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**Kristina Spohr Readman. "Conflict and Cooperation in Intra-Alliance Nuclear Politics: Western Europe, the United States, and the Genesis of NATO's Dual-Track Decision, 1977-1979."** *Journal of Cold War Studies* 13:2 (Spring 2011): 39-89. DOI: 10.1162/JCWS\_a\_00137. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/JCWS\\_a\\_00137](http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/JCWS_a_00137)

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Review by **Judith Michel**, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Berlin

Though archival materials are still not completely open to historians, the development and implementation of NATO's dual-track decision has gained increased scholarly attention during the last couple of years.<sup>1</sup> Kristina Spohr Readman seeks to analyze the intra-alliance decision making process concerning the modernization of NATO's long-range theater nuclear forces (LRTNF) and the parallel offer to the USSR to negotiate on the reduction of Soviet intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF). Using a multi-archival approach, she bases her article on recently released British, German, Norwegian, and U.S. archival sources, published documents, and memoirs. It is not completely clear whether Spohr Readman limited her analysis to these sources because of restricted access, for pragmatic reasons, or because further sources would not provide any additional evidence for her study.

In his famous October 1977 speech at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London, West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt deplored the sub-strategic imbalance in Europe which arose from the Soviet Union's deployment of SS-20 missiles in Eastern Europe. He suggested that NATO had to deal with this 'grey area' which was not part of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks II (SALT II) between the Soviet Union and the

<sup>1</sup> See for instance Leopoldo Nuti. "The Origins of the 1979 Dual Track Decision: A Survey." in Id. (Ed.), *The Crisis of Détente in Europe: From Helsinki to Gorbachev, 1975-1985* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 57-71; Joachim Scholtyseck. "The United States, Europe and the NATO Dual-Track Decision." in Matthias Schulz/Thomas A. Schwartz (Eds.), *The Strained Alliance. U.S.-Relations from Nixon to Carter* (Cambridge et. al.: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 333-352; Philipp Gassert/Tim Geiger/Hermann Wentker (Eds.), *Zweiter Kalter Krieg und Friedensbewegung: Der NATO-Doppelbeschluss in deutsch-deutscher und internationaler Perspektive* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011).

United States. Earlier studies on the dual-track decision consider this speech a catalyst for NATO's efforts to reexamine the need for improved capabilities for defense and further progress in arms control. Still, earlier analyses tend to emphasize the dominant role of the United States in the subsequent formulation of NATO's strategy.<sup>2</sup> Spohr Readman, in contrast, describes the Carter administration as being rather reluctant to take the lead in NATO's debate on its future strategy. Like other recent studies she concentrates on the role of the European alliance partners in the negotiation process and highlights particularly Chancellor Schmidt's merits in developing NATO's strategy: "the final decision bore all the hallmark of his political thought" (43).

Spohr Readman first describes the discussion of 1977/78 about President Jimmy Carter's plans to deploy neutron bombs in Europe as "a forerunner of the dual-track decision" (48). Though Schmidt considered Carter's proposal as a possible means to maintain parity in Europe at the sub-strategic level he did not greet the controversial initiative without reservation. He therefore presented a compromise: The United States should announce the production of enhanced radiation weapons (ERW) while at the same time NATO should signal its willingness to negotiate with the Soviet Union for two years about the reduction of the SS-20 missiles in return for not deploying its neutron bombs. If negotiations failed, ERW should be deployed in Germany if at least one other NATO member was willing to host them as well. This proposal already contained many elements of the future dual-track decision. When Carter ultimately deferred his decision to produce the neutron bomb, Schmidt was taken aback.

Spohr Readman thoroughly depicts the negotiation process on NATO's future nuclear strategy in the alliance's expert working groups -- the High Level Group and later the Special Group -- and also highlights the importance of the meeting of Schmidt, Carter, the British Prime Minister James Callaghan, and the French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing at Guadeloupe in January 1979. According to Spohr Readman, the U.S. took "no firm lead" (51) and left the stage to the Europeans. The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), often backed by Great Britain and Norway, opted for LRTNF enhancements to increase the alliance's deterrence spectrum and asked for the inclusion of Soviet 'grey area' systems in future SALT III negotiations. At home, Schmidt had to harmonize intraparty and interministerial tensions and therefore opted for an approach to negotiate first, with the threat to deploy if arms reduction talks failed.<sup>3</sup> In addition, he sought to prevent the FRG from becoming the only non-nuclear host country for the modernized

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<sup>2</sup> Spohr Readman explicitly challenges the theses of Raymond Garthoff. "The NATO Decision on Theater Nuclear Forces." *Political Science Quarterly* 98:2 (1983), 197-214, James A. Thomson. "The LRTNF Decision: Evolution of U.S. Theater Nuclear Policy, 1975-9." *International Affairs (RIIA)* 60:4 (October 1984), 601-614, and Richard K. Betts (Ed.), *Cruise Missiles: Technology, Strategy, Politics* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1981).

<sup>3</sup> For the domestic discussion in the FRG also see Tim Geiger. "Die Regierung Schmidt-Genscher und der NATO-Doppelbeschluss." in Gassert/Geiger/Wentker (2011), 95-122.

U.S. missiles. Only slowly, the Carter administration accepted that it had to deal with the 'grey area' problem and realized that the negotiation-part of Schmidt's approach was meant to be more than a fig leaf to appease public opinion. In the end, NATO's dual-track decision was close to Schmidt's favored approach and provided -- at least theoretically -- a 'zero option' through arms control.

Spoehr Readman states that in contrast to the arguments of Soviet propagandists and peace activists, the U.S. did not push for a modernization of LRTNF. In addition, in the debates within the expert groups on NATO's nuclear strategy, smaller members achieved the inclusion of arms reduction talks. Spoehr Readman therefore concludes: "More by accident than design, the alliance adopted a new, more democratic approach to nuclear politics." (88) With these arguments Spoehr Readman goes further than Leopoldo Nuti who finds both a European and an American influence on the formulation of the NATO dual track decision but also sees "a strong American predominance throughout most of the process, but by no means an absolute control".<sup>4</sup> The role of some of the other NATO members like the Netherlands or Belgium is only briefly touched upon in Spoehr Readman's article. Perhaps future studies analyzing archival sources from even more NATO member states will further clarify intra-alliance dynamics. This is not to belittle the merits of this multi-archival study which consults an impressive amount of sources. Spoehr Readman's analysis is very detailed and diligently supported by evidence. By concentrating on a variety of source materials she can back the arguments of other recent studies concerning the role of smaller alliance members and further differentiate them.

**Judith Michel** (Ph.D. University of Bonn) is researcher at the Institut für Zeitgeschichte München-Berlin where she is editing the diplomatic documents of the Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany. Her main research interests are the history of transatlantic relations, business history, and the history of emotions. She published several articles on the West German peace movement in the 1980s and is author of *Willy Brandts Amerikabild und -politik 1933-1992* (Göttingen: Bonn University Press, 2010) and co-editor of *Angst in den Internationalen Beziehungen* (Göttingen: Bonn University Press, 2010).

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<sup>4</sup> Nuti (2009), 68.