

Stresemann Workshop 2015: Illusionary Visions or Policy Options?

Aug 5, 2015

By [Andreas Lutsch](#)

Discontent over Cold War Security Architecture in Europe and the Search for Alternatives

The NPIHP cooperated with the Stresemann Society, Mainz (Germany), and with the Universities of Mainz and Würzburg to organize the 'Stresemann Workshop', an academic workshop on international history that was held from 5 to 8 July 2015 at the State Chancellery of Rhineland-Palatinate, Mainz. The research focus was on ideas, concepts and policies to establish alternatives to the structures of Cold War security architecture in Europe, including concepts to overcome the bipolar Cold War system and, at the sub-systemic level, concepts of alternative security policies regarding key states in this system. The workshop was generously sponsored by the State Chancellery of Rhineland Palatinate, by the Representation of Rhineland Palatinate in Berlin and at the EU in Brussels, by the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, by the University of Mainz' friends association and by the Private Funds of Peter E. Eckes.

Following the workshop-style method, panelists submitted papers in advance and gave brief presentations which were followed by comments of senior experts and plenary discussions. Doctorate students and post-doctorate experts from Italy, France, Romania, the UK, Hungary, Belgium, India, Germany and the U.S. presented their research by making use of new archival and documentary evidence to assess the general research question: How can we appraise the historical chances of success of alternative security concepts which put pressure on the bipolar security architecture of the Cold War in Europe? Considering the profound impact of the legacies and structures of this security architecture beyond 1989/1990, the Cold War's political order and bipolar stability were understood as being rather constantly in flux or even challenged instead of being static. Specifically, the panelists appraised which forms of discontent over Cold War security architecture in Europe can be detected, which policy-relevant alternative security concepts were identified historically, how they were evaluated by relevant agents, whether governments began implementing such concepts and what their relative importance had been.

The workshop and the individual panels were distinguished by their coherence to address the research agenda. Papers elaborated on a wide range of case studies and issues: on Franco-British divergences over maintaining or overcoming the Cold War order during the Berlin crisis; on French attempts to make use of the CSCE as an instrument of East-West convergence; on the non-implementation of the idea to establish a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the Balkans and on Yugoslav attempts to foster nuclear cooperation within the Non-Aligned Movement; on the transformative period of the late 1960s regarding the triangle Washington-Paris-Bonn and its potentials to transcend the Cold War order; on tendencies to construct structures of Western European security cooperation in the 1970s and early 1980s, particularly with regards to Franco-German cooperation; on the impact of SALT on security architecture; on alternative paths in national (nuclear) strategies, including the modernization of the UK strategic deterrent and the TRIDENT D5 upgrade in the early 1980s, the attempts of the Reagan administration to pave the way towards global zero and strategic missile defense, and the implications of missile-based strategy in an hypothetical post-nuclear age; another core theme of the workshop was West Germany's position and role in the Cold War,

West Germany's development aid policy as a potential vehicle for East-West cooperation, Bonn's role in the genesis of NATO's dual track decision of 1979 including the reemergence of the German question and the question whether the concept of middle power politics can be applied to West Germany; a paper on terminology, concepts and ideas of international security policy from a non-Western, constructivist perspective completed the workshop by recalling that language powerfully forms realities.

The workshop provided valuable insight why particular obstacles and limitations including structural barriers like the state of anarchy in the international system, distrust among states and domestic rivalry detained attempts or ongoing policies to implement alternative security concepts on the level of governmental policy. Such concepts appeared sometimes in exposed and sometimes in rather hidden, non-public ways. No comprehensive explanation emerged why such concepts did not get beyond an embryonic degree of political implementation in many cases although the implication was evident that every failure fortified the given structures of the given Cold War security architecture. It became clear at the same time that such concepts had often substantial historical importance, even if they were not implemented. They could unfold a powerful intellectual impact on the Cold War system in the long run, as a kind of injection into this system that worked to transform it; the Gaullist concept and the idea to establish collective security structures in Europe, for example according to the scheme of Egon Bahr, were identified as such injections, even though the workshop concluded that the question of their long-term impact on the Cold War system requires more empirical research, particularly with regards to the 1980s. On the other hand papers, presentations and debates repeatedly demonstrated that alternative security concepts always served at least as points of reference, as challenges or negative images, that spurred different or even opposing kinds of governmental policy.

The Stresemann Workshop offered a forum for stimulating interdisciplinary exchange among an international group of young scholars and senior experts. Papers, presentations and discussions contributed in an empirically well-founded way to develop answers to the workshop's research questions and to provide valuable feedback on individual research. Moreover, the workshop stimulated thinking about potential research avenues and ways of future cooperation including further international conferences.

See more at: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/stresemann-workshop-2015-illusionary-visions-or-policy-options#sthash.KxjzYUF4.dpuf>