1997, 204.

12 | "An sich müssen wir Pleite anmelden." Erich Honecker, 1975, in: Wentker, 393.

13 | German: Einheit von Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik.

14 | German: Konsumsozialismus, in: Siebs, 1999, 112.

15 | "Überlebenswille der SED-Führung." Wentker, 2007, 393.

was mostly motivated by economic considerations,[16] bringing about other severe political problems: While conceding as little as possible to Brandt's demands for "humanitarian relief" for the divided German population,[17] Honecker tried to draw as much know-how and technology to the GDR as possible so that East Germany remained "No. 2" in the Eastern Bloc. Nonetheless, the "humanitarian relief" promoted more exchange of good, people and especially ideas, between the two Germanys. As a result, the GDR's population became less and less convinced by negative news coverage of the "imperialistic West" and the efforts to control coverage by Western media on the GDR proved insufficient.[18] These developments led to more citizens questioning the SED's legitimacy and its political system, further undermining the party's absolute claim of primacy. Also, the GDR's economic dependency on West Germany became a never-ending source of conflict between East Berlin and Moscow: The Kremlin seemed to sense the imminent dangers posed by inter-German arrangements to the viability of the East German state.[19]

At the beginning of political exchange between the two Germanys, the GDR's dilemma had become clear: The "unsolved conflict between claims of ideology and political reality,"[20] as Ludz describes it. At first, international détente demanded "rapprochement" to the unloved sibling state; later on it was economic need demanding it. However, any relaxation of relations between the blocs and thus between the GDR and FRG somewhat questioned the GDR's justification for existence. The GDR's "rapprochement" regularly had to be accompanied by national "dissociation" based on the rules of "class struggle"[21] to ensure the GDR's ideological legitimation as the "democratic," that is, socialist alternative. Regardless of the superficial reconciliation between East and West, the GDR's foremost interest remained its "external and internal consolidation,"[22] rather than further political "fraternization" with its sibling. In addition to that internal development had gained importance compared to Soviet influence and West German attraction during Honecker's "reign," as political and economic problems intensified and again endangered the GDR's existence from within. After the

16 | One of the most spectacular incidents was the so-called "Billion Deal" of 1983 between the Bavarian Prime Minister Franz Josef Strauß and the Head of Commercial Coordination (KoKo) Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski. Strauß granted two loans to the economical ailing GDR in exchange for the dismounting of the GDR's border protection system, including its automatic guns and other concessions in visa issues and prisoners' ransoms, in: Scholtyseck, 2003, 41.

17 | German: menschliche Erleichterungen.

18 | Trampe, in: Judt, 1998, 311.

19 | Scholtyseck, 2003, 41.

20 | Ludz, 1977, 300.

21 | ibid., 299.

22 | Scholtyseck, 2003, 32.

"wave of diplomatic recognition" of the early 1970s, international acceptance and respect for Honecker as an esteemed statesman was more important for internal than for external policies.[23] Honecker's public appearances more often than not were intended to brush over the accumulating internal political, economic and social problems. The "discourse of danger" of foreign policy in the GDR had shifted from the external to the internal sphere.

2. Growing Distance from "Brother Moscow": "Steadfast Friendship" in Danger?

"Without us there is no GDR,"[24] clarified Leonid Illich Brezhnev, reminding Erich Honecker of his loyalties towards the Soviet Union. In the GDR's constitution of 1974, the alliance with the Soviet Union was declared "irrevocable."[25] Internally, the GDR was continuously kept on a very short political "leash." However, the USSR apparently had other plans for "Socialist Germany" with regard to its position in the international community. At least outside the Eastern Bloc, it appeared to be in the Kremlin's interest to generate the image of a sovereign GDR. During any negotiations concerned with questions of sovereignty of the young state, Moscow stressed the GDR's autonomy and demanded to draw into consideration East Berlin's position. During the negotiations of a treaty package called the "Ostverträge" (Eastern Treaties) in the early 1970s, Hermann Axen,[26] at the time chairman of the Committee for Foreign Affairs of the GDR, even considered the GDR as the Soviet Union's "main consulting partner."[27] With regard to the topic such a characterization might even be true, but Moscow did neither need nor desire to consult any of its satellite states. However, the "big brother" withdrew more and more from the GDR's day-to-day politics, first from the internal, then from the external sphere.[28] Gradually, and within the predetermined scope of action, the GDR used its new leeway to establish itself as a "junior partner"[29] to the Soviet Union internationally and within the Warsaw Pact.

Without doubt, the SED functionaries were well aware of the dubious character of its "limited sovereignty": Soviet "consultant" were to remain in the GDR

23 | Wentker, 2007, 372.

24 | Scholtyseck, 2003, 30.

25 | Constitution of the GDR of 1968, Version October 7 1974, Art.6(2).

26 | From the late 1960s onward, Hermann Axen was considered the "architect" of the GDR's foreign policy. In 1970 he became a member of the Politbüro, in 1971 chairman of the committee for foreign affairs of the Volkskammer. in: Müller-Enbergs/Wielgohs/Hoffmann (Ed.), 2000, 34.

27 | Axen, 1996, 356.

28 | Wentker, 2007, 367.

29 | Gasteyger, 1976, 38.

throughout its existence.[30] They were supported by a wide network of undercover informants which guaranteed the leadership in Moscow to be informed of any political developments within the country. This arrangement was an open secret and political functionaries would act in anticipatory obedience and refuse to deviate too far from the field of political maneuver Moscow had staked out for them. To that effect, the "exchange of dictators"[31] from Ulbricht to Honecker in 1971 meant more than a simple change of the figurehead. Honecker's inauguration was not only an act by Moscow's grace but a well-planned stroke which moved the GDR closer to the Kremlin again.[32] Another revision of the constitution bore witness to this development: The GDR was to pursue a foreign policy of "socialism and peace, for international understanding and security" based on the "Leninist policy of peaceful co-existence"[33] and the "irrevocable"[34] alliance with the Socialist Soviet Republics was lifted to constitutional rank.

This political bond was not meant for eternity. Its demise, however, in the end was caused by quite other reasons than the Kremlin might have feared. The disintegration of relations between East Berlin and Moscow can be traced back as far as the 1970s and was tightly interwoven with the GDR's economic ties with West Germany. When the Kremlin found out about the extent of East German financial dependency, Honecker avoided the open confrontation with Brezhnev and sent Axen on his behalf.[35] The disagreement over East Germany's policy towards its capitalist counterpart was never really addressed and remedied and thus kept smoldering below the shining surface of Soviet-East German relations. Meanwhile, the GDR had to witness an improvement of Soviet-West German relations and old fears of being "sold" as a political pawn sacrificed by the "big brother" were just as present as ever before.

The first harbinger of estrangement between East Berlin and Moscow was Brezhnev's surprisingly moderate reaction to political unrest and opposition in Poland in 1980. The SED regime readily declared the reformist movement a "counter-revolutionary" danger – clearly the "shock of 1953" had never lost its sting. But the Polish "aberration" from the path of Soviet bloc discipline did not result in the merciless military intervention by the Soviet Army East Berlin had been hoping for.[36] Apparently, political and economic pressures prevented a Soviet

30 | On the early activities of the Soviet secret services and their interconnectedness with the East German secret service see: Kowalczuck, 2013, 30-46 and 53.

31 | Schroeder, 2006, 89.

32 | Wentker, 2007, 363.

33 | Constitution of the GDR of October 7 1974, Art. 6; Hänisch, in: Hahn/Hänisch/Busse/Lingner, 1974, 207.

34 | Constitution of the GDR of October 7 1974, Art. 6 I.

35 | Scholtysek, 2003, 33f.

36 | Ibid., 37.

reaction similar to the earlier "counter-revolutionary" incidences in the GDR, Hungary or the ČSSR. Times indeed had changed when Moscow opted against the possible political damage and loss of prestige caused by a military enforcement of the Brezhnev Doctrine.

3. The Double-Edged Sword of International Recognition and the End of the GDR

The early years of this second phase of the GDR's foreign policy can be considered the "High Times of Diplomacy." The GDR became significantly more active and the analyst might recognize long-term foreign policy strategies. Due to a lack of alternatives, East Berlin's foreign policy efforts after the "wave of recognition" in general displayed a noticeable focus on mediation and multilateral support.[37] With the blessing of the Soviet Union,[38] the GDR became considerably more active within the framework of international organizations and conferences like the sub-organizations of the United Nations[39] or the CSCE Process. The latter turned out to be a double-edged sword for the SED regime, though. By signing the Final Act of Helsinki in 1975 Honecker himself had confirmed a comprehensive guarantee of human rights.[40] The Conference in Helsinki in the end provided the "legitimate reasoning for the people in the Eastern Bloc and especially the GDR which could not simply be put aside by the ruling party."[41] The gap between political promises and social reality was made clear.

In the European context the two major fields for the GDR's foreign policy goals were the CSCE process and the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) negotiations, but not for long. Just as many contemporaries had predicted, the "European Peace Process" and its conferences somewhat stagnated in the late 1970s. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the new "ice age" in the Cold War also froze any movement in the European power constellations. The functionaries of the SED had to realize that the GDR, even though it was now an equal member of the international community, still was subject to the rules of the bloc and that it remained a small state with little to no leverage on the playing field of Europe. This realization without doubt further intensified the GDR's engagement towards the countries of the Global South:[42] First the Arab states, then Africa, and finally, in the late 1980s, Asia. Outside Europe, the GDR more than ever aimed to make its

37 | Muth, 2001, 23.

38 | Scholtyseck, 2003, 35.

39 | Both German states obtained a full UN membership in 1973.

40 | Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE).

41 | Müller, 2010.

42 | Scholtyseck, 2003, 36.

mark as the "better Germany," free of a colonial past. In the meantime, the Soviet Union, the major determinant of East German foreign policy, was well on its way to political transformation.

3.1 "Limits" May Change: The Transformation of the Major Determinant of East German Foreign Policy

> "Perestroika - the process of change in our country – started from above. It could not have been otherwise in an authoritarian state."[43]
>
> (Mikhail Gorbachev, former General-Secretary of the CPSU)

After Brezhnev passed away in late 1982, the transitional phase with two secretary generals of the Communist Party, Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov Konstantin Ustinowich Czhernenko, revealed the first structural problems of the huge political "Empire" Moscow had built.[44] Despite several attempts to reform the Bolshevik system, the Soviet Union never actually touched its central principle of organization, the "Communist Party Dictatorship," including the "omnipresent surveillance and social penetration"[45] to uphold political control of society. Interestingly, this politically self-controlling system, which was exceptionally resistant to change, carried the seeds for its own destruction within: "The centralized, autarchic, dictatorial institutions of the Soviet system [also] dictated that the source of change had to originate from within and at the top."[46] The hierarchic structure focused on a single, ultimate decision-maker who could move beyond the control of its system of origin: the Secretary-General of the CPSU.

The new and noticeably younger Secretary-General of the Communist Party, Mikhail Gorbachev, aimed to tackle the country's problems by introducing a strategy of "radical reform"[47] that he officially announced at the XXVIIth party meeting in February 1986. With the initial support of the "hard liner" and without immediately challenging the existing structures, Gorbachev aimed to change the system incrementally. The first priority was to change its actors. Gorbachev simply replaced the majority of his opponents.[48] Clearly, his reform endeavors did not rest on pluralist inclusion of interests, but rather upheld the "Leninist tradition [of] centralized political power."[49] Nonetheless, this new path included a comprehensive new foreign policy that was confirmed at the Comecon meeting in November 1986. This new approach firstly aimed to stop Moscow's confrontation

43 | Gorbatchev, 1996, 76.

44 | Scholtyseck, 2003, 42.

45 | McFaul, 2001, 36; On the "Political Structure of the Soviet Sys.": Kotz/Weir, 1997, 23–33.

46 | McFaul, 2001, 39.

47 | Hewett quoting Gorbachev, in: Kotz/Weir, 1997, FN 80, 55; Scholtyseck, 2003, 43.

48 | Adelman/Palmieri, 1989, 233.

49 | McFaul, 2011, 57.

with the West, secondly to create a feeling of security for the other international actors with regard to the Soviet Union, and thirdly to reduce spending on security and developmental aid.[50] Most importantly, the new policy meant nothing less than the official termination of the Brezhnev Doctrine. This "Wind of Change,"[51] as the international atmosphere of the time was summed up by the West German band The Scorpions, was bound to have an extremely high impact on the Socialist alliance.

This is where real trouble started for the SED-led GDR. Already in the 1970s, Honecker was hoping to be able to visit the FRG as the official Head of State of the GDR. East Germany considered this high-ranking visit a significant step to full diplomatic recognition by the "other Germany." But the Kremlin at the time rejected outright the endeavor and even the official agreement on a visit in April 1983, which had been a success for East German diplomacy, did little to impress the Soviet Union. At the very last minute the SED regime had to cancel the trip. This attitude in Moscow was not about to change before the profound shift in Soviet leadership under Gorbachev. When in 1987 Honecker finally visited Bonn, East Berlin considered it a decisive step for the GDR toward full sovereignty and diplomatic recognition. However, it instead may be considered the very last moment of "diplomatic glory" for a decaying state and an aging party elite that was neither willing nor able to react to Moscow's policy change or the shifts within the bipolar international system.

The ongoing disagreements between Moscow and East Berlin over how the latter should frame its relations to the "other Germany" were now complemented by more severe discrepancies. Moscow's policy change and the new scope of action it granted to the members of the Warsaw Pact questioned basic ideological and political foundations of the Eastern Bloc, which had been part of Moscow's "guarantee of existence" for the GDR and thus an integral part of the SED's "Policy of Survival." The USSR immediately translated "Glasnost" and "Perestroika" to the international sphere and opened up new doorways for the members of the Warsaw Pact and the ideological allies of the Global South. In a short time, the internal and external room for these regimes' maneuvering extended significantly. For the GDR, however, this policy change barred the path that the "SED state" had followed for over four decades, while the SED regime was not able to make use of this newfound freedom. In an often-quoted interview in 1987 with the West German magazine "STERN," Kurt Hager, member of the Politbüro and assigned with questions on ideology, summarized East Germany's position towards Moscow's reform policies in the most pointed way: "Would you [...] put up new wallpaper just

50 | Kanet, in: Greiner/Müller/Weber, 2010, 57. On the effect of Gorbatchev's policy change on the "international community states," esp. the "West": Adelman/Palmieri, 1989, 242.

51 | The Scorpions, Album "Crazy World," Lyrics "Wind of Change" in English and Russian; Also see: Zum Mauerfall, in: Spiegel Online, October 27 1999.

because your neighbor decided to do so?"[52] The GDR's political system, its policies and functionaries were not flexible enough to leave this dead end and find an alternative.[53] Gieseke even speaks of an emerging "schism" between Moscow and East Berlin at the time. Mielke had prevented a meeting between functionaries of the KGB and MfS in April 1989, as he was "worried about the negative impact of the Soviet reformative spirit."[54] In retrospect, one may conclude that the GDR had been a child of the Cold War. Hence, the only thing left to do for Honecker and his generation was to cling to the old ideology of bloc confrontation in their foreign policy. Even though the "Big Brother" in Moscow had proclaimed a new style of fashion, Honecker kept faith with "socialism in the colors of the GDR."[55]

3.2 Why the Dissolution of its "Foreign Policy Limits" meant the End of the GDR

Inspired by changes in nearby countries, most prominently in Hungary and the ČSSR, the summer 1989 witnessed an increase in refugees who tried to flee the GDR via West German embassies in the neighboring countries. The lack of legitimacy inside the GDR had built up and erupted in enormous demonstrations in the GDR's bigger cities: In the month of October hundreds of thousands took to the streets, from Leipzig to Berlin. The SED regime's "discourse of danger" had manifested. However, the people and the regime alike could not yet be sure about the true intentions and extent of Moscow's "new" course of policy towards the members of the Warsaw Pact – especially not with regard to the value of an SED-led GDR for the Kremlin. In the end the Soviet Union's troops did nothing to intervene and nothing to save the SED regime. In late October of 1989, the SED Politbüro decided to dethrone Honecker to save a socialist GDR, the "Primacy of the Party," and thus their own neck. But the change to the new leader, Egon Krenz, came too late to make any difference,[56] as this was also the moment when "the full truth about the condition of the GDR's economy came to light."[57] Overstrained and still inflexible, the new regime stumbled into both drastic and uncoordinated action. Triggered by a double entendre in a public interview by Günter Schabowski, the "wall" in Berlin had to yield to the will of the people.[58] After almost three

52 | Kein Tapetenwechsel: Kurt Hager beantwortete Fragen der Illustrierten Stern, in: Stern, April 9 1987.

53 | Muth, 2001, 9 and 22.

54 | Gieseke, in: Kaminski/Persak/Gieseke, 2009, 203.

55 | Honecker, Erich, Report of the Politbüro to the VII. Conference of the Central Committee, in: Neues Deutschland, December 2 1988.

56 | On the downfall of Honecker see for example Malycha/Winters, 2009, 333-339, Schroeder, 1998, 300f.

57 | Schroeder, 1998, 308.

58 | Scholtyseck, 2003, 48; Schroeder/Staadt, in: Courtois, 2010, 138.

decades of detention in their own country, the people in the GDR regained their full freedom of movement.

The GDR had broken. It was a period of fundamental changes in East German society, and also for the political system. Consequently, these changes also disrupted the centralized process of foreign policy making profoundly. Heinz-Dieter Winter, at the time Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, remembers: "There were almost no internal orders and directives anymore. I had to find my own line of argument."[59] The ambassadors mostly had to act on their own accord. While the MfAA and its embassies at first tried to continue their regular work under the new circumstances, the first and final free elections in East Germany in March 1990 sealed the GDR's fate. The only task left to the foreign policy apparatus was to administer its dissolution and find new assignments for the former personnel.[60] The newly granted scope of action in the international realm could neither be filled nor used by the decaying regime. While the international realm demanded more flexible foreign policy reactions, the GDR's old one-party system could not afford this flexibility internally. The time was up for any gradual reforms.

The people of the GDR had been calling for free elections for a long time, and finally won them in March 1990. This election presented the choice between a supposedly reformed separate socialist GDR or German reunification under Article 23 of the "Grundgesetz" of the FRG. The outcome did not leave any doubt: Despite all its endeavors between bribery and coercion, the SED-led GDR had not been able to "integrate" its own population. The majority voted against gradual reforms along a "Third Path" and for the end of the GDR. They voted for a unified Germany under the umbrella of the "Grundgesetz." In the end "the democratically elected government under [...] Lothar de Maizère (CDU) became a kind of executive organ for the liquidation of the GDR."[61]

Just as Moscow's active role in determining the GDR's foreign policy at the time had diminished, Bonn's role had increased. At first Bonn took the place as the major determinant of the GDR's foreign policy and expanded its impact up to the point that the GDR's "foreign policy initiative was incrementally taken over by Bonn" during the "2+4 negotiations."[62] At the same time, the end of the GDR was somewhat the harbinger to the last throes of East Germany's other foreign policy determinant, its "guarantor of existence." "Glasnost" and "Perestroika" had come too late to save the sclerotic political giant that was the Soviet Union:

59 | Interview with Heinz-Dieter Winter July 3 2012.

60 | Phone interview with Werner Sittig May 7 2014.

61 | Scholtyseck, 2003, 51.

62 | Scholtyseck, 2003, 50; The "2+4 negotiations" resulted in the Treaty on the final settlement with respect to Germany of September 12 1990; PA AA MULT 781.

> "Once Gorbachev opened up the agenda of change [...], the dynamics of simultaneous political and economic change had a logic of their own that eventually could not be controlled by Gorbachev."[63]

Apart from the fading ideological glue, massive economic problems and the waning of the existential fear of the Warsaw Pact members coincided with a "period of interpenetration"[64] by ideas and "Weltanschauungen" which challenged the ideological pillars of the Soviet system. The Marxist promise of "salvation on earth"[65] had not been fulfilled. Today, current discourse names an "imperial overstretch"[66] of Soviet power in the Global South as one of the many reasons for the Soviet Union's dissolution, calling it a "Failed Empire."[67] In addition to that, another decisive aspect should not be overlooked. The Cold War had been a war after all, an "inter-systemic war,"[68] as Halliday puts it. And the Soviet system, at least economically, had lost this war. Meanwhile, the SED regime had kept on walking its well-trodden path of Real Socialism and thus had to walk its very own road to perdition all by itself – the GDR's last and only policy decision outside the Soviet-approved room for maneuver.

63 | McFaul, 2001, 60.

64 | Shearman, in: Shearman, 1995, 18.

65 | Löwenthal, Messianism, Nihilism and the Future, in: Schmeitzner (Ed.), 2009, 462.

66 | The "Imperial Overstretch Hypotheses" is regularly connected to Edward Gibbon's monograph "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" published in six volumes between 1776 and 1789. Gibbon argues that the collapse of Rome had actually been caused by the exhaustion of its military and economic ability which in turn led to the decay of its comprehensive citizenship. Gibbon, Edward, in: Womersley, 1994.

67 | Zubok, 2007, 227.

68 | Halliday, 1993.