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The Oil Crisis of 1973 as a Challenge to Multilateral Energy Cooperation among Western Industrialized Countries

Henning Türk*

Abstract: »Die Ölkrise von 1973 als Herausforderung für die multilaterale Energiekooperation westlicher Industrieländer«. Much of the existing historical research discusses the 1973 oil crisis through single national perspectives. In contrast, this article focuses on the multilateral dimension of this far-reaching event. Starting with the Suez crisis of 1956, it explores the work of the OECD Oil Committee and its High Level Group regarding possible oil crises. However, the crisis mechanisms the OECD developed were not activated when the 1973 oil crisis hit. Thus, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger took the initiative to form a stronger group of oil consuming countries outside the OECD, which should have guaranteed cohesion in the West in future oil crises. Pressured by the United States and expecting advantages from close transatlantic energy cooperation, the other Western industrialized countries, except France, approved of the project. The result was the founding of the International Energy Agency (IEA) in November 1974. Its structure and voting rules reflect the crucial role the United States play in the agency. Therefore, in the context of international relations, the IEA serves as an example of the United States' struggle to maintain its hegemony in the Western camp.

Keywords: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), oil, consumer cooperation, Henry Kissinger, Washington Energy Conference, Energy Coordinating Group, International Energy Agency, intergovernmental organizations.

1. Introduction¹

In existing historical research, the oil crisis of 1973 has been analyzed primarily from national perspectives. Researchers have focused mainly on the measures that national governments implemented to deal with the oil shortage, consequently giving the impression that single countries reacted to the oil crisis

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in an uncoordinated way.² That a forum for multilateral cooperation in energy policy among Western industrialized countries had existed before the oil crisis – i.e., the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) – is disregarded. Within this forum, the Oil Committee and its specialized smaller group, the High Level Group of Oil, discussed the future development of oil supplies and how to react to current and future energy crises.

During the oil crisis, the potential for improving cooperation in energy policy between oil consuming countries was specifically articulated at the Washington Energy Conference initiated by US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, which took place February 11-13, 1974 and involved ministers from the most important industrialized nations. The conference established the Energy Coordinating Group (ECG), which, in the following months and under US supervision, devised a program for energy policy cooperation among Western industrialized countries. In addition, the ECG worked on a coordinated Western approach to the economic reaction to the oil crisis – it was not simply a question of ensuring oil supplies in the case of a future oil embargo, but it was also important to ascertain the economic consequences of the oil crisis and to determine how the Western world would cope with it. In these economic and political analyses, the ECG made particular use of the expertise of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the OECD. The energy policy solutions then developed into the International Energy Program, which was to be implemented by a new international organization, the International Energy Agency (IEA), which was founded in November 1974 and placed under the umbrella of the OECD in Paris. The IEA therefore replaced the OECD as the central multilateral coordinating organization of Western industrialized countries in the field of energy.

In the following, this transition from the OECD to the IEA will be scrutinized, with an emphasis on the creation of a united reaction to the oil supply crises among Western industrialized countries. One major question is why the countries did not revert back to the OECD directly after the 1973 oil crisis and extend its responsibilities. How much experience had these countries gained in the various OECD energy bodies in the build-up to the oil crisis and to what extent did this experience affect the organization of future cooperation in the IEA? What did the Western industrialized countries expect from future cooperation in the IEA? Thus, I aim to extend beyond the dominant national narratives of the oil crisis by presenting the perspective of international cooperation.

Based on this, I will present in the conclusion deliberations on how international cooperation changed in the 1970s. Many scholars in global history, such as the historian Akira Iriye, see this decade as decisive for the formation of a “global community” of governmental and non-governmental organizations.

² See e.g. Merrill 2007; Hohensee 1996. Graf 2014 presents a more comprehensive approach. He interprets the oil crisis as a challenge to the sovereignty of the oil-consuming countries and analyzes multilateral cooperation in this context.

The number of intergovernmental organizations grew from 280 to 1530 between 1972 and 1984.³ But did this quantitative increase also represent an increase in quality?⁴ In this context, the foundation of the IEA can provide us with important answers.

This article is based on previously unreleased documents from the OECD archives, as well as on relevant volumes from the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), the Documents on British Policy Overseas (DPBO) and the *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (AAPD).⁵ In addition, I have used archival material from Ulf Lantzke, the OECD Counsellor on Energy Questions and later the Executive Director of the IEA, as well as from the West German Foreign and Economics Ministries.

2. The OECD and the Decline of the American Oil Shield (1956-1973)

Multilateral cooperation in energy policy had already begun with the OECD's predecessor, the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), which was originally established to allocate Marshall Aid funding.⁶ As early as May 1948, a month after its founding, the OEEC created its Oil Committee in order to distribute American aid with the intent to increase European refining capacity. In addition, the committee administered statistics for the demand for crude oil and its by-products. As the OEEC extended its responsibilities to cover the analysis and evaluation of West European economic development, the importance of the Oil Committee grew, especially since crude oil was covering an ever-larger proportion of Europe's energy needs. During the Suez Crisis of 1956, agreements between the Oil Committee and the United States' Middle East Emergency Committee (MEEC) compensated the fall in oil supplies which was caused by the closing of the Suez Canal. In this context, the close cooperation with the oil industry organized by the OEEC Petroleum Emergency Group, which had in the meantime joined the Oil Committee, played a significant role. The work of the Oil Committee was made difficult, however, as the delegations had to frequently consult with their own governments when making decisions. Despite these difficulties, the hope of benefit-

³ See Iriye 2004, 129.

⁴ In this respect, the originator of the regime theory, Robert Keohane, analyzed the IEA. However, he did not consider the experience of the OECD. See Keohane 1984, esp. 217-40.

⁵ Foreign Policy Records of the Federal Republic of Germany.

⁶ Regarding the history of the OEEC/OECD, which has until recently been neglected, see Griffiths 1997; Wolfe 2008.

ting from surplus US oil production was a particular motivation for maintaining cooperation.⁷

Energy policy also remained an important topic when, in 1961, the OEEC was transformed from a European organization to the transatlantic OECD, with the addition of the United States and Canada. In the Oil Committee and its High Level Group, the member countries' energy officers discussed measures to compensate for future shortages.⁸ At the same time, they developed projections for future energy demand and available sources of oil. To assess crisis preparation measures, the OECD developed a detailed questionnaire, which was regularly sent out to member countries and enabled the OECD to analyze to what extent member countries were prepared for potential oil shortages.⁹ These measures were planned for only Western European OECD members, however; because of their dependency on imported crude oil, they were particularly susceptible to supply crises. In case of an emergency, the United States, with its significant oil production capacity, served as a last resort for Western Europe.

The United States' protective function proved to be particularly helpful in the events of the Six Day War of 1967.¹⁰ For the first time, the Arab states had employed the embargo concept to have a broad impact, affecting 80 percent of West European oil imports; but the embargo could only be maintained for a short period. This was mostly due to the US government's quick reaction, permitting the use of US oil reserves and coordinating with the oil industry to supply oil to their European allies. The oil embargo was also a test case for the OECD's measures for dealing with a crisis, which were based on Western Europe's ability to build up strategic oil reserves. In addition, an emergency decision reactivated the Industrial Committee (formerly the Petroleum Emergency Group), which continued to work closely with the MEEC. However, the Oil Committee's discussions were proceeding in a less-than-satisfactory way for the United States. In the OECD, some European countries, such as France or West Germany, did not feel the need to declare an emergency. There was fear of provoking the Arab countries to extend the embargo.¹¹ The committee ultimately decided to announce emergency under pressure of the American OECD envoy, who declared that the supporting measures could only be intro-

⁷ OECD Oil Section, Report on OECD-Wide Apportionment of Oil Supplies in an Emergency, Document DIE/E/PE/73.126, Paris, 19 November 1973, OECD Archive, High Level Group Oil: DIE/E/PE. On the Suez crisis as an energy crisis, see Chakarova 2013, 39-52.

⁸ Graf 2014, 52-66.

⁹ Chakarova 2013, 43-50; Graf 2014, 56; Graf 2010, 334.

¹⁰ On this subject and the following section, see Chakarova 2013, 97-102; Graf 2014, 58f. For a British perspective see Thorpe 2007.

¹¹ For West Germany's criticism, see "Bundesminister Schiller, z.Z. Washington, an das Auswärtige Amt, 20.6.1967" In *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (A-APD)* 1967, doc. 228, 936-8.

duced, when the Europeans would officially declare they were in a crisis. France, the Federal Republic of Germany, and Turkey abstained from the vote. Cooperation between the United States and industry allowed the OECD to quickly deal with the consequences of the short embargo.

Afterwards, however, the possibility of using US oil reserves in times of crisis diminished as, by the end of the 1960s, the character of the oil market had changed rapidly.¹² In the 1950s and 1960s, oil companies controlled the market – from drilling to sales to the end consumer. As of the end of the 1960s, the oil countries had been improving their market position by nationalizing part of the oil industry, participating stronger in the profits of the Western oil companies, and demanding higher prices. The increasing economic dependence of the West on oil had made this possible. Oil consumption increased enormously in not only Japan and Western Europe, but also the United States, which had nearly hit its limit on oil production. As a consequence, the reserve capacity, which had been adequate for the shortfalls in 1956 and 1967, was now no longer available. The further increase in US oil consumption also meant that the country itself was becoming a major buyer on the international oil market, which, in turn, increased pressure on the market.

Alarm bells started to ring within many European countries when, on January 8, 1970, the United States delegate in the Oil Committee declared that other countries could no longer rely on his country's supplies in future energy crises.¹³ In the following months, the United States delegates urged the other members to build up higher oil reserves.¹⁴ As a result, the OECD Council demanded that European member countries keep a 90-day reserve to be used in the event of a crisis,¹⁵ and the Oil Committee regularly checked on member countries' efforts to achieve the reserves.

At the same time, the Oil Committee was occupied with a more detailed emergency plan for the Western European countries. The negotiations resulted in the OECD Council's passing of the Oil Apportionment Decision, which laid out specific crises measures.¹⁶ The decision required governments to devise emergency plans to reduce oil consumption in individual countries in the event of a crisis. The OECD Council also determined that a unanimous decision was needed to implement the emergency plans as defined by the Oil Committee.

¹² On this subject and the following section, see Yergin 1991, 688–711.

¹³ Graf 2014, 59f.

¹⁴ "Telegram from the Mission to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to the Department of State." In *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1969–1976*, vol. XXXVI, 2011, 146–8.

¹⁵ This was the decision C(71)113(Final). See Scott 1994, 36.

¹⁶ On this decision C(72)201(Final) and the following section, see Scott 1994, 35–6; Lantzke 1976, 218–9; OECD Oil Section, Report on OECD-Wide Apportionment of Oil Supplies in an Emergency, Document DIE/E/PE/73.135, Paris, 28 November 1973, OECD Archive, High Level Group Oil: DIE/E/PE, 4–5.

The main features of the oil distribution system were fixed and based on member states' previous oil consumption. Ten percent of the oil available was to be reserved for special emergencies. An International Industry Advisory Board was once again set up to advise the Oil Committee on measures to be taken during crises and to provide information on the amount of oil available.

Concentrating these measures on West Europe proved to be increasingly anachronistic. The OECD had expanded into the Pacific region, with Japan and Australia joining, and had thus evolved from a transatlantic into a trilateral organization. This development was to be reflected in the crisis procedure, since Japan imported all of its oil and was therefore particularly vulnerable in an energy crisis.

The geographic expansion of the OECD and the increasing deterioration of consuming countries' negotiating positions quickly led to the consideration of comprehensive reforms in cooperation amongst oil consuming countries. By May 1972, there was already speculation within the US government about a transatlantic "energy community."¹⁷ On May 30th, the Undersecretary of State John Irwin suggested to the OECD Council of Ministers that the High Level Group should develop a program for a consumer group

to increase the availability of all types of energy resources, to lessen, to the degree possible, an overdependence on oil from the Middle East, to coordinate the response of consuming countries to restrictions on the supply of Middle East petroleum, and to develop, jointly and cooperatively, a responsible program of action to meet the possibility of critical energy shortages by the end of this decade.¹⁸

The Dutch wanted to go even further. In an Oil Committee meeting on June 19, 1972, they proposed using the strategic oil reserves to improve the oil companies' negotiating position vis-à-vis the oil producers. This suggestion was rejected, however, because the countries that had no domestic oil companies did not expect any resulting advantage.¹⁹

With the US government's stronger commitment to consumer cooperation, it was now prepared to discuss a common emergency sharing policy for the OECD. In October 1972, the Oil Committee decided that the United States, Canada, Australia, and Japan should jointly devise new conditions for an emergency system, which would apply to all OECD countries.²⁰ However, the four delegations did not succeed in working out a new system.

¹⁷ "Memorandum of Conversation, May 22, 1972." In *FRUS 1969-1976*, vol. XXXVI, 2011, 296.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 296, fn. 4.

¹⁹ "Intelligence Note Prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, June 27, 1972." In *FRUS 1969-1976*, vol. XXXVI, 2011, 300-301; "Airgram of the Department of State to the Embassies in all OECD Capitals, July 21, 1972." In *FRUS 1969-1976*, vol. XXXVI, 2011, 313-6.

²⁰ On this subject and the following section: OECD Oil Section, Report on OECD-Wide Apportionment of Oil Supplies in an Emergency, Document DIE/E/PE/73.135, Paris, 28th November 1973, OECD Archive, High Level Group Oil: DIE/E/PE, 4-5.

The failed negotiations were evaluated in the meetings of the Oil Committee and its High Level Group on June 12, 1973. The US government had come well prepared to both groups' meetings. The US State Department considered it essential to work towards a common OECD approach to the oil market. In particular, officials wanted to avoid a race to obtain oil reserves between consuming countries, as this would push up prices. For the State Department, the meetings were the right place to discuss increasing cooperation between the consumer nations,²¹ the potential for which rested in three areas: in the emergency sharing and oil stock policy, in research and development, and in the creation of a consumer organization that countered OPEC. According to the State Department, its energy situation and its leading role in research gave the United States a central position, and it could make full use of this position in bargaining. The High Level Group therefore decided in its meeting to form a new informal working group, which now included European participants, in order to work out the emergency procedures together.²²

The group's work suffered, however, because the United States, Japan, and European countries wanted to calculate the potential loss of oil differently. The United States wanted the sharing system calculated on the basis of imported oil, whereas the Japanese and Europeans wanted to bring the total reduction in oil consumption into the equation.²³ The American proposal was obviously in its own favor. They would be at an advantage if an embargo were to be directed at them, because their strong domestic production would remain outside the equation. In long and difficult negotiations, the working group agreed that in the final report the various options would be compared and the political decision would be left to the higher-ranking boards. The final report contained not only an overview of the different calculating methods of oil sharing, but also the different ways of declaring emergencies, ranging from a unanimous vote to an automatic triggering when an agreed threshold of oil loss would be reached. The report also made clear that oil sharing was only one of a range of efforts the consuming countries could make to survive a future crisis scenario and reduce their dependence on Middle Eastern oil. The rationing of oil consumption, the creation of further oil reserve supplies, aligned research and development, and energy conservation were all of great importance. However, it was

²¹ "Action Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs (Armstrong) to the Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Casey), April 20, 1973." In *FRUS 1969-1976*, vol. XXXVI, 2011, 455-61.

²² *FRUS 1969-1976*, vol. XXXVI, 2011, 492, fn. 9.

²³ "Memorandum From the Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Casey) to Acting Secretary of State Rush, September 19, 1973." In *FRUS 1969-1976*, vol. XXXVI, 2011, 561-2. Cf. Painter 2013, 180.

also obvious that cooperation in all of these areas would be possible only if an agreement on a common sharing system could be reached.²⁴

As a result of the complicated negotiations and contentious discussions, the report could not be presented before November 1973, when the oil crisis was already one month old. In the meantime, the OAPEC had already started the embargo against the United States, the Netherlands, and Portugal and had decided to gradually reduce output. At the same time, OPEC had increased the posted price for crude oil considerably.

At the meeting of the High Level Group on October 25, 1973, it had already become clear how difficult it was to activate the existing emergency procedure, even in this acute crisis. The American delegation had expected the crisis procedure would be triggered and the Industry Advisory Board would be activated. In the discussion, however, the British, French, and West German delegations were against the activation. The arguments resembled the OECD discussions that occurred during the 1967 embargo – for example, there was once again the desire to not provoke the Arabs and cause panic in Britain, France, and Germany. Instead, the Western European countries suggested an informal cooperation with the oil companies. The US delegation pointed out that problems would probably ensue with the American Anti-Trust Law, as it did in 1967, since this allowed oil companies to only exchange information in an emergency. At the end of the day, there was no decision, and the OECD left oil rationing to the companies.

The US delegation regarded the European approach as proof of the success of an Arab oil policy. The clever breakdown of consumer countries into preferential and non-preferential categories seemed to be effective. France and Britain, in particular, tried to maintain their preferential status, fearing disadvantages should they increase cooperation with the Israel-friendly United States.²⁵

From the United States' point of view, the OECD, which the country was relying upon for its plans to expand consumer cooperation, had thus proved to be ineffectual in the endurance test. The US government now reconsidered its approach to multilateral energy policies.

²⁴ OECD Oil Section, Report on OECD-Wide Apportionment of Oil Supplies in an Emergency, Document DIE/E/PE/73.135, Paris, 28 November 1973, OECD Archive, High Level Group Oil: DIE/E/PE.

²⁵ "Cable about Meeting of High-Level Group of OECD Oil Committee from OECD (Paris) to Department of State, October 26, 1973." <http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1973_OECDP27835_b.html>. Regarding the British point of view, see also "Minute: Carrington to Heath, London, 22 October 1973." In *Documents on British Policy Overseas (DBPO), Series III, vol. IV*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2006, doc. 320. In the research it has always been emphasized that it was the French who had prevented the activation of the crisis procedure. See e.g. Chakarova 2013, 67.

3. Henry Kissinger's Leadership and the Sidestepping of the OECD

The OECD's performance in the oil crisis cast much doubt within the US administration about the suitability of this organization for the development of cooperation amongst consumer nations. Additionally, Henry Kissinger's increasing influence on US foreign energy policy led to a downgrading of the OECD's role in the US energy policy approach. In his roles as the national security advisor under President Richard Nixon and, from September 1973 onwards, as Secretary of State, Kissinger identified US crude oil policy as a key foreign policy issue. His point of view was much influenced by the energy and economics expert Walter J. Levy, who also advised the British government and a number of oil companies.²⁶ In a *Foreign Affairs* article, Levy had described the OECD as an unsuitable body for maintaining cooperation between consumers. While it had helped maintain an information exchange and provided important analytical data, the power shift within the oil market rendered the OECD too weak to stand up to the oil-producing countries. Thus, a new and more powerful consumer organization was needed.²⁷ In a conversation with Kissinger, Levy dismissed the OECD as merely a "talk group."²⁸ In addition, he recommended pushing the increasingly intransigent French out of the circle of cooperating consumers.²⁹

For Kissinger, a consumer group led by the United States would not only back the US power vis-à-vis OPEC but could also be used as a means to reach other foreign policy aims. In particular, he saw a way of binding Western European countries and Japan closer to the United States, as these countries became ever more self-confident in foreign policy. The United States' strong role regarding energy issues, which Kissinger wanted to take advantage of, could not be exploited in the OECD. Due to the unanimity rule, any country, regardless of its size or power, could veto a decision. The question was therefore how to find new forms of cooperation, whereby the United States could make better use of its political strength.

For this reason, the US Secretary of State presented a far-reaching suggestion to the public. In a speech to the Pilgrim's Society in London on December 12, 1973, Kissinger proposed the creation of an Energy Action Group, comprised of the most important Western oil-consuming countries. This group of high-ranking personalities was to develop a consumer cooperation program.

²⁶ Regarding Levy's consulting activities for the British government, see Kuiken 2013, 269–307.

²⁷ Levy 1973, 181–90.

²⁸ "Memorandum of Conversation, November 26, 1973." In *FRUS 1969–1976*, vol. XXXVI, 2011, 699.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 700.

According to Kissinger, the aim of this program was to secure the supply of energy at reasonable prices. For example, it was to coordinate energy-saving measures and joint research. In concluding, Kissinger appealed to Western partner countries to deal with the challenge in the spirit of cooperation, even comparing this challenge to the “Sputnik shock” of 1957.³⁰

A few days later, US representatives made it clear to the OECD’s Oil Committee that this Energy Action Group was to be organized in a trilateral and effective way. Its core should consist of one high-ranking representative per geographical region: North America, Western Europe, and Japan.³¹ According to the US government the OECD was definitely not suitable for this purpose – the political differences within the OECD were too great. The High Level Group could, at most, assist the newly formed group.³²

The European countries saw this differently. They attempted to position Kissinger’s suggestion within the OECD. At the meeting of the heads of the European Community (EC) in Copenhagen on December 14 and 15, 1973, these countries announced that they were prepared to examine in more detail the subject of consumer cooperation in an OECD study group.³³ A few days later, government officials in the OECD Oil Committee, including the United States, discussed Kissinger’s proposals. They tasked OECD General Secretary Emile van Lennep with coming up with suggestions for how to organize the Energy Action Group, based on Kissinger’s speech.³⁴

Kissinger, however, remained at the helm and did not let the initiative be taken from him. By making his speech, Kissinger had already moved the issue of consumer cooperation from the OECD to a more noticeable level: the ministerial level. Thus far, only insiders were privy to discussions on multi-lateral energy policy; now such discussions were being made known to the public at large. In this way, Kissinger had made it clear to the public and his Western partners how important cooperation was to him. He was thus exercising public pressure on Western governments to resist the power of OPEC. He was also displaying to OPEC members that the United States was not willing to stand back passively and watch power shift within international relations. In order to discuss his proposal in greater detail and to examine new mechanisms for mul-

³⁰ “Rede des amerikanischen Außenministers, Henry Kissinger, vor der Pilgrims Society in London am 12. Dezember 1973 über die transatlantischen Beziehungen (gekürzt).” In *Euro-pa-Archiv 1974, Dokumente*, 45-50.

³¹ Here there is a connection with the work of the Trilateral Commission. Part network and part think tank, the Trilateral Commission also discussed the idea of closer cooperation on matters of energy between North America, Western Europe, and Japan.

³² “Tel 1533 to UKREP Brussels, 13 December 1973, doc. 456”; “UKDEL OECD tel 109, 17 December 1973, doc. 469”; “UKDEL OECD tel 118, 19 December 1973, doc. 476”; all in *DBPO*, Series III, vol. IV. 2006.

³³ Scott 1994, 44.

³⁴ “UKDEL OECD tel 118, 19 December 1973, doc. 476.” In *DBPO*, Series III, vol. IV. 2006.

tilateral cooperation, Kissinger and President Nixon disseminated an invitation to the Energy Conference, which was to take place February 11-13, 1974 in Washington, DC.

4. The Dominance of the US Position in the Washington Energy Conference in February 1974

The reactions of Western countries to Kissinger's proposals and Nixon's invitation were rather tepid. Japan and the Western European countries, except France, acknowledged a closer cooperation with the United States, but this topic had now attracted too much public attention, which was not particularly useful for cautiousness in extending consumer cooperation. The OPEC countries observed the preparation for the conference carefully and warned against the forming of an organization opposing them.³⁵ Western Europe and Japan could not afford such a confrontation in light of their strong dependence on Middle Eastern oil and pointed out on many occasions that the United States had to avoid creating the impression that an anti-OPEC front was being formed. The United States therefore officially announced that no confrontation was planned but, internally, Kissinger made it clear that the conference was "designed to create a united front."³⁶ He further explained to his staff,

I mean we will say all the appropriate platitudes about this not being a confrontation with producers. The fact of the matter is that the only way the consumers can protect themselves against what is a revolution in international finance, in international economics, is to share a common perception and to organize it.

The fact that the other countries had lower aims at the conference became clear in the EC Foreign Ministers' conference mandate from February 5, 1974. They stressed the conference delegates could not make any significant decisions regarding international cooperation in energy policy, because only the Western consuming countries would meet in Washington. Therefore, the conference should not be allowed to become a permanent arrangement nor represent a new framework for international cooperation. Instead, the conference could only examine how to rejuvenate the already established cooperation in the OECD and the IMF and whether a world conference of oil consumers and producers should be organized. Moreover, it could verify whether it was worthwhile to set

³⁵ See e.g. Permanent Delegation of the EC-Commission at the OECD to the EC-Commission concerning the meeting of the High Level Group Oil/Visit of Mr. Yamani and Beleid in Tokyo, Paris, 1.2.1974, Historical Archives of the EU, Florence, Papers of Emile Noel, EN 0456.

³⁶ "Minutes of the Secretary of State's Staff Meeting." In *FRUS 1969-1976*, vol. XXXVI, 2011, doc. 293, 821-6, here 822-3. Cf. Graf 2014, 294.

up working groups to cover special topics.³⁷ Therefore, on the whole, Kissinger's proposals were treated cautiously. The UK government even warned the US administration directly that its expectations for the conference were too high and recommended the United States adopt a less offensive conference tactic.³⁸

Kissinger disregarded these warnings. To push through his ambitious aims, he applied pressure in the lead up to the conference. He repeatedly mentioned in conversations with European and Japanese Ministers that the United States would enter bilateral negotiations with oil-producing countries should the conference fail, which would considerably weaken the other consuming countries' negotiating position. Kissinger threatened the Europeans with strengthening US isolationism should they not align with US aims.³⁹ This was particularly alarming for West Germany, which relied on a US security guarantee.

At the conference, the other countries tried to hand over the planned cooperation work to the various existing boards, such as the OECD.⁴⁰ Kissinger dismissed this idea completely. He had already insisted to the West German ambassador Berndt von Staden that he did not believe the OECD to be the appropriate body for dealing with consumer cooperation. Energy issues were, in his view, primarily a political problem and only partially a technical one.⁴¹

Since the US government did not budge on its position at the conference and, in conversation and speeches, their representatives had been hinting at the dangerous consequences should the conference fail, more and more countries aligned with the United States, thus going beyond the EC mandate. The only exception was France, represented by Foreign Minister Michel Jobert, who ended up refusing to sign the most important part of the conference communiqué, which covered consumer cooperation.⁴² It was then agreed that a group of high-ranking officials from among the conference delegates should come together to analyze the various consequences of the oil crisis. Among other

³⁷ The conference mandate of the EC Council of Ministers can be found in AAPD 1974, 196-197, fn. 4 and in: "Telex 691 UKREP Brussels, 5.2.1974." In *DBPO*, Series III, vol. IV, 2006, doc. 535. The council members were very satisfied with a commission's draft of the council mandate, which was based on a strict French paper and a more conciliatory German summary of the discussions in the Committee of the Permanent Representatives (COREPER). For an account of the council discussions, see: "Telex 690 UKREP Brussels, 5.2.1974." In: *Ibid.*, doc. 534. For the skilful drafting of the mandate by the Commission, see the various documents in Historical Archives of the EU, Florence, Papers of Emile Noel, EN 0456.

³⁸ "Telex 269 to Washington, 3.2.1974." In *DBPO*, Series III, vol. IV, 2006, doc. 531.

³⁹ See e.g., "Gespräch des Bundesministers Scheel mit dem amerikanischen Außenminister Kissinger in Washington, 10.2.1974." In AAPD 1974, doc. 42, 166-70.

⁴⁰ Conference participants were the nine EC countries and the USA, Canada, Norway, and Japan, as well as the President of the EC Commission François-Xavier Ortoli and the OECD General Secretary Emile van Lennep.

⁴¹ "Botschafter von Staden, Washington, an das Auswärtige Amt, 5.1.1974." In AAPD 1974, doc. 5, 16.

⁴² Regarding the French position, see Hiepel 2012, 292-301; Gfeller 2011, 120-33; Tauer 2012, 131-41.

things, the group was to find out how multilateral cooperation could be organized in the following areas:

- (a) the conservation of energy and restraint of demand;
- (b) a system of allocating oil supplies in times of emergency and severe shortages;
- (c) the acceleration of development of additional energy sources so as to diversify energy supplies;
- (d) the acceleration of energy research and development programmes through international cooperative efforts.⁴³

At the end of the day, cooperation with the United States in these areas was so important that most of the EC countries were prepared to accept a deterioration of their common work in the EC, caused by the controversy with France.⁴⁴ In his internal evaluation of the conference, Kissinger made it clear that the separation of the EC countries was intended. Nixon and Kissinger agreed that the conference taught the Europeans a lesson.⁴⁵ Kissinger crowed that now the Europeans knew “who’s got muscle.”⁴⁶ Whether this “power play” between the United States and the EC would have consequences for further cooperation would become evident in the negotiations that followed.

5. The Energy Coordinating Group and the United States’ Push for a New International Organization

The negotiations of the group of civil servants that made up the so-called Energy Coordinating Group (ECG) got off to a quick start. Kissinger wanted to exploit the United States’ dominance and the Europeans’ weakened role. He forced the negotiations on the hesitant Europeans, who had considered taking a break after the difficult conference, in order to reflect upon its consequences for intra-European and transatlantic relationships.⁴⁷

⁴³ “Final Communiqué of the Washington Conference (13 February 1974).” <http://www.cvce.eu/obj/final_communique_of_the_washington_conference_13_fevbruary_1974-en-96e19fad-6aba-4b79-a791-34624e94acf9.htm>.

⁴⁴ “Telex 574 from Washington, 13.2.1974.” In *DBPO*, Series III, vol. IV, doc. 549.

⁴⁵ “Transcript of a Telephone Conversation between Secretary of State Kissinger and President Nixon, Washington, 13.2.1974.” In *FRUS 1969-1974*, vol. XXXVI, doc. 322, 901-2. For an interpretation of the Washington Energy Conference in the context of transatlantic arguments about the role of Western Europe and the United States in world politics, see Gfeller 2012, 114-41; Möckli 2009, 184-300.

⁴⁶ “Transcript of a Telephone Conversation between Secretary of State Kissinger and the White House Chief of Staff (Haig).” In *FRUS 1969-1974*, vol. XXXVI, doc. 323, 903-4.

⁴⁷ “Aufzeichnung des Referatsleiters Kruse betr. Auswirkungen der Washingtoner Energiekonferenz, hier: Vorbereitung erster Sitzung der Koordinierungsgruppe auf heutiger Ressortbesprechung, Bonn, 22.2.1974.” Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PAAA), B71, vol. 113893; “Aufzeichnung des stellvertretenden Referatsleiters Otto-Kaban Heinichen betr. Kabinetts-

Organizationally, the Americans now made concessions to the Europeans. They offered the chair of the ECG to the Belgians, and thus, after the first meeting in Washington on February 25, the remaining negotiations were moved to Brussels.

Regarding content, it quickly became clear that the groups involved had different ideas about one central task of the ECG: the preparation of a conference with the oil-producing countries. This part of the conference communiqué had been a decisive concession the United States made to the other participants. By placing closer consumer cooperation in the context of a future consumer-producer conference, they wanted to signal to OPEC that they were not out for confrontation. For this reason, the Europeans, and particularly the British, wanted to quickly organize a consumer-producer meeting, but the US representatives put on the brakes. They wanted the ECG to work out a common position for the consumer countries first and then turn to the oil-producing countries as a group. But this was exactly the kind of confrontation the Europeans and Japanese had wanted to avoid.

When it became possible to establish contact with the oil-producing countries at a special session of the UN General Assembly about raw materials and development, which had been going on since April 9th in New York, the ECG agreed to not approach the producing countries as one unified group, but to sound these countries out on a bilateral basis.⁴⁸ The ECG then evaluated the results of the bilateral talks. Most delegations expressed disappointment at the reactions. It was apparent that the oil-producing countries had no interest in a dialogue with the consuming countries about the oil issue alone. They saw the whole energy problem as the main leverage to push through the New International Economic Order, which was to replace the old system that benefitted only the industrialized countries, and to take into account the needs of developing countries.⁴⁹ The ECG members therefore agreed to publicly support the aim of maintaining a dialogue with the producing states, but were conscious of the fact that this would not be happening in the near future.⁵⁰ Thereafter, the matter of a consumer-producer dialogue, which had been a central point of the ECG agenda, faded into the background.⁵¹ This result was convenient for the United

sitzung am 27.2.1974, hier: Sprechzettel für eventuelle Aussprache über Folgearbeiten der Washingtoner Energiekonferenz, Bonn, 26.2.1974." PAAA, B71, vol. 113893; "Kissinger an Außenminister Scheel, Washington, 21.2.1974." PAAA, B71, vol. 113893.

⁴⁸ "Vermerk des Referatsleiters Kruse betr. Koordinierungsgruppe der Washingtoner Energiekonferenz, Bonn, 25.3.1974." PAAA, B71, vol. 113893; "Fernschreiben Nr. 1214 von Rohwedder und Lebsanft betr. 3. Sitzung der Energie-Koordinierungsgruppe am 3.-4. April 1974, Brüssel, Delegationsbericht Nr. 1, 3.4.1974." PAAA, B71, vol. 113895.

⁴⁹ Graf 2014, 318-25.

⁵⁰ "Briefing Paper Prepared in the Department of State, Washington, May 1974." *FRUS 1969-1976*, vol. XXXVI, doc. 352, 997-8.

⁵¹ "Fernschreiben Nr. 1526 von Rohwedder und Lebsanft betr. 4. Sitzung der Energie-Koordinierungsgruppe in Brüssel am 2.-3.5.1974, Delegationsbericht Nr. 2, Brüssel,

States, as it was then possible to develop an initial unified stance for the consumer countries.

In this respect, the US government's main aims were to decide on crisis measures and develop joint efforts to bring down the price of oil. In a declaration to the ECG, the leader of the US delegation, Under Secretary of State for International Security Affairs William H. Donaldson, had made clear what was important to the United States: as a result of successful negotiations, the participating countries "must be considered a single unit in energy matters. Any cut-off or discriminatory pricing on energy exports to any one country must be considered a cut-off to all."⁵²

When the US government presented its concrete proposal on June 12, 1974, it laid bait for the other countries, persuading them to accept it. By now, the United States was ready to go back to the proposal it previously had rejected in OECD committee meetings in November 1973. This new proposal essentially laid out a scheme for consumer cooperation that the OECD working group had already identified in those November 1973 meetings. For example, measures were aimed at reducing the amount of oil consumed during a crisis, increasing the emergency crude oil reserves, and carrying out joint attempts to develop alternative energy sources. But now, the US government accepted that, in a crisis, its oil production would become part of a distribution system. In addition, the United States was proposing the founding of a small international organization to carry out the program, which would entail an administrative board of foreign and energy ministers, a committee of high-ranking civil servants for crisis management, and a secretariat for day-to-day operations.⁵³

The other countries could hardly turn down the United States' offer. Content-wise they were in full agreement with its ideas. Denmark and Italy in particular also demanded stricter control of the market through the consumer group and by regulating prices. These interventionist tendencies were intercepted by the US government, which did not want to endanger the oil companies' traditional role. US representatives made sure that the consuming countries did not work against, but rather in cooperation with oil companies.⁵⁴

3.5.1974." PAAA, B71, vol. 113895. A conference of oil consumers and suppliers first took place in the form of the Conference on International Economic Cooperation (CIEC) between 1975 and 1977. This achieved no results. See Graf 2014, 325-30.

⁵² Speech of Donaldson to the ECG, 3.4.1974, Bundesarchiv Koblenz (BaK), N1360 (Lantzke), vol. 68. Lantzke noted succinctly in the margin, "That is the political problem."

⁵³ "Drahtbericht des Vortragenden Legationsrats I. Klasse Kruse, 19.7.1974." In *AAPD 1974*, 861, fn. 8. See also "Minutes of the Acting Secretary of State's Principals and Regional Staff Meeting, Washington, 10.6.1974." in: *FRUS 1969-1976*, vol. XXXVI, doc. 355, 1006-9.

⁵⁴ Kuiken 2013, 422-3.

A proposal to make the market more transparent, which was promoted by the Federal Republic of Germany, found widespread approval.⁵⁵ The governments' traumatic experience of making decisions without reliable data in the oil crisis made the proposal plausible. It was therefore decided in the negotiations to set up an information system based primarily on the regular supply of data from the member countries. Consequently, they had to establish national information systems in cooperation with the oil companies. This new multilateral data collection system countered the mistrust towards oil companies – a noticeable sentiment among a number of governments during the oil crisis. As such, the oil crisis caused governments to take a different view of the industry's role in the oil market. Efforts made here went far beyond the rudimentary statistical work of the Oil Committee and its High Level Group.⁵⁶

While the countries came to quick agreement on content, most continued to reject the creation of a new organization to carry out the proposal's aims. The Europeans were particularly keen to utilize the OECD, because the agreed-upon program then appeared less confrontational. In addition, the EC enjoyed special status in the OECD, which meant the EC Commission could be included in the new energy policy measures. The EC countries also wanted to assure consistency with the developing EC energy policy.⁵⁷ Even France, which still remained on the fringes, showed signs of rapprochement should the new program be transferred to the OECD.⁵⁸ Since the United States still insisted on its own independent organization, the compromise was to establish the new organization as a separate body – with its own rules – within the OECD. By doing so, the United States wanted to prevent any country from vetoing a decision. The fragmentation of Western industrialized countries, as exemplified by the OECD bodies during the oil crisis, had underscored that a unanimous voting procedure was not particularly helpful in organizing resistance to OPEC's threats. Besides, decisions had to be made quickly in the case of a crisis, and such a procedure seemed to be too time-consuming.

The United States was able to push through the system of weighing votes according to oil consumption on most of the topics, a ruling that was clearly in its favor, as compared to the unanimous system used by the OECD. The new

⁵⁵ See also the diverse reports from the West German Ministry of Economics in BaK, N1360 (Lantzke), vols. 71 und 100.

⁵⁶ Particularly in this area of oil data collection, Graf sees the most important task of the IEA. See Graf 2014, 316.

⁵⁷ Türk 2014.

⁵⁸ On the subject of how West Germany made attempts to include France in the evolving consumer cooperation, see "Deutsch-französische Konsultationsbesprechung, 9.7.1974." In *AAPD 1974*, doc. 205, 899-917, here 905-6; "Aufzeichnung des Referats 403 des Auswärtigen Amtes betr. Europäische Energiepolitik, 17.7.1974." BaK, B136, vol. 8470; "Vermerk des stellvertretenden Leiters der Abteilung ‚Auswärtige und innerdeutsche Beziehungen, äußere Sicherheit‘ im deutschen Bundeskanzleramt, Per Fischer, betr. Beteiligung Frankreichs am Washingtoner Follow-up, Bonn, 18.7.1974." BaK, B136, vol. 8470.

voting system also made sure that neither the US nor Western Europe as a bloc could push through decisions alone.⁵⁹

Additionally, the OECD debates during the 1967 and 1973 oil crises had revealed that the process of voting on when to set off the crisis procedure was not constructive. They had only underlined the lack of unity among Western industrialized countries. Within the ECG, there was agreement that the decision to activate the crisis system was to be depoliticized – in other words, it would be triggered automatically. As such, the ECG negotiators reverted back to an option that had already been discussed by the OECD Oil Committee in November 1973. The secretariat of the new organization would declare the crisis situation and, therefore, obtained an authoritative position. The threshold for a crisis was fixed at a seven percent drop in either one country's or the whole group's oil supplies.⁶⁰

After the details were agreed upon, they were laid out in the Agreement on an International Energy Program, which established the IEA as the administrative body for these measures. The last hurdle rested on the OECD council's decision. Unanimous approval was needed to establish the IEA as an autonomous organization within the OECD. However, some delegates were indecisive, including the French. A few days before the vote, Kissinger proposed a financial safety net of 25 billion dollars within the OECD for countries particularly affected by the oil crisis. US Secretary of Finance William E. Simon made clear that the fund should support only countries that participated in the joint efforts to reduce dependency on Middle Eastern oil. The proposal's link with the vote was not directly mentioned, but was obvious.⁶¹ Accordingly, France, Iceland, and Greece abstained from voting on November 15, 1974, a move that was formally possible without endangering the agreement.⁶² Along with the United States, the founding members of the IEA were: Canada, Great Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, Denmark, Austria, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, Japan, and Turkey.

The members expected the IEA to prevent the potential future use of the "oil weapon," universally reduce dependency on Middle Eastern oil, and provide reliable data for political decisions. It was the first time the United States was

⁵⁹ Scott 1994, 193.

⁶⁰ "Fernschreiben Nr. 2195 by Rohwedder and Lebsanft betr. 5. Sitzung der Energiekoordinierungsgruppe am 17./18.6.1974, Brussels, 17.6.1974." PAAA, B71, vol. 113895; "Fernschreiben Nr. 2539 by Lebsanft betr. 6. Sitzung der Energie-Koordinierungsgruppe am 8./9.7.1974, Brussels, 9.7.1974." PAAA, B71, vol. 113895. In its early years, the creation and decision-making procedure of the IEA was seen as innovative and, therefore, attracted the attention of political scientists and legal experts. See inter alia Keohane 1978; Willrich and Conant 1977; Scott 1977; Roggen 1979.

⁶¹ Cohen 1998, 163-6; Carroll and Kellow 2011, 78-9.

⁶² On the discussions and voting within the OECD Council, see the record of the meeting C/M(74)27 (Prov.), OECD archives, vol. 541c.

formally part of the common sharing system, which the other members perceived as a decisive step toward securing their oil supplies.⁶³ In his final assessment of the IEA, Kissinger articulated the United States' broader approach, pointing out that the oil crisis "dangerously strained political, security, and economic ties within the industrialized world. The IEP was [...] designed to avoid such costs in the future."⁶⁴

6. Conclusion

This analysis began with the recognition that, even before the oil crisis, cooperation among the Western industrialized nations on energy policy in the OECD was evident. This was particularly the case when it came to crisis measures in Europe and energy consumption projections. During the oil crises caused by the Suez Crisis in 1956 and the Six Day War in 1967, supply problems were countered by making use of the US oil reserve capacity, whereby the OECD's Oil Committee acted as a kind of coordinating body. But this arrangement became outdated in light of rising US oil consumption. The United States urged the Europeans to therefore intensify measures to deal with crisis situations, particularly by building up strategic oil reserves.

The concentration on Europe was increasingly perceived as inappropriate. Consequently, the Oil Committee and its High Level Group analyzed perspectives on consumer cooperation that included the United States, Canada, and Japan. They identified a joint sharing system as key for cooperation in the case of crisis. Agreement was not found, however, since the countries that were extremely dependent on imported oil requested the inclusion of US oil production in this system, and, in 1973, the US government was not yet prepared to carry this responsibility.

Therefore, all Western countries entered the oil crisis of 1973 insufficiently prepared. The uncertainty of the situation made clear the shortcomings of the measures already planned, especially since the Arab countries cleverly divided the Western consumer countries into preferential and non-preferential countries. The OECD thus failed to bring about a unanimous decision on activating the crisis procedure.

In this context, US Secretary of State Kissinger identified that a strong consumer group would be a useful means of opposing OPEC/OAPEC power and

⁶³ See e.g., the evaluation of the IEA by the West German Ministry of Economics for the Federal Cabinet: "Der Bundesminister für Wirtschaft betr. Internationales Energieprogramm (IEP), Anlage zur Kabinettsache, Bonn, 14.10.1974." BaK, B102, vol. 139709.

⁶⁴ Cable by Kissinger to the US diplomatic posts concerning current economic developments: The International Energy Program, 2.12.1974, <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1974STATE264612_b.html> (last accessed May 8, 2014).

absorbing centrifugal tendencies in the Western camp. As such, energy policy served as a vehicle for the United States to maintain its leading role among Western industrialized countries. Therefore, Kissinger started an initiative to build closer cooperation among the consuming countries, culminating in the Washington Energy Conference in February 1974.

By applying political pressure, the US government was able to encourage the participating countries, with the exception of France, to set up the ECG, which was supposed to sort out the possibilities for consumer cooperation. In the ECG discussions, the US government showed its willingness to include the US oil production in the sharing system, because this concession was now part of the State Department's foreign policy strategy. In this way, the United States succeeded in obtaining an agreement on a consumer cooperation program.

The previous OECD negotiations convinced the US government in particular that a unanimous decision-making system was not beneficial for its aims, and the ECG therefore decided to weight the vote in the IEA on the basis of oil consumption. In this way, the United States exercised greater influence on the IEA than it did on the OECD. Additionally, the triggering of the crisis case was depoliticized. The IEA's secretariat had to declare the crisis after a minimum drop in oil supplies of 7%. The ECG discussions about the tasks and the structure of the IEA therefore took on the previous discussions and papers produced by the OECD Oil Committee and its High Level Group. The OECD thus proved in the event of the 1973 oil crisis to be more of a think tank than a decision-making center.

The negotiations in the OECD and the ECG made clear that the United States was the leading power in the initiative to generate cooperation among Western oil-consuming countries. To most countries, the idea that consuming countries should cooperate seemed necessary. However, such an initiative seemed too daring for Europeans and Japanese, who feared direct consequences regarding oil supplies. It became clear that the initiative's success or failure depended on the degree of US commitment. The inclusion of US oil supplies in the sharing system was the major concession here. The prospect of this security in future oil crises finally convinced the other countries to favor strong cooperation with the United States. For this reason, the United States' relative dominance was tolerated.

This article shows it is necessary to also look from an historical perspective at the questions of how international relations changed in the 1970s and how power shifting went hand in hand with these changes. Following the final phase of the Second World War, when, for example, the Bretton Woods Institutions and, later, the GATT cemented the United States' institutionalized dominance, the 1970s seemed to be a second development and transitional phase for inter-

national organizations.⁶⁵ This period was shaped by major challenges for Western industrialized countries. The breakdown of the Bretton Woods system, the oil crises, the EC's pursuit of a more independent role in international relations, and the rising power of some Third World countries challenged the dominant paradigm of international relations under US leadership. The negotiations leading to the establishment of the IEA can, therefore, be seen as a struggle of the United States to maintain its hegemonic role. By promising more energy security, the United States succeeded in rallying around them the Western industrialized countries, with the exception of France, and in restoring its hegemony, at least in energy cooperation. Thus, the main tasks of the IEA became not only managing a crisis procedure and making information about the oil market available to its members, but also coordinating the Western approach to international energy politics under US leadership. In this respect, the IEA served as a tool to prepare a common Western approach for the Conference on International Economic Cooperation (CIEC) in Paris between 1975 and 1977, at which the Western industrialized countries discussed energy matters with oil producing countries. Since the end of the 1970s, the IEA also proved helpful in developing the papers for the energy discussions of the G6 and G7 summits. Still today, a coherent IEA approach on energy matters is secured by the limitation of membership to only OECD countries.⁶⁶

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⁶⁵ Bergsten characterizes the 1970s as the third phase; he identifies a second wave of international institutions around 1960, which organized a stronger role for recovered Europe and Japan and integrated the developing countries into the international system. See Bergsten 1976, 361-2. Cf. Graf 2014, 364-9.

⁶⁶ That the IEA's restricted membership also has advantages is disregarded by Colgan, Keohane and Van de Graaf 2012, 137, who simply explain the fact that important oil consumers such as India or China are not members with path-dependency.

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