

**THE UNITED STATES
AND GERMANY IN THE ERA
OF THE COLD WAR, 1968–1990**

A Handbook, Volume 2



Edited by
Detlef Junker

PUBLICATIONS OF THE GERMAN HISTORICAL INSTITUTE

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THE UNITED STATES AND GERMANY IN THE ERA OF THE COLD WAR,
1945–1990

The close association between the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany was a key element in the international order of the Cold War era. No country had as wide-reaching or as profound an impact on the western portion of divided Germany as the United States. No country better exemplified the East–West conflict in American thinking than Germany. *The United States and Germany in the Era of the Cold War* examines all facets of German–American relations and interactions in the decades from the defeat of the Third Reich to Germany’s reunification in 1990. In addition to its comprehensive treatment of U.S.–West German political, economic, social, and cultural ties, *The United States and Germany in the Era of the Cold War* provides an overview of the more limited dealings between the United States and the communist German Democratic Republic.

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The United States and Germany in the Era of the Cold War, 1945–1990

A HANDBOOK

Volume 2: 1968–1990

Edited by

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University of Heidelberg

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David B. Morris

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Contents

Volume 2

The United States and Germany, 1968–1990

List of Contributors for Volumes 1 and 2

page *xiii*

POLITICS

Détente and Multipolarity: The Cold War and German–American Relations, 1968–1990 <i>Klaus Schwabe</i>	I
1 The United States and the German Question <i>Christian Hacke</i>	18
2 The Federal Republic of Germany Between the American and Russian Superpowers: “Old Friend” and “New Partner” <i>Gottfried Niedhart</i>	26
3 Ostpolitik: Détente German-Style and Adapting to America <i>Werner Link</i>	33
4 Creative Tension: The United States and the Federal Republic in the CSCE <i>Michael R. Lucas</i>	40
5 The United States, Germany, and the Multilateralization of International Relations <i>H. W. Brands</i>	47
6 Expectations of Dominance and Partnership Rhetoric: The Federal Republic of Germany in the Crossfire of American and French Policy, 1945–1990 <i>Eckart Conze</i>	54
7 West Germany and European Unity in U.S. Foreign Policy <i>Klaus Larres</i>	62

8	Cooperation and Conflict in German and American Policies toward Regions Outside Europe <i>Helmut Hubel</i>	69
9	Two States, One Nation: The International Legal Basis of German-American Relations from Ostpolitik to Unification <i>Richard Wiggers</i>	76
10	The U.S. Congress and German-American Relations <i>Steven J. Brady</i>	82
11	The German Political Parties and the USA <i>Matthias Zimmer</i>	89
12	The Role of East Germany in American Policy <i>Christian F. Ostermann</i>	96
13	The United States and German Unification <i>Stephen F. Szabo</i>	104

SECURITY

	German-American Security Relations, 1968–1990 <i>Wölfgang Krieger</i>	111
1	A Limit to Solidarity: Germany, the United States, and the Vietnam War <i>T. Michael Ruddy</i>	126
2	NATO Strategy and the German-American Relationship <i>Kori N. Schake</i>	133
3	Differences on Arms Control in German-American Relations <i>Matthias Dembinski</i>	140
4	The NATO Double-Track Decision, the INF Treaty, and the SNF Controversy: German-American Relations between Consensus and Conflict <i>Michael Broer</i>	148
5	The Shifting Military Balance in Central Europe <i>Frederick Zilian Jr.</i>	155
6	The Transfer of American Military Technology to Germany <i>Joachim Rohde</i>	163
7	German-American Intelligence Relations: An Ambivalent Partnership <i>Loch K. Johnson and Annette Freyberg</i>	171
8	No Unity Without Security: The Security Features of German Unification <i>Karl Kaiser</i>	178

ECONOMICS

Cooperation, Competition, and Conflict: Economic Relations Between the United States and Germany, 1968–1990	187
<i>Harold James</i>	
1 Trojan Horse or Loyal Partner? West Germany as a Trading Power, Between the United States and the EC	203
<i>Monika Medick-Krakau</i>	
2 Emancipation, Regionalization, and Globalization: German–American Trade Relations	211
<i>Welf Werner</i>	
3 American and German Trade Policy: Between Liberal Multilateralism, Neoprotectionism, and Regional Integration	220
<i>Andreas Falke</i>	
4 The Deutsche Mark and the Dollar: Domestic Price Stability and International Currencies	228
<i>Harold James</i>	
5 Globalization of Entrepreneurial Prospects: The Integration of Capital, Direct and Portfolio Investment, and Multinational Companies in Germany and the United States	235
<i>Christine Borrmann and Hans-Eckart Scharrer</i>	
6 The United States, Germany, and Aid for Developing Countries	242
<i>Maarten L. Pereboom</i>	
7 The World Economic Summits: A Difficult Learning Process	249
<i>Bernhard May</i>	

CULTURE

Culture as an Arena of Transatlantic Conflict	257
<i>Frank Trommler</i>	
1 American Cultural Policy Toward Germany	274
<i>Hans N. Tuch</i>	
2 The Third Pillar of Foreign Policy: West German Cultural Policy in the United States	280
<i>Wulf Köpke</i>	
3 The Study of Germany in the United States	287
<i>John A. McCarthy</i>	
4 American Studies in the Federal Republic of Germany, 1945–1990	294
<i>Willi Paul Adams</i>	
5 In the Shadow of the Federal Republic: Cultural Relations Between the GDR and the United States	305
<i>Heinrich Bortfeldt</i>	
6 American Literature in Germany	312
<i>Martin Meyer</i>	

7	The American Reception of Contemporary German Literature <i>Sigrid Bauschinger</i>	319
8	The Americanization of the German Language <i>Heidrun Kämper</i>	326
9	Between Blight and Blessing: The Influence of American Popular Culture on the Federal Republic <i>Michael Ermarth</i>	334
10	Popular Music in Germany: Experimentation and Emancipation from Anglo-American Models <i>Edward Larkey</i>	341
11	Hollywood in Germany <i>Thomas Koebner</i>	349
12	New German Cinema as National Cinema <i>Anton Kaes</i>	356
13	Transatlantic Reflections: German and American Television <i>Michael Geisler</i>	365
14	Performance Theater in the Age of Post-Drama <i>David Bathrick</i>	373
15	Beyond Painting and Sculpture: German-American Exchange in the Visual Arts <i>Stefan Germer and Julia Bernard</i>	379
16	The Rediscovery of the City and Postmodern Architecture <i>Werner Durth</i>	387
17	Modernity and Postmodernity in a Transatlantic Perspective <i>Klaus J. Milich</i>	394
18	Confrontations with the Holocaust in the Era of the Cold War: German and American Perspectives <i>Jeffrey Peck</i>	402

SOCIETY

	German-American Societal Relations in Three Dimensions, 1968–1990 <i>Lily Gardner Feldman</i>	409
1	“1968”: A Transatlantic Event and Its Consequences <i>Claus Leggewie</i>	421
2	Social Movements in Germany and the United States: The Peace Movement and the Environmental Movement <i>Carl Lankowski</i>	430
3	Women and the New Women’s Movement <i>Hanna Schissler</i>	437

4	Transatlantic Networks: Elites in German–American Relations <i>Felix Philipp Lutz</i>	445
5	Bridging Constituencies: German Political Foundations in German–American Relations <i>Ann L. Phillips</i>	452
6	Normalizing German–American Labor Relationships in a Changing International Environment <i>Michael Fichter</i>	460
7	German and American Churches: Changes in Actors, Priorities, and Power Relations <i>Robert F. Goeckel</i>	466
8	The Twisted Road Toward Rapprochement: American Jewry and Germany Until Reunification <i>Shlomo Shafir</i>	474
9	Difference and Convergence: Immigration Policy in the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany <i>Ulrike Fischer-Inverardi</i>	482
10	Urban Planning, Transportation, and Suburban Development: Striking a Balance <i>Brian Ladd</i>	489
11	Relations Between Right-Wing Extremists in Germany and the United States, 1945–1990 <i>Thomas Grumke</i>	495
12	With America Against America: Anti-Americanism in West Germany <i>Philipp Gassert</i>	502
13	The Maturation of a Relationship: The Image of America in West German Public Opinion <i>David B. Morris</i>	510
14	Between Private Opinion and Official Pronouncement: Images of America in the German Democratic Republic, 1971–1990 <i>Rainer Schnoor</i>	519
15	The American Image of Germany, 1968–1991 <i>Thomas Reuther</i>	527

OUTLOOK

America, Germany, and the Atlantic Community After the Cold War <i>Hans-Peter Schwarz</i>	535
<i>Index</i>	567

List of Contributors for Volumes 1 and 2

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POLITICS

Détente and Multipolarity

The Cold War and German-American Relations, 1968–1990

Klaus Schwabe

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GLOBAL DÉTENTE AND GERMAN OSTPOLITIK

The period covered here began with the postwar era's first major turning point, symbolized by the year 1968. On the surface, this new era was ushered in by changes in leadership: In Washington the administration of Richard Nixon replaced that of Lyndon Johnson, while in Bonn the "Grand Coalition" of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats gave way to a new alliance between the Social Democrats and Liberals. The overshadowing development, however, was the crisis of U.S. policy in Vietnam along with the nuclear stalemate between the superpowers. To ease that stalemate, the United States had to reorient its foreign policy in Europe fundamentally toward the goal of a comprehensive easing of East-West tensions. This new orientation achieved its first critical success with the treaty negotiated with the Soviet Union on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons ratified by the United Nations on July 7, 1968.

The Vietnam War and its repercussions also had an indirect effect on the Federal Republic's foreign policy position by mobilizing a "New Left"¹ that adopted the American protest against the war as its own cause. The influence of this new, in extreme cases fanatically anti-American "movement" extended into the Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, or SPD), the party that took over the

chancellorship in late October 1969. American efforts to achieve détente posed a more direct challenge to West Germany's previous foreign policy principles. Because the Federal Republic insisted that progress toward détente must depend on progress toward German reunification, it was in danger of becoming isolated from its main ally, for the Americans attached higher priority to détente in Europe than to the German question.²

The new West German chancellor, Willy Brandt, pursued Ostpolitik in part to prevent this isolation. With de facto recognition of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as a second German state, the offer to Russia to renounce force in their mutual relations, and the signing of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Brandt paved the way for the negotiations that resulted in the Moscow and Warsaw treaties of 1970. Although this brought the country back into step with America's policy of détente, the question of whether the long-term goals of West Germany's new Ostpolitik could be reconciled with America's policy toward Europe remained unanswered. There was a contradiction between the Brandt government's immediate "operative" Ostpolitik, for which, if only because of the Berlin question, American cooperation was essential, and its long-term political strategy vis-à-vis the East, which was moving away from the American line.

¹ See the chapter by T. Michael Ruddy, vol. 2, Security.

² See the chapter by Werner Link in this section.

The German question itself made clear that if the new Ostpolitik were to remain acceptable domestically, it could not sanction the *permanent* division of the German *nation*. At the same time, it acquiesced to lasting Soviet hegemony beyond the Iron Curtain. Conversely, the U.S. government had internally come to terms with a divided Germany and with the Oder-Neisse border, and it never contemplated endorsing the objections raised by the Christian Democratic (CDU/CSU) opposition to the Moscow and Warsaw treaties.³ On the other hand, however, the United States had not reconciled itself to the subjugation of Eastern Europe to the same extent as the German proponents of Ostpolitik. In a sense, the Americans actually viewed the concessions made by the West German government in the policy on Germany (*vis-à-vis* Poland, for example) as an opportunity for gradual liberalization within the Eastern bloc and the Soviet Union.

More important still were the differences between Washington and Bonn on the long-term aims of détente in Europe. Brandt was unsure of how long the American presence in Europe would last. The question arose whether Europe might not have to make its own security arrangements. The true intellectual architect of Ostpolitik, Brandt's trusted adviser Egon Bahr, aimed at that very possibility. Even before 1969, he advocated a Central European security system – an alliance of the non-nuclear states on both sides of the Iron Curtain – as a long-term optimal goal; such a security system would, he hoped, also facilitate German reunification. His somewhat optimistic expectation was that the United States would still retain a sufficient interest in a free and independent Europe to guarantee this system from outside. A further argument in favor of such a European security system, as he saw it, was the clear strategic consensus between the two superpowers that they would spare each other in the event of a nuclear war and make Europe their atomic battleground if necessary.⁴ Bahr suggested that it would therefore be in Germany's long-term interest to avoid this

risk by breaking away from involvement in the East-West conflict and, instead, becoming part of a neutral security zone in Central Europe (in which it would be the most important partner). Central Europe instead of NATO: This sentiment, which would have marginalized America's role in Europe, was widespread in the ranks of the German Left. In later years it would become apparent how much the SPD as a party was forced to yield to this pressure.

The United States and its leading analyst of international relations, Henry Kissinger, Nixon's national security adviser, initially judged Germany's Ostpolitik not by its immediate, pro-American and pro-détente orientation, but by the long-term ulterior motives that they suspected – not unjustly, as previously shown – lay behind it. Kissinger mistrusted the spokesmen of the new Ostpolitik such as Brandt and Bahr – the latter, in his view, was an old-fashioned left-wing nationalist – because he thought that, in the end, they were not pro-American.⁵ Ostpolitik revived old fears that the Federal Republic might revert to Germany's traditional policy of swinging between East and West. The Western alliance had just weathered the Gaullist variation of this policy. As Kissinger put it, the prospect that the Federal Republic might seek a similar nationalistic “breaking out on its own” could only fill Washington with trepidation.⁶

The real danger in Kissinger's view lay, however, in a selective détente in Europe, with NATO powers competing for Moscow's favor, that would loosen the cohesion of the Atlantic alliance and undermine American leadership in Europe. What he feared was that the global multipolarization of powers might eventually extend to Europe, a process that he himself was energetically pushing in the Far East with his policy of rapprochement with the People's Republic of China.⁷ In Europe, Charles de

⁵ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston, 1982), 147; Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, 1979), 410–11.

⁶ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York, 1994), 735.

⁷ William Burr, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts: The Top Secret Talks with Beijing and Moscow* (New York, 1999).

³ See the chapter by Christian Hacke in this section.

⁴ Egon Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit* (Munich, 1996), 411.

Gaulle had become the spokesman of this multipolarization. It seemed that the long-term goals of the new German Ostpolitik lay in the same direction. Realization of these goals could have resulted in a loss of American say on the German question.

At first such long-term concerns were of secondary importance to U.S. policy. For the time being, the U.S. government could only welcome the fact that the Federal Republic had distanced itself from insisting on the maximum goals of its policy on the German question and had temporarily recognized the status quo in Central Europe.⁸ If the Soviet Union at the same time made concessions over the issue of Berlin, this, too, was in the direct interest of the American protector power and corresponded with the desire of both West Germany and the United States to preserve peace in Europe. For the purposes of avoiding a selective détente, therefore, it seemed better to play an active part in shaping West Germany's Ostpolitik in order to control it.

Kissinger in fact succeeded in dovetailing Brandt's Ostpolitik with U.S. détente policy. In retrospect, this was almost a rehearsal of the highly successful division of labor between the United States and Germany that, twenty years later, brought about German unification. One consequence that Brandt and his advisers hoped would flow from Ostpolitik was greater independence from Germany's American ally, whose assistance in the Berlin question would henceforth be needed only in exceptional cases.

This new West German independence had its limits, as became apparent during the final months of the Brandt government. The period of U.S. intervention in Vietnam had provided considerable potential for conflict between Western Europe and the United States: The Europeans complained of American unilateralism in the arms-control talks with the Soviet Union and felt that America's nuclear guarantee for Western Europe had lost its credibility. Attempts in Congress to reduce the number of American troops stationed in Europe increased

these doubts. The Americans for their part condemned the West Europeans' plans to exclude them from the foreign policy discussions under the newly established European Political Cooperation (EPC) system and their reluctance to help shoulder the global burdens imposed by America's superpower status. In particular, the United States insinuated that the Brandt government had breached transatlantic solidarity with its energetic pursuit of Ostpolitik and its failure to support America in the Arab-Israeli Yom Kippur War.

In the context of the "Year of Europe" that he had proclaimed (1973), Kissinger succeeded in obtaining endorsement of an "Atlantic declaration" at the NATO conference in Brussels on June 26, 1974. This came, with the help of German mediation, after heated opposition, especially from the French representatives. In the declaration, the United States confirmed its nuclear guarantee for Europe, while the Europeans committed themselves to the principle of Atlantic "burden sharing" and solidarity on all fronts – not just the military one – both inside and outside the territory of the North Atlantic Treaty.⁹ Recognition and institutionalization of the United States' right to a say in matters of joint European and American interest had preceded this agreement. Despite its economic weakness brought on by the oil crisis, the United States thereby frustrated from the outset the attempt to make Western Europe an independent factor within the bipolar Soviet-American system. Contrary to its hopes, the Brandt government found its room for maneuver narrowed.

AMERICA AND THE EUROPEAN SECURITY SYSTEM

That a multilateral structure of peace for the whole of Europe, envisaged by Bahr as an alternative to NATO and the Warsaw Pact, remained a subject of discussion was due to the Soviet Union's long-standing call for a European security conference. The Russians hoped that such

⁸ See the chapter by Christian Hacke in this section.

⁹ See the chapter by Klaus Larres in this section.

a conference, in the absence of the Americans, would definitively sanction Europe's post-World War II frontiers and thus the Soviet's predominance in Eastern Europe (what later became known as the "Brezhnev Doctrine").

Brandt had already supported the Soviet project, albeit with American participation, while he was foreign minister. As chancellor, he saw it as an opportunity to provide multilateral footing for securing his Ostpolitik and to tie the United States, independently of NATO, to both parts of Europe. In America, the security conference idea remained controversial and had merely served as a bargaining chip as Kissinger sought concessions from the Soviets in the negotiation of the Moscow and Warsaw treaties. Subsequently, however, the negotiations that began in 1973 showed that the West could also introduce its own ideas – on protecting human rights in Eastern Europe, for example – into the Soviet plan.

Once again, American and German negotiators worked together closely.¹⁰ Neither party had any interest in outright legal recognition of the East European status quo, the Federal Republic being particularly reluctant to sanction the division of Germany. By presenting a united front, they were able to persuade the Soviets to accept a language that made it clear that the new security system would be equivalent not to a peace treaty, but rather to an interim agreement. This would keep open legal options that the West regarded as desirable. Existing treaty rights, such as the Allies' rights in Berlin, were confirmed and frontier changes undertaken through military force were ruled out. But the possibility of peaceful change – by application of the right of self-determination, for example – was kept open. The Germans' intention, as Brandt's successor Helmut Schmidt emphasized in Helsinki, was to preserve the possibility of reunification and closer ties with the European Community (EC). The United States championed the German "reunification proviso" despite the reservations expressed by some West European representatives. The Americans also regarded

the commitment to human rights as one way of backing Germany's policy of softening the blow of division by gaining humanitarian concessions. These concessions were made palatable to the Soviet Union by the prospect of closer economic cooperation between East and West (the so-called Basket II).

The Final Act concluded at the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) on July 30, 1975, was an ultimate triumph for détente and Ostpolitik, one with which both the Bonn government and President Gerald Ford's new administration could equally identify. At the follow-up conferences to Helsinki, this consensus between Germans and Americans soon broke apart. This reflected the new détente tactics developed by the U.S. government under Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. Together with Britain and France, the United States regarded the Helsinki follow-up negotiations as a means of securing Soviet cooperation in the détente process as a whole. For the West German government, by contrast, "Helsinki" had been an end in itself: The Germans felt that further consultations on the implementation of the Final Act should take place without regard to Soviet actions elsewhere in the world. This reflected Germany's national interest in securing further multilateral support for the policy of making constant incremental progress toward the gradual opening-up of the GDR and, at the same time, encouraging the Eastern bloc governments in their efforts to gain greater independence from Moscow. "Helsinki," in Bonn's view, should be left untouched as an alternative to the Cold War and as an option for a multilateral European security system supported by both superpowers. This was not without consequences for the events of 1989–90.

THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC AND THE END OF AMERICAN DÉTENTE POLICY

Like Brandt, his successor Helmut Schmidt attached great importance to the multilateralization of West German foreign policy. The aims of that policy were not only to adapt to the

¹⁰ See the chapter by Michael R. Lucas in this section.

global trend toward a multipolar power structure but also to find a way out of the crippling bilateral Soviet-American confrontation over the German question. Schmidt, as a former defense minister, was more of an Atlanticist than his predecessor. In his later years in office, he moved closer and closer to France, especially in economic and monetary matters. NATO, however, remained the primary anchor of his security policy, and neither the European Community nor the Franco-German entente offered a substitute to it.

This basic stance was confirmed during President Gerald Ford's term of office. Close harmony between West Germany and the United States marked this period, as the Helsinki Final Act had demonstrated. The personal factor was all-important: Schmidt and Henry Kissinger, now promoted to secretary of state, thought in similar terms on foreign policy. As pragmatists and political realists, they shared the same model of a stable international order based on the principles of universal and controlled balance of power, calculability in foreign policy conduct, and maintenance of a credible deterrent as the essential conditions for preserving peace.

In his policy on Germany, too, Schmidt's aims were in line with American priorities. The objective of a security structure embracing the whole of Europe and retaining only loose ties with the United States had considerably less hold over him than over his visionary predecessor. Although he also kept open the option of German unification, he seems to have had less faith in the medium-term efficacy of the "change through rapprochement" formula than Bahr or Brandt. Most of all, however, he attached clear priority to the Federal Republic's alignment with the West in both the medium and longer term.

Even so, relations between the Schmidt government and the United States soon became more difficult as support for the policy of détente in American domestic politics began to weaken appreciably. To the Democrats in Congress, Kissinger's seemingly nonideological realism in foreign policy was suspect. Influenced by Senator Henry Jackson, the party began to advocate a policy that made American eco-

nomics favors to the Soviet Union conditional upon Soviet concessions on human rights issues, especially the emigration of Soviet Jews. Out of deep personal conviction, though certainly with one eye on the electorate, the new president, Jimmy Carter, took up the cause of this morally inspired form of foreign policy. His plan was to remind the Soviet leadership, by granting or withdrawing trade concessions, of the humanitarian commitments it had entered into with the Helsinki Final Act. From Carter's standpoint – a naïve one, as we know today – this policy was in no way incompatible with the aims of disarmament and détente. Indeed, he saw himself as representing a true détente based on reciprocity; he ruled out any attempt to obtain strategic preponderance and called for restraint by both sides in crisis regions of the Third World.

The Schmidt government took a skeptical view of Carter's principles of ethical conduct. It feared that the Soviet leadership would feel challenged with regard to its sincerity in dealing with human rights and would react with even harsher suppression of its population. Schmidt's prediction that escalating demands for arms limitation would merely embarrass the Soviet leadership internally, and therefore be rejected, would shortly be confirmed.

The U.S.-Soviet negotiations on the limitation of strategic nuclear weapons (SALT II) also gave reason to doubt the reliability of America's nuclear guarantee for Western Europe; the negotiations dealt exclusively with long-range weapons and disregarded the medium-range missiles with which the Soviet Union was threatening Western Europe in general and the Federal Republic in particular.¹¹ The United States possessed no equivalent to meet this challenge. In the event of war, Europe would be selectively threatened by medium-range missiles, whose numbers the Russians rapidly increased; in the event of a crisis, this weakness exposed Western Europe to Soviet blackmail. Schmidt was able to persuade Ford

¹¹ See the chapter by Matthias Dembinski, vol. 2, *Security*.

but not Carter to take medium-range weapons into account in the SALT talks. He encountered decisive resistance from the president's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who mistrusted Germany's ideas about détente, with their echoes of Ostpolitik, in general and Schmidt in particular. "Carter's idea of the superiority of his moral position," Schmidt wrote in retrospect,

and his overestimation of the ease with which international politics could be manipulated, combined with Brzezinski's inclination, as the representative of a world power, quite simply to ignore the interests of America's German allies – there had been nothing like it in German-American relations since the days of Johnson's dealings with Ludwig Erhard.¹²

In fall 1977, therefore, Schmidt went public in support of deploying medium-range missiles in Western Europe. This initiative led to what became known as NATO's "double-track decision" of December 12, 1979, which was to play a key role in subsequent relations between the United States and West Germany. Drawing on NATO's Harmel Report of 1967, it provided both for arms-control negotiations and for stepped-up rearmament measures. However, because new American medium-range missiles could not be deployed in Europe before 1983, the United States would in the meantime attempt to broach the issue of limiting the "Eurostrategic" weapons with the Soviets at the SALT talks. This was a concession on the part of Carter, who evidently hoped – as Reagan did later – to prevent the appearance of a decoupling of the United States and Federal Republic in security policy and to not encourage West German multilateralism.

The NATO double-track decision marked the end of a series of awkward clashes between Carter and Schmidt, in which each had accused the other of letting down the alliance. Carter obviously underestimated the domestic difficulties that Schmidt would have to face in the event of the implementation of the decision to deploy

medium-range missiles. Schmidt was irked by the vacillation of the American president, who, after obtaining Schmidt's consent on the development of the neutron bomb, reversed his own decision against the recommendations of his closest advisers. In its desire to prevent the proliferation of atomic weapons, the U.S. government was also trying to prevent its German ally from supplying nuclear installations for peaceful purposes to Brazil, which was not a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Carter eventually had to withdraw his government's objections. Behind these disagreements lay Carter's ambitious hopes for worldwide détente, while Schmidt remained committed to the "balance of fear" in Europe.

Just how much the United States' standing as the leading power within NATO had suffered from Carter's inconsistent security policy became apparent at a moment of international crisis when the Western allies should have presented a united front. In the final days of 1979, the Soviet Union sent troops into Afghanistan. As Carter saw it, this was the end of détente: As in Angola and Ethiopia, the Soviet Union had once again violated the principle of détente, namely, that the superpowers refrain from military intervention in Third World conflicts. The American government became convinced that an unstoppable Soviet-supported offensive in the Third World was underway that ultimately threatened the global balance between the superpowers.

To embarrass the Soviets in the eyes of the world, Carter pressed for nonmilitary sanctions to "punish" the USSR. He also took steps for a dramatic increase in American arms spending. The German chancellor thought little of what he regarded as a noisy punitive policy shaped largely by electoral considerations. It would, he believed, certainly fail in the critical aim of persuading the Soviets to withdraw from Afghanistan without loss of face and, at worst, might even lead to Soviet reprisals in Berlin. Schmidt was not prepared to support the proposed sanctions and thereby jeopardize the détente dialogue with the Soviet leadership in the German and European context.

¹² Helmut Schmidt, *Men and Powers: A Political Retrospective* (New York, 1989), 187.

This, of course, was the selective détente that Nixon had feared: In West Germany, there was talk of the “divisibility of détente.”¹³ Schmidt, however, did take specific steps to raise NATO’s defense capability, because he felt concern about global equilibrium on account of the obvious weakness of the Carter administration. The most important thing, he believed, was to stand by the NATO double-track decision unreservedly despite threatening gestures from the Soviets. In Washington, he was able to persuade Carter to continue the arms-control negotiations. Taking account of those in the SPD critical of his loyalty to NATO, Schmidt had to perform a precarious balancing act between the United States and the Soviet Union that sometimes gave rise to American doubts about his loyalty to the alliance. Even so, Carter accepted a Soviet offer negotiated by Schmidt for talks on medium-range missiles.

In his clashes with the Carter administration, Schmidt banked more and more on solidarity from the rest of Europe, especially France. This was particularly true for the broad field of international economic policy, which in the second half of the 1970s could often be no more than a policy of crisis management. Because of the repercussions of the Vietnam War and the oil crisis, high unemployment and inflation beset the American economy. If a basic consensus on economic and trade policy nevertheless still prevailed within the community of Atlantic states, and the world economic crisis did not swing entirely out of control, it was largely due to the ongoing cooperation between Schmidt and the French president, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, often within the context of the European Community. The Federal Republic thus became considerably more important both within the Western alliance and vis-à-vis with the United States, which could now claim to be no more than one among equals among the major economic powers. Because of its newly gained position, West Germany could now afford to demonstrate more independence from the United States in its policy of détente.

The loss of prestige that America had also suffered elsewhere – in Iran, for example – cost Carter his chance for reelection in November 1980. The victorious Ronald Reagan had put himself forward as a stern critic of Carter’s weak foreign policy. A second change of course for U.S. foreign policy was imminent, while elections in West Germany had recently endorsed the Schmidt government and its foreign policy.

THE “GOOD EMPIRE” AND THE “SECOND
COLD WAR”: THE CRISIS OF
THE AMERICAN-GERMAN CONSENSUS
ON DÉTENTE POLICIES

The new American president pursued with all ideological consistency what had already become a reality under Carter: the temporary suspension of détente. More resolutely than any of his predecessors since the 1950s, Reagan interpreted the confrontation between the United States and the “evil empire”¹⁴ embodied by the Soviet Union as a struggle of principle. After the legacy of self-doubt and moral dejection left behind by the Vietnam protest movement, he intended to embark on an ideological crusade against Soviet power, full of pride in what America stood for politically as a free democracy. He predicted the fall of the Soviet system. For all that, Reagan ruled out a military conflict with the Soviet Union; indeed, he thought such a conflict ultimately superfluous and counted on the eventual conversion of the Russian people to the American ideals of democracy, human rights, and the free market. One prerequisite, however, was that America should aim higher than mere equality in armaments with the Soviet Union and should demonstrate its resolution to preserve its superiority in military technology. This would give the West the critical trump card in the disarmament negotiations that would

¹³ See the chapter by Gottfried Niedhart in this section.

¹⁴ Christian Hacke, *Zur Weltmacht verdammt: Die amerikanische Aussenpolitik von Kennedy bis Clinton* (Berlin, 1997), 300; Detlef Junker, *Von der Weltmacht zur Supermacht: Amerikanische Aussenpolitik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Mannheim, 1995), 102.

ultimately force the USSR to abandon the arms race and accept an effective policy of détente. Reagan therefore stepped up the process of rearmament begun by Carter. A second prerequisite – the core of what became known as the Reagan Doctrine – was that the United States fight the Soviets' interventions in the Third World with their own weapons, in particular by fomenting counterrevolutions.

Remarkably, Reagan combined his militantly anticommunist ideology with far-reaching proposals for disarmament agreements between the superpowers: a reduction (rather than mere limitation) of strategic weapons (START) and the "zero option" for medium-range missiles; in other words, the United States would abandon the deployment of such arms in Europe once the Soviets had dismantled their existing equivalent systems (SS-20). That his rhetorical outbursts against the Soviet Union did not exactly enhance the credibility of these proposals among many of his contemporaries apparently did not make an impression on the president.

The West German peace movement took Reagan's militant anticommunism at its face value and saw him as the potential instigator of a third world war. This movement – in large part an outgrowth of the protest movements of 1968 that extended the political spectrum from the newly formed Green Party to the terrorist fringe and that was encouraged by East Germany – made it increasingly difficult for the chancellor to defend the NATO double-track decision. On the basis of what the chancellor called "ecological-anarchist-pacifist principles," but on account of an understandable sense of threat as well, the peace movement rejected not only any upgrading of the American nuclear force in Europe but also demanded the total withdrawal of America's nuclear arsenal from West Germany. Because the Soviets skillfully parried Reagan's proposals for disarmament, the suspicion arose within the peace movement that the danger of war in Europe sprang from the United States alone. The Reagan administration created the same effect with semipublic considerations of a successful nuclear war confined to European soil. For Schmidt, the publicity generated by the protest movement,

with what he himself regarded as its clearly anti-American thrust, became a central domestic concern as this movement extended its influence to the left wing of the SPD leadership around Oskar Lafontaine. Even the head of the SPD, Brandt, now associated NATO arms modernization with the Vietnam War.¹⁵ Schmidt's adherence to the NATO double-track decision thus contributed fundamentally to the erosion of his domestic power base. Even in the chancellery itself, some officials spoke in favor of a policy of confronting Reagan's America.

Unlike many in his party, Schmidt realized from the outset that Reagan's campaign against the Soviet Union was populist and intended mainly for domestic consumption. The chancellor admired Reagan's talent for a telegenic articulation of the political views shared by the majority of his fellow citizens, and he soon came to value the new president as being more steady and predictable than his predecessor and at the same time more open to discussion.¹⁶ By warning Reagan that the West German government might withdraw its full support from him, he persuaded the president to adhere loyally to the double-track decision and to continue the arms limitation talks with the Soviet Union.

The Schmidt and Reagan governments nonetheless eventually came into conflict. The occasion was the crisis the trade union Solidarity caused for Poland's communist regime in 1981. Reagan saw this as a first sign of the predicted collapse of the Soviet system. Under pressure from Russia, the Polish head of state proclaimed martial law in order to suppress Solidarity. Reagan reacted to this the same way Carter had when the Soviets intervened in Afghanistan. To embarrass the communist leadership in Poland and the Soviet Union, the United States imposed a trade embargo on both countries (wheat was excluded in deference to American farmers).

¹⁵ According to Wolfgang Jäger, "Die Innenpolitik der sozial-liberalen Koalition 1974–1982," in Karl Dietrich Bracher et al., eds., *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 5 vols. (Stuttgart, 1987), 5(2): 212.

¹⁶ Barbara Heep, *Helmut Schmidt und Amerika: Eine schwierige Partnerschaft* (Bonn, 1990), 207.

Like Carter before him, Reagan expected the West European members of NATO to stand squarely behind America. In particular, he expected that the Federal Republic would cancel a natural gas pipeline deal with the Soviets that had been negotiated by a European consortium. Schmidt rejected such symbolic acts as ineffective. As the guardian of Brandt's Ostpolitik, he felt a commitment to preserving stability and thereby peace in both halves of Europe. Solidarity, a grassroots movement, seemed to him to be a destabilizing factor that threatened to undermine both German-German and German-Soviet relations, which in turn could jeopardize what détente had so far achieved and perhaps even the security of Berlin. Clearly distancing himself from the Reagan government, Schmidt thus embarked on a damage-control campaign to salvage the European process of détente. He continued his policy of cooperation with East Germany and, in practice, with Poland's communist leadership.¹⁷ Economic interests were thus of only secondary importance when he and his European partners declined to support the American trade sanctions against the USSR. Increased pressure exerted by the Reagan government actually strengthened the solidarity of the Western Europeans, including the British, so that eventually the Americans had to give way.

Schmidt's efforts to pursue détente in Europe, especially between the two Germanies, brought him no relief on the domestic political front. The rejection of NATO's rearmament decision by many in his party undermined his credibility abroad and his ability to preserve his governing coalition at home. Although the collapse of the social democratic-liberal coalition came about mainly because of disputes over economic policy, a contributing factor was undoubtedly the lack of backing for Schmidt's security policy within his own party.

When the new government under Helmut Kohl took office on October 1, 1982, the United States could assume there would be no change in West German foreign policy.

Once again, the Free Democratic Party (*Freie Demokratische Partei*, or FDP) provided the foreign minister in the person of Hans-Dietrich Genscher. The new government had the parliamentary support its predecessor had lacked. And above all, the CDU had presented itself to the public during the last years of the Schmidt government as being America's more reliable partner in West Germany. The new chancellor's more unambiguous commitment to the long-term goal of German reunification also fit in better with Reagan's anticommunist rhetoric. A paradoxical situation arose, and indeed still existed at the time of the great turning point of 1989–90: Although a closer relationship with the American superpower added emphasis to the West German government's call for reunification, the left-wing protest against Reagan's America largely meant a renunciation of this national objective.

The new government's main foreign policy aim was to implement NATO's double-track decision. In the context of the time, that meant adhering to the decision to modernize NATO's nuclear armaments, thereby either forcing the Soviets to yield in the disarmament negotiations or to restore the nuclear balance of power in Europe. For Kohl, the issue here was whether the Federal Republic was still a "reliable partner" of the West and of the United States in particular.¹⁸ In the SPD opposition, however, some – clearly overestimating the weight carried by the Federal Republic in international relations – recommended that the West German government threaten to reject modernization in order to force the United States to show more flexibility toward the Soviet Union – a tactic that, perhaps intentionally, would have risked the disruption of NATO.

The Kohl government finally had its way on November 23, 1983, when a majority of the German Bundestag voted in favor of the deployment of American medium-range missiles on West German soil. Kohl's political prestige in the United States instantly soared. It was secured

¹⁷ Werner Link, "Aussen- und Deutschlandpolitik in der Ära Schmidt 1974–1982," in Bracher et al., eds., *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik*, 5(2): 370–4.

¹⁸ Helmut Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, with Kai Diekmann und Ralf Georg Reuth (Berlin, 1996), 27.

in the eyes of the Reagan administration by his willingness to contribute to the technological development of a space-based missile system (the Strategic Defense Initiative, or SDI) although doing so would entail political difficulties at home. This relationship of growing trust could not be damaged by the fact that the Kohl-Genscher government continued to work toward détente with the German Democratic Republic and to participate actively in the follow-up conferences to Helsinki even though the CDU had rejected the Final Act when it was in the opposition. The continuing progress toward détente between West and East Germany actually enhanced the GDR's standing in American eyes, for it indicated greater independence from the Soviet Union. This proved, however, to be but a brief interlude, not sufficient to influence general American reservations about the GDR, particularly because the latter refused the responsibility for restitution it had, in American eyes, as one of the successor states to the Third Reich.¹⁹

An indication of the importance Reagan attached to the Federal Republic and the Kohl government was his willingness to meet the German chancellor at the Bitburg German military cemetery on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the German surrender in 1945 as a symbol of the final reconciliation between the United States and the new Germany. Reagan made the visit at the express request of the German chancellor even though many of the soldiers buried at Bitburg had been members of the *Waffen-SS*. The American public, especially representatives of Jewish organizations, protested vociferously.²⁰ Caught between coming to terms with the past and serving the interests of the Western alliance, the American government gave precedence, as it had on previous occasions, to backing its proven German ally.

The American government saw itself justified in backing the Kohl government, which was subject to increasingly sharp criticism

from Germany's opposition parties. Egon Bahr, having given up hope of reunification, was now praising the Soviet Union as the country that could be most helpful in bringing about a rapprochement between the two German states. Critics of NATO gained fresh arguments with the radical change that occurred in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev. Now that the Soviet Union no longer posed a threat, had the Atlantic alliance not also outlived its usefulness?

After Moscow called for East-West interdependence instead of confrontation and gave credibility to its announced interest in easing tensions by withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan, even the American president was persuaded in fall 1987 that the Soviet leadership's new foreign policy ideas and goals were genuine. As Gorbachev spoke of a "common European house," the final proof of Moscow's honesty would be, in American eyes, the opening up of Eastern Europe. With this in mind, Reagan, visiting Berlin in 1987, appealed to the Soviet leadership to tear down the wall that divided the city.

The treaties on controlled arms reduction concluded between the United States and the Soviet Union during the period that followed produced mixed feelings in Western Europe. The INF Treaty of December 8, 1987, in which the United States and Soviet Union agreed to reciprocal reductions in intermediate-range weapons without consulting their European allies, was a cause of uncertainty in the governing coalition in Bonn. The familiar complaint that the United States was disregarding German security interests was voiced once again, particularly by the CDU's right wing.²¹ Efforts by the chancellor to counter apparent American unilateralism by reinforcing the European pillar of NATO produced no significant success because France, under President François Mitterrand, was insisting on its problematic special status within the alliance.²² The United States, in any event, continued to reject separate European disarmament initiatives as selective détente.

¹⁹ See the chapter by Christian F. Ostermann in this section.

²⁰ See the chapter by Jeffrey Peck, vol. 2, Culture.

²¹ See the chapters by Matthias Zimmer in this section, and Michael Broer, vol. 2, Security.

²² See the chapter by Eckart Conze in this section.

Given this situation, the Kohl government initially endorsed the demand for NATO to be armed with short-range missiles (with a range of less than 500 kilometers). In accordance with the logic of the Cold War and the double-track decision, it would in fact have been necessary to restore the balance in this area because the Soviet Union greatly outstripped the West here. The United States therefore pressed for the rapid deployment of its Lance short-range missile system.

But the military logic of the Cold War no longer held for the West German government, least of all in the eyes of Foreign Minister Genscher. He was increasingly impressed by Gorbachev's interest in détente. At this historic turning point, when the possibility of a security structure for the whole of Europe had come within reach, he regarded NATO's proposed upgrade of its nuclear arsenal as anachronistic and detrimental to détente.²³ He called instead for more intensive multilateral negotiations over a balanced conventional disarmament and trust-building measures within the framework of the CSCE. This idea was initially very controversial even among Genscher's CDU-CSU coalition partners. Both parties realized, however, that they could not afford a second public debate on NATO's nuclear rearmament. An election was imminent. Kohl adopted Genscher's rejection of an upgrade of short-range weapons and by doing so triggered a grave crisis within NATO. The West German government itself was now suspected of having neutralist leanings ("Genscherism"). Serious clashes took place between Kohl and his British and American NATO allies. Finally, on May 30, 1989, a NATO resolution made further decisions over the deployment of modernized short-range missiles conditional on the progress of East-West negotiations on conventional disarmament, which postponed the problem for two years. Kohl apparently secured this decisive concession from the new Bush administration not least by warning that a defeat for him in the upcoming Bundestag election

would bring a less NATO-friendly SPD government to office. Memory of this was to affect the atmosphere in which German unification was discussed shortly thereafter.

Only a few weeks after the end of this controversy, signs of the new era in Eastern Europe began to appear. The secret fear of a neutral Germany revived by this controversy no doubt played its part in shaping American policy toward Germany in the period that followed. In these circumstances, the reputation of the chancellor as the most reliable exponent of Germany's commitment to the West could only be enhanced.

This fact was particularly influential in determining what stance the new U.S. president would adopt over the German question. At the high point of the West German nuclear arms debate, Bush, then vice president, had come to appreciate Kohl as a trustworthy ally of America. What influenced him in considering the key role that Germany would play in the changes in Eastern Europe was not the burden of the German past, but the capital of trust accumulated by the West German present. In mid-September 1989, he declared publicly that he did not share the fear of a united Germany expressed by others.²⁴ Instead, with an eye to the prestige of the chancellor, he referred to Germans and Americans as "partners in leadership."²⁵ Bush, less of a visionary in world politics than his predecessor but an experienced hand at international negotiations who possessed a sure sense of the feasible, was in Kohl's words a "*Glücksfall*," a stroke of luck, for the Germans.²⁶ Two points here must not be overlooked. First, Bush's positive attitude toward the prospect of a reconstituted German nation state was in line with a basic orientation of American policy on Europe that went back to the latter part of the nineteenth century.

²⁴ Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), 81.

²⁵ Remarks to the Citizens of Mainz, Federal Republic of Germany, May 31, 1989, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, George Bush, 1989* (Washington, D.C., 1990), 1:651.

²⁶ Horst Teltschik, *329 Tage: Innenansichten der Einigung* (Berlin, 1991), 237.

²³ Hans-Dietrich Genscher, *Rebuilding a House Divided: A Memoir by the Architect of Germany's Reunification* (New York, 1998), 232–4.

It had been revived after 1945 in the context of the Cold War and the need to mobilize forces against the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. Second, "leadership" was more than just a word to Bush: It expressed the determination of his administration to play a vital part in shaping the changes coming in Central and Eastern Europe in order to preserve America's interests as a "European power." This was the background to the unique form of German-American cooperation that was evident during the negotiations on German reunification.

PERESTROIKA, THE NEW DÉTENTE, AND GERMAN UNIFICATION

Bush had already indicated to Kohl in early September 1989 that Germany could count on U.S. backing if the issue of German unification came to the fore. After the fall of the Wall, and even more so after the collapse of the East German regime in December 1989, the American government was pressing for swift action. Neither Americans nor Germans were in any doubt that much was at stake. From the U.S. standpoint, the Federal Republic's alignment with the West in security policy and hence the continuation of NATO and the presence of American troops in Europe²⁷ – in other words, the continuation of dual containment – hung in the balance. For its part, the coalition government in Bonn faced the challenge not only of demonstrating the credibility of its reunification policy and the consistency of that policy with the aims of Germany's Western orientation, but also of preserving its ties to the West and thereby retaining the American nuclear shield over Germany through the impending upheavals in Europe.

If Germany were to fail in these aims, a number of dangers would arise for both sides. The possibility of neutrality for Germany might become more attractive as the Soviet Union came to be seen as less of a military threat. The protest movement in the GDR might run out of

control and resort to violence against the Red Army. The Soviets might intervene militarily. The movement toward independence in Eastern Europe might come to an end, and opponents of reform might return to power in the Kremlin, as in 1953. The "victory" of the West in the Cold War would turn into defeat. A final risk, less obvious, was that a community of interest might develop between the two major Western European powers and the Soviet Union on the issue of Germany, which would create a fault line within the Western alliance.

These possibilities explain the growing urgency with which the Bush administration pressed for speedier negotiations on German unification. Its pressure went hand in hand with efforts to spare the new Soviet leadership under Gorbachev any loss of face.²⁸ The essential American contribution to unification thus lay in the selection and application of a process that made it as simple as possible for the international community to sanction unification. This meant that the domestic and external aspects of German unification were treated as separate issues to block Soviet influence on the process of unification between the two German states. It meant as well that a peace settlement imposed by the former Allied powers would be avoided because it would have discriminated against the Germans. Most important of all, however, the choice of two-plus-four formula for the negotiations excluded all of Germany's other wartime enemies as well as the CSCE from the unification talks. The nightmare of a cumbersome multilateral peace conference, which might not have achieved the desired aim and which certainly would have reopened issues such as the question of German reparations, was thus averted. The United States had to resort to pressure in persuading Poland in particular to accept this process. As Washington realized, that pressure could be effective only if the Warsaw government could count on a definitive German

²⁷ See the chapter by Karl Kaiser, vol. 2, *Security*.

²⁸ See the literature cited previously, and also the chapter by Stephen F. Szabo in this section, and Werner Weidenfeld, with Peter M. Wagner and Elke Bruck, *Aussenpolitik für die deutsche Einheit: die Entscheidungsjahre 1989/90* (Stuttgart, 1998).

guarantee of the Oder-Neisse border. Although West German governments up to that time had endeavored to deal with the German question in a multilateral frame, both Germany and the United States now had to aim for an essentially bilateral agreement between the superpowers.

The two leading West European allies also had to be won over to the simplified procedure for bringing about German unification. Their misgivings about the resurgence of Germany as a major power were successfully allayed by the Bush administration, which made the United States the guarantor of peace in the new Europe in various ways. The United States insisted that a united Germany remain in the Atlantic alliance. It committed itself to the continued stationing of American troops in Western Europe and, as a nuclear power, took on ultimate control over German security policy while guaranteeing the security of a non-nuclear Germany. In addition, the United States insisted on Germany's continued incorporation within a progressively more integrated Europe.

In order not to forfeit American support for unification, the Federal Republic had to prove itself a reliable member of NATO and the driving force behind European integration. For Kohl this meant that there could be no doubt about united Germany's membership in NATO and Germany's determination to hold to this demand. Similarly, Kohl recognized that in deference to American convictions, there was no alternative to accepting the Oder-Neisse border once and for all, and he did not hesitate to commit himself to the American president in this question. On the other hand, Kohl was able to get the United States to commit itself to the continuation of arms reductions talks with the Soviet Union in which the final renunciation of NATO's controversial plans for an upgrade of its short-range nuclear weapons would be on the agenda. It was only by following this route and by reformulating NATO's strategy – together with economic and financial concessions on the part of the Federal Republic – that the essential conditions were created that enabled Gorbachev to accept the Western vision of German unification. The triumph of the West on the German

question and in Eastern Europe coincided with a triumph for the policy of détente.

CONCLUSION

Looking back at the two decades that separated the great turning points of 1968 and 1989, one is struck by the critical role played by security issues in German-American relations during those years. It was not by chance that uncircumscribed German membership of NATO became the cornerstone on which achievement of German unification ultimately depended. The partnership between America and Germany was always primarily a security partnership, which guaranteed the Federal Republic an existence independent of the Soviet Union, the United States its position of leadership in Western Europe, and, as long as the deterrent retained credibility, the Old World the preservation of peace. On this issue a clear community of interest existed between West Germany and the United States, and it is not surprising that whenever the German question appeared on the international agenda – as during the time of Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, on the occasion of the Helsinki negotiations, and in the case of reunification – the diplomatic cooperation between the two states was as close as possible.

It proved impossible to achieve an equally harmonious collaboration between America and Germany in détente policy. Their geostrategic positions were too different. The United States took a global view of the process of détente, while the West Germans saw it purely in the European context, where the signing of the Moscow and Warsaw treaties of 1970 had made coexistence with the communist states easier than in other regions of the world. Because the United States always saw détente in light of its own fundamental security interests, American diplomacy leaned toward bilateral negotiations with the other superpower. The Federal Republic, in the interest of détente between the two German states, preferred multilateral links, seeing them as a way to avoid being involved in the global confrontation between the superpowers. Although the Washington and

Bonn governments often differed greatly in their views of the possibility of détente and its immediate and long-term aims, both sides were nevertheless convinced that the Germans and Americans depended on each other. Washington never forgot that the key to Europe's future was held by the Soviets as well as by the Germans; Bonn was always aware that the United States provided the guarantee of the Federal Republic's continued existence and of German unification at some point, perhaps, in the future.

Not until bilateral détente between the superpowers achieved tangible and lasting successes did the multilateral involvement of the Federal Republic lose its significance for West German foreign policy. That policy now could, and indeed had to, opt for a bilateral détente framework allowing German unification with the decisive consent of the two superpowers. Ultimately, it was the community of interests and values that arose between Germans and Americans in the 1950s that survived all the crises of the years that followed and made such a vital contribution to the successful ending of the Cold War.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For a bibliographical guide to German-American relations in the context of the East-West conflict, see Wolfgang Michalka, ed., *Ost-West-Konflikt und Friedenssicherung* (Stuttgart, 1985); Herbert Dittgen, "Deutsch-amerikanische Sicherheitsbeziehungen und die Krisen in der atlantischen Allianz," *Neue Politische Literatur* 32 (1987): 386–407; Robert J. McMahon, "Making Sense of American Foreign Policy During the Reagan Years," *Diplomatic History* 19 (1995): 367–84; Werner Link, "Die Entwicklung des Ost-West-Konfliktes," in Manfred Knapp and Gert Krell, eds., *Einführung in die internationale Politik*, 3d ed. (Munich, 1996), 243–74 (a "realistic" as opposed to "idealistic" interpretation of the Cold War as it drew to a close); see also Ernst-Otto Czempiel, "Die USA und Westeuropa: Asymmetrie, Interdependenz, Kooperation," in *ibid.*, 147–203.

Because the material covered here is still subject to the thirty-year rule, few relevant archival sources have yet been published. Those that have include *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, series 3, vol. 2: *The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe 1972–1975* (London, 1997), and Hanns-Jürgen Küsters and Daniel Hofmann, eds., *Deutsche Einheit: Sonderedition aus den Akten des Bundeskanzleramtes 1989/90* (Munich, 1998). However, a number of memoirs have already been published. Particularly important on the American side are the memoirs of Henry Kissinger: *White House Years* (Boston and Toronto, 1979); *Years of Upheaval* (Boston and Toronto, 1982); and *Years of Renewal* (New York, 1999), which are as informative on the present subject as they are analytically brilliant. Kissinger's self-portrayal is critically reappraised by William Bundy, *A Tangled Web: The Making of Foreign Policy in the Nixon Presidency* (New York, 1998). Also instructive are the recollections of Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977–1981*, 2d ed. (New York, 1985); Paul H. Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost: At the Center of Decision: A Memoir* (New York, 1989); and James A. Baker and Thomas M. DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace, 1989–1992* (New York, 1995). Besides Baker, the secretaries of state in other U.S. administrations covered here have also left memoirs (varying in their degree of informativeness): George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York, 1993); Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York, 1983); and Alexander Haig, *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy* (New York, 1984). Moreover, a few U.S. ambassadors to Germany have published their reminiscences: Martin J. Hillenbrand, *Fragments of Our Time: Memoirs of a Diplomat* (Athens, Ga., 1998); the memoir of the U.S. ambassador in Bonn during the collapse of communism delivers only part of what its title promises: Vernon A. Walters, *Die Vereinigung war voraussehbar. Hinter den Kulissen eines entscheidenden Jahres: Die Aufzeichnungen des amerikanischen Botschafters* (Berlin, 1994). German-American relations ordinarily play only a marginal part in the memoirs of the

U.S. presidents who held office during the period discussed here, so these works need not be listed here. On the events of 1989–90, however, see George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York, 1998); the memoirs of the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (New York, 1993); as well as the published works of Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York, 1996) and the extremely selective *Gipfelgespräche: Geheime Protokolle aus meiner Amtszeit* (Berlin, 1993).

On the German side, equally informative autobiographical works from the leading politicians of the period exist: Willy Brandt, *People and Politics: The Years, 1960–1975* (Boston, 1978) and *My Life in Politics* (New York, 1992); Helmut Schmidt, *Men and Powers: A Political Retrospective* (New York, 1989); Helmut Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, with Kai Diekmann und Ralf Georg Reuth (Berlin, 1996), an authorized memoir concerned almost exclusively with the end of communism in East Germany. Important works by less prominent politicians include: Rainer Barzel, *Auf dem Drahtseil* (Munich, 1978); Egon Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit* (Munich, 1996); Franz Josef Strauss, *Die Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 1989); and Horst Teltschik, *329 Tage: Innenansichten der Einigung* (Berlin, 1991), a highly informative source for German activities during the unification negotiations. Despite their abundance of quotations and discursive style, the memoirs of the German foreign minister are also indispensable: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, *Rebuilding a House Divided: A Memoir by the Architect of Germany's Reunification* (New York, 1998).

In the absence of comprehensive studies of the issues covered here, a number of recently published general collections offer useful articles on individual themes discussed below: Wolfgang-Uwe Friedrich, ed., *Die USA und die deutsche Frage 1945–1990* (Frankfurt am Main, 1991); Gustav Schmidt, ed., *Ost-West Beziehungen: Konfrontation und Détente 1945–1989* (Bochum, 1993); Helga Haftendorn and Christian Tuschhoff, eds., *America and Europe in an Era of Change* (Boulder, Colo., 1993); Manfred Knapp, ed., *Transatlantische Beziehungen: Die USA und Europa zwischen gemeinsamen Inte-*

ressen und Konflikten (Stuttgart, 1990); Gottfried Niedhart, Detlef Junker and Michael Richter, eds., *Deutschland in Europa: Nationale Interessen und internationale Ordnung im 20. Jahrhundert* (Mannheim, 1997); and Klaus Larres and Torsten Oppelland, eds., *Deutschland und die USA im 20. Jahrhundert. Geschichte der politischen Beziehungen* (Darmstadt, 1997), which has excellent bibliographical notes.

A number of monographs also deal competently with the topic covered here. Noteworthy above all is the work of Werner Link, one of the leading experts on German-American relations up to the very recent past; see the summary he provides in his essay "Historical Continuity and Discontinuity in Transatlantic Relations: Consequences for the Future," in Miles Kahler and Werner Link, eds., *Europe and America: A Return to History* (New York, 1996), 29–126. See also his sections devoted to West German foreign policy in Karl Dietrich Bracher et al., eds., *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Werner Link, "Aussen- und Deutschlandpolitik in der Ära Brandt,"* in Karl Dietrich Bracher, Wolfgang Jäger, and Werner Link, *Republik im Wandel 1969–1974: Die Ära Brandt* (Stuttgart, 1986), 163–282, and "Aussen- und Deutschlandpolitik in der Ära Schmidt, 1974–1982," in Wolfgang Jäger and Werner Link, *Republik im Wandel 1974–1982: Die Ära Schmidt* (Stuttgart and Mannheim, 1987), 275–432. Also relevant are parts of Christian Hacke, *Die Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Weltmacht wider Willen?* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997) and *Zur Weltmacht verdammt: Die amerikanische Aussenpolitik von Kennedy bis Clinton* (Berlin, 1997); Gregor Schöllgen, *Geschichte der Weltpolitik von Hitler bis Gorbatschow 1941–1991* (Munich, 1996); Alfred Grosser, *The Western Alliance: European-American Relations Since 1945* (New York, 1980); Erhard Forndran, *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika und Europa: Erfahrungen und Perspektiven transatlantischer Beziehungen seit dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Baden-Baden, 1991); Geir Lundestad, "Empire" by Integration: *The United States and European Integration, 1945–1997* (Oxford, 1998); Wolfram F. Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe: Forty Years of German Foreign Policy* (New Haven, 1989); and Frank A. Ninkovich,

Germany and the United States: The Transformation of the German Question Since 1945, 2d ed. (New York, 1995). Touching briefly on our subject is Warren I. Cohen, *America in the Age of Soviet Power 1945–1991* (Cambridge, 1993).

Arnulf Baring, *Machtwechsel: Die Ära Brandt-Scheel* (Munich, 1984) remains an important study of Ostpolitik. General overviews of détente can be found in Manfred Görtemaker, *Die unheilige Allianz: Die Geschichte der Entspannungspolitik 1943–1979* (Munich, 1979); and Hans-Peter Schwarz, ed., *Entspannungspolitik in Ost und West* (Cologne, 1979). Keith L. Nelson, *The Making of Détente: Soviet-American Relations in the Shadow of Vietnam* (Baltimore, 1995) stresses the importance of smaller and medium-sized powers in détente between the superpowers. Gebhard Schweigler, *Von Kissinger zu Carter: Entspannung im Widerstreit von Innen- und Aussenpolitik 1969–1981* (Munich, 1982) describes the debates over détente in the United States against the background of its political system. Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (New York, 1993), is a brilliantly written critical stocktaking of the Social Democrats' détente policy. Drawing on recently released American and Soviet documents, the essays in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *The Fall of Détente: Soviet-American Relations During the Carter Years* (Oslo, 1997) describe how the combination of conflicts over arms-control issues and intervention in the Third World put an end to détente in the late 1970s. Georges-Henri Soutou, *L'Alliance incertaine: les rapports politico-stratégiques franco-allemands, 1954–1996* (Paris, 1996) uses archival material that is not yet generally accessible for an analysis of the repeated failure to create a Franco-German security community; at the same time, his book deals with the triangular relationship with the United States. Josef Joffe, *The Limited Partnership: Europe, the United States, and the Burdens of Alliance* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), shows how the divisibility of détente postulated by the Europeans and the growing rejection of nuclear weapons during the 1980s shifted the foundations of the alliance.

A growing number of studies scrutinize the foreign and security policies of

the social democratic-liberal governments, in which the relationship with the United States inevitably played a central role: Stefan A. Heinlein, *Gemeinsame Sicherheit: Egon Bahrs sicherheitspolitische Konzeption und die Kontinuität sozialdemokratischer Entspannungsvorstellungen* (Münster, 1993); Andreas Vogtmeier, *Egon Bahr und die deutsche Frage: Zur Entwicklung der sozialdemokratischen Ost- und Deutschlandpolitik vom Kriegsende bis zur Vereinigung* (Bonn, 1996); Herbert Dittgen, *Deutsch-amerikanische Sicherheitsbeziehungen in der Ära Helmut Schmidt: Vorgeschichte und Folgen des NATO-Doppelbeschlusses* (Munich, 1991); Barbara D. Heep, *Helmut Schmidt und Amerika: Eine schwierige Partnerschaft* (Bonn, 1990); and Thomas Enders, *Die SPD und die äussere Sicherheit: Zum Wandel der sicherheitspolitischen Konzeption der Partei in der Zeit der Regierungsverantwortung* (Melle, 1987). For more on the subject of security, which was naturally of central importance for the political relations, more narrowly understood, between the two countries, see the narrative bibliography in the article by Wolfgang Krieger, vol. 2, Security.

Knowledge of the background of U.S. relations with the Soviet Union is essential for an understanding of German-American relations. The literature on this is immense, especially on the American side. Besides the aforementioned works by Henry Kissinger, the most important is Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, D.C., 1985), in which the author endeavors with a wealth of detail to invalidate the argument, fashionable in the United States, that détente was a one-way street that benefited only the Soviet Union. In *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, D.C., 1994), the same author analyzes bilateral relations under Presidents Reagan and Bush and the Soviet general secretaries from Brezhnev to Gorbachev. Neither book includes a bibliography. On the German side, Ernst-Otto Czempiel, *Machtprobe: Die USA und die Sowjetunion in den achtziger Jahren* (Munich, 1989) focuses on the "societal," that is, the domestic background to U.S. foreign policy in the Reagan era.

An extensive body of monographs already exists on German unification. Two outstanding studies based on confidential documents are: Werner Weidenfeld, with Peter M. Wagner and Elke Bruck, *Aussenpolitik für die deutsche Einheit: Die Entscheidungsjahre 1989/90* (Stuttgart, 1998); and Philip Zelikow and Condolezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995). Like Zelikow and Rice, Robert L. Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War: An Insider's Account of U.S. Policy in Europe, 1989–1992* (Washington, D.C., 1997) relies on personal experience. For further reading, see A. James McAdams, *Germany Divided: From the Wall to Reunification* (Princeton, 1993); Stephen F. Szabo, *The Diplomacy of German Unification* (New York, 1992); and Elizabeth Pond, *Beyond the Wall: Germany's Road to Unification* (Washington, D.C., 1993). Occupying a position between history and belles lettres is Michael R. Beschloss

and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War* (Boston, 1993).

Of the German accounts, Karl Kaiser, *Deutschlands Vereinigung: Die internationalen Aspekte* (Bergisch Gladbach, 1991) contains the most important documents, and Heinrich Bortfeldt, *Washington-Berlin-Bonn: Die USA und die deutsche Einheit* (Bonn, 1993) incorporates the perspective from East Berlin. There is information on the U.S. role in the German unification process in the records of the Bundestag's inquiry into the background of unification: see "Handlungsspielräume deutscher und internationaler Akteure im Vereinigungsprozess," in *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission 'Überwindung der Folgen der SED-Diktatur im Prozess der deutschen Einheit'* (13. Wahlperiode des Deutschen Bundestages), ed., Deutscher Bundestag (Baden-Baden, 1999), vol. 8, 121–302.

CHAPTER ONE

The United States and the German Question

Christian Hacke

Translated by Richard Sharp

Washington and Bonn both believed until the late 1950s that the German question could be resolved only by the German people exercising their right to self-determination through free elections and that only then would conditions for European détente exist. During the 1960s, however, the views of the two governments increasingly diverged. The fact that the Federal Republic of Germany was acting to some extent as a “gatekeeper” obstructed American work for détente because the German insistence on the primacy of reunification ran counter to Washington’s demand for at least temporary recognition of the status quo in Europe.

In a complex process of bilateral readjustment, it became evident to the governments in Washington and Bonn that European détente was the top priority. As a result, the German question ceased to be so acute. By the early 1970s, the overall situation surrounding détente policy had undergone surprising changes: The treaty sought with the East by the West German government under Willy Brandt and Walter Scheel clearly went too far for Richard Nixon’s administration. The Nixon government stopped short of open criticism but, behind closed doors, expressed fears that the new Ostpolitik being pursued by the Federal Republic was too accommodating toward the Soviet Union. As a result, Washington initially greeted

Bonn’s renewed initiatives in the field of détente policy with suspicion.¹

THE ATTITUDE OF THE NIXON AND FORD ADMINISTRATIONS TOWARD THE GERMAN QUESTION

The Nixon Administration initially harbored grave reservations about what Brandt called Ostpolitik. With each German state seeking to seduce the other, they might finally come together on some nationalist, neutral program, as Adenauer and de Gaulle had feared. . . . Above all, the Nixon Administration feared for the unity of the West . . . Washington viewed the specter of West Germany breaking out on its own with trepidation.²

That was how Henry Kissinger retrospectively described American mistrust of Bonn’s efforts in creating détente. But Washington was wrong. Chancellor Willy Brandt and his foreign minister, Walter Scheel, had no intention of breaking up the alliance. All the Federal Republic wanted was to break out of an isolation – an isolation of its own making – and negotiate directly with its eastern neighbors and the Soviet

¹ Frank A. Ninkovich, *Germany and the United States: The Transformation of the German Question Since 1945*, 2d ed. (New York, 1995), 138–43; Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, 1979), 408–10; see also the chapter by Werner Link in this section.

² Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York, 1994), 735.

Union.³ This was boldly ambitious because there had previously been doubts in the United States whether the Federal Republic would be ready to undertake diplomatic initiatives toward the Soviet Union. Until Brandt took office, Washington had actually feared that its partner in Bonn would pursue its own interests and in the process undermine American and Soviet attempts to normalize the situation in Germany and the rest of Europe.⁴

As a result, the few pronouncements issued by the Nixon administration were often cryptic. Nixon stated in January 1971 that the successes achieved by the Bonn government in Moscow and Warsaw had been prepared through mutual consultations and had only been possible because of the strength of the Western alliance. Yet mistrust toward Bonn remained, for Washington feared that the United States might lose control over East-West relations. Western détente policy should, in the view of the Nixon administration, thus be better coordinated. In plain language, that meant that the United States, as the dominant power, wanted to determine the direction and scope of Western détente policy in the heart of Europe. Washington did not want to see Germany going it alone. An additional factor was that in 1972 Nixon, unlike Brandt, could not look back on any major successes in foreign policy. Soviet support for mobilization of troops in Jordan, the Cienfuegos incident, the Vietcong offenses in South Vietnam, the Soviet threats in the Middle Eastern conflict, and, finally, the socialist Salvador Allende's seizure of power in Chile all seemed to signal precisely what the Nixon administration no longer wanted to believe: the continuation of communism's global strategy of confrontation.

Unlike Nixon, who was also under pressure for his domestic and economic policies, Brandt and Scheel had been able to initiate their diplomatic effort in the East almost effortlessly.

In the wake of the decisive successes of the treaties with Moscow and Warsaw, the Brandt government was riding a crest of popularity in the early 1970s. Richard Nixon, therefore, regarded his junior partner in Bonn with suspicion and even some envy. Willy Brandt had accomplished something that the president himself had hoped to achieve: new treaties with former enemies and a consensus, even enthusiasm, in domestic policy.

Nixon had no objections in principle to the West German initiative toward Moscow, but he was not overly pleased that the Federal Republic, in addition to its increased economic importance, had also become the pacesetter of détente policy. However, the charge leveled by Nixon and Kissinger that a new form of nationalism, paired with anti-West European and anti-American tendencies, might arise in the Federal Republic objectively proved to be the product of their competitiveness and differing interests.⁵ The United States thus tried to regain control over East-West détente through the Four-Power Agreement on Berlin of 1971.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE 1971 BERLIN AGREEMENT TO AMERICAN INTERESTS

The negotiations on a Berlin settlement were not intended to resolve the question of German reunification. The Nixon administration had more interest in implementing the détente element of the Nixon doctrine through a Western policy toward Eastern Europe that was steered and coordinated by America. His call for greater regional autonomy and a greater willingness on the part of his allies to bear their share of the costs sought to ease the political and economic burden on Washington. In substance, Brandt's Ostpolitik was not at odds with Nixon's foreign policy, but supplemented and even reinforced it. Both Nixon and Brandt were also seeking greater security for Berlin.

During the 1960s the Soviet Union and East Germany had repeatedly obstructed transit to and from West Berlin. With access often

³ Wolfram F. Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe: Forty Years of German Foreign Policy* (New Haven, Conn., 1989), 196–7.

⁴ Christian Hacke, *Die Ära Nixon-Kissinger 1969–1974: Konservative Reform der Weltpolitik* (Stuttgart, 1983), 146.

⁵ Ibid., 162–3.

arbitrarily cut off for hours at a time, the Western Allies, especially the United States, were sympathetic toward the West German government's desire for a Four-Power agreement to settle the Berlin question. "Restrictions on access and obstruction of transit facilities to Berlin, and Soviet protests against the *Bundesversammlung* [the assembly that elects the president of the Federal Republic] had in 1968 and 1969, again drawn attention to the city's unsatisfactory situation."⁶ During his visit to Germany, President Nixon gave the signal on February 27, 1969, in an address to the Siemens workforce in Berlin: "The men of the past thought in terms of blockades and walls; the men of the future will think in terms of open channels. . . . The question now is how best to end the challenge and clear the way for a peaceful solution to the problem of a divided Germany. . . . Nobody benefits from a stalemate."⁷

It was only the new Ostpolitik of the social democratic-liberal coalition government that would open the way for the Four Powers to negotiate a treaty improving Berlin's situation. For West Berliners, this brought greater freedom of action and movement; for the United States, it offered an opportunity to monitor the dynamic of German Ostpolitik.⁸ Internationally, the Berlin Agreement marked a new point of intersection between American and German policies on détente. Brandt had pressed forward with his Ostpolitik through treaties with the Soviet Union and Poland, but the Four-Power Agreement once again established closer links between the American and German desire for détente. The effect of the Berlin Agreement was to expedite American détente policy toward the Soviet Union, but at the same time to Europeanize it through cooperation with the other Western powers and the Federal Republic. Conversely, West Germany's Ostpolitik

gained new substance from the Berlin Agreement: It became an integral part of the Atlantic alliance's efforts at détente.⁹ For the Germans, the Berlin Agreement also became a precondition for ratifying the Moscow and Warsaw treaties. This arrangement bracketed West Germany's East bloc treaties with the Allied agreement on Berlin, and at the same time provided the Soviet Union with an important incentive to conclude the latter agreement. When Willy Brandt and, above all, Defense Minister Helmut Schmidt also assured their NATO partners that continuity within the alliance took precedence over West German policy shifts toward the East bloc,¹⁰ the Nixon administration acknowledged that Brandt and Scheel's Ostpolitik in no way undermined the American approach to détente. Indeed, Washington paid tribute to Bonn's contribution to détente. In turn, Bonn had acknowledged the realities of postwar Europe and also facilitated the arms-control talks running between Washington and Moscow. Nixon now treated the German question as an issue separate from American-Soviet relations: Finding an answer for that question, he said, was a matter for the Germans.¹¹

This decoupling of American interests from the German question was only superficial, however. Kissinger understood the importance of the Moscow and Warsaw treaties for East-West détente. Moscow signed the Berlin agreement with a view to having the Bundestag ratify the Moscow and Warsaw treaties. The Soviets were particularly anxious to secure Bonn's support for their special project of setting up a European security conference, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). After Brandt turned this new deal on Berlin around the other way – insisting that a Berlin agreement had to be signed before agreeing to the

⁶ Helga Haftendorn, *Sicherheit und Entspannung: Zur Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1955–1982* (Baden-Baden, 1983), 351.

⁷ *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969* (Washington, D.C., 1971), 158.

⁸ Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York, 1992), 322–7.

⁹ Dieter Mahncke, *Berlin im geteilten Deutschland* (Munich, 1973), 245–53; Dennis L. Bark, *Agreement on Berlin: A Study of the 1970–72 Quadripartite Negotiations* (Washington, D.C., 1974), 57–62.

¹⁰ Barbara D. Heep, *Helmut Schmidt und Amerika: Eine schwierige Partnerschaft* (Bonn, 1990), 25–6.

¹¹ Rainer Barzel, *Auf dem Drahtseil* (Munich, 1978), 113; Willy Brandt, *Begegnungen und Einsichten: Die Jahre 1960–1975* (Hamburg, 1976), 400–1.

CSCE – during his talks with Leonid Brezhnev in the Crimea, Moscow showed greater willingness to cooperate on Berlin, partly not to jeopardize ratification of the Moscow and Warsaw treaties.

The “preliminaries of Ostpolitik” in Germany created new options in foreign policy for the Nixon administration. Kissinger established a link between Vietnam and the Moscow and Warsaw treaties on his secret mission to Moscow in April 1972: After the United States forces had mined North Vietnam’s ports, Kissinger raised the subject of the outstanding ratification of the Moscow and Warsaw treaties in Bonn as a lever to persuade the Soviets to exercise restraint in the Far East.

Neither Nixon nor Kissinger wished to sabotage West Germany’s Moscow and Warsaw treaties. On the contrary, the treaties had become an indispensable foundation of American détente policy. It was in vain, therefore, that the Christian Democratic opposition in the Bundestag hoped for U.S. support in its opposition to the Moscow and Warsaw treaties. American criticism may have affected the tempo of Brandt’s Ostpolitik but had no impact on its substance.

These disagreements demonstrated that the status of the Federal Republic within the alliance had been enhanced and had expanded the room for maneuver in Western détente policy as a whole. Nixon was able to sign the hoped-for Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT) agreement in Moscow in May, and in June the Four-Power Agreement on Berlin came into force. The fact that Chancellor Brandt was working toward a treaty with East Germany as the final stage of his diplomatic efforts in the Eastern bloc surprised no one in the United States; in the wake of the Moscow and Warsaw treaties, such a step was only logical. In view of his own resounding victory in the November 1972 elections – an implicit endorsement of his Ostpolitik – Nixon took a more relaxed view of German policy. But neither German nor American détente policy had any direct impact on solving the German question. No one in either the East or the West expected or feared that Germany would be reunified through the

new Ostpolitik. In contrast to the 1950s, European détente and the division of Germany indeed now seemed to be a given.

From 1973 onward, the Watergate scandal increasingly limited the Nixon administration’s foreign policy options, while the Federal Republic came to occupy a key position in efforts to achieve East-West détente. The CSCE, the new multilateral fulcrum of East-West relations, was welcomed by West Germany because it pressed for greater freedom of movement and sought improvements in relations between West and East Germany. Washington, by contrast, took a skeptical view of the CSCE.¹² The United States was evidently more interested in bilateral détente between the superpowers than within the CSCE. This reluctance on Washington’s part caused irritation, not only in Western Europe, but in Eastern Europe as well. With the full political backing of the United States, the West might possibly have been able to achieve more advantageous and lasting results through the CSCE. Instead, Nixon and Kissinger preferred to retain exclusive control of policy toward the Soviet Union by way of a “détente Americana.” In this situation, Brezhnev’s main contact became Willy Brandt, not Richard Nixon. Brandt offered Brezhnev his assistance in speeding up the CSCE negotiations in the hope of encouraging the Communist Party secretary to reach a satisfactory settlement on Berlin in exchange.

When Schmidt replaced Brandt at the head of the government in 1974, Washington’s mistrust of West German Ostpolitik diminished markedly, for Helmut Schmidt once again made loyalty to the alliance and German security considerations a central factor in his policies. Accordingly, disagreements over détente with Nixon’s successor, Gerald Ford, were less frequent.¹³ At the same time, the importance of the Federal Republic within the complex network of East-West relations increased at the expense of the United States, and the more confrontational

¹² Robert D. Schulzinger, *Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy* (New York, 1989), 212–3. See also the chapter by Michael R. Lucas in this section.

¹³ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 759–60.

relations between the superpowers became, the more West Germany's importance grew. President Ford, too, had to recognize that there was no alternative to the Schmidt government's policies on Eastern Europe and the German question. Ford thus used Bonn's Ostpolitik as a means of bringing pressure on the Soviet Union to force the pace of the arms-control dialogue. From this standpoint, the American government "deflected" the German question, using it to advance America's own interests in the superpower dialogue.

The German question remained unresolved during the 1970s, although the division of Germany became more tolerable as a result of the agreements on the issues surrounding Berlin and on humanitarian measures. The Federal Republic had kept the German question open, both legally and politically, and at the same time codified it by means of the Moscow and Warsaw treaties. Moreover, the Federal Republic was decisively involved in East-West détente and had become an active shaper of European détente policy, not merely a passive figure in its development.¹⁴ Washington acknowledged this reluctantly at first, but eventually accorded the German role due respect.

THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION ON THE GERMAN QUESTION

During the Carter presidency the question of reunification remained only a secondary issue. It seemed to have been superseded by the needs of European détente. Even so, repeated disagreements between President Carter and Chancellor Schmidt emerged on key détente issues. At the heart of the matter was whether détente in Europe should be pursued as in the past given tensions outside Europe, such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Tensions also arose between Carter and Schmidt over economic rivalries between their two countries in the world market. This occurred, for instance, when

Carter attempted to block delivery of German nuclear reactors to Brazil.¹⁵ In the military strategy sector, too, Carter's position as a leader within the alliance was weakened.¹⁶ His actions after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan were hard to predict, and he seemed unable to act during the crisis in Iran, especially after the failed attempt to free the American hostages. Schmidt and French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing meanwhile gained influence within the alliance in friendly tandem. They partially decoupled European détente policy from the global "détente Americana," determined not to allow European and German détente policy to be frozen by the plunging temperature of American-Soviet relations. Indeed, both tried to act as intermediaries between the United States and the Soviet Union in Moscow, which stirred up suspicions in Washington that they were becoming too close to the Soviet Union. Tensions increased as a result, particularly between Schmidt and Carter. The West German chancellor, always a political realist, had no great use for the American president's human-rights rhetoric. However much Schmidt, too, might have welcomed Carter's SALT negotiations in principle, he still regarded the president's policy as unbalanced and feared that Carter would disregard German security interests in his arms-control talks with Brezhnev.¹⁷

In view of these problems, it was not surprising that the German question took a back seat. In the context of American foreign policy and relations with the Federal Republic, the German questions in the conventional sense – the questions of reunification and self-determination – were of completely secondary importance. Indeed, the division of Germany seemed to have become a basic precondition and permanent element of East-West détente.

¹⁵ Hans-Dietrich Genscher, *Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 1995), 403–4.

¹⁶ See the chapter by Matthias Dembinski, vol. 2, *Security*.

¹⁷ Christian Hacke, *Zur Weltmacht verdammt: Die amerikanische Aussenpolitik von Kennedy bis Clinton* (Berlin, 1997), 266–77.

¹⁴ Christian Hacke, *Die Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Weltmacht Wieder Willen?* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997), 335–7.

Differences between the Germans and Americans arose from their differing assessments of policy on security and détente. The issue was not so much the German question as the repercussions of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on Europe. As Carter saw it, the invasion had dealt the deathblow to European détente. The Schmidt-Genscher government, by contrast, was unwilling to abandon détente in principle. The reason was obvious: Although the Federal Republic remained firmly rooted in the West, the détente based on West Germany's new Ostpolitik had created additional interests and broadened the country's room for maneuver. On the one hand, its standing and role in the Western alliance had been enhanced; on the other, the new dynamic of policy on Eastern Europe and Germany had made the Federal Republic more dependent on cooperation with the East, especially the Soviet Union and East Germany. To expand relations between West and East Germany, intensify Ostpolitik, and, not least, keep the German question open, an understanding with Moscow was necessary above all. In the 1970s the Federal Republic was still able to perform this tightrope act more or less satisfactorily.

At the beginning of the 1980s, however, conflicts between the United States and the Federal Republic increased; the two most important partners in the alliance were heading in opposite directions.

Responding to the logic of great-power rivalry, the United States quite naturally proclaimed the "indivisibility of détente" while calling for resistance on a global scale. Following the logic of its national and regional mission, the Federal Republic acted as if détente could (and should) be compartmentalized while denigrating the wider implications of the Polish putsch and the Soviet foray in Southwest Asia.¹⁸

¹⁸ Josef Joffe, "Squaring Many Circles: West German Security Policy between Deterrence, Détente and Alliance," in James A. Cooney et al., eds., *The Federal Republic of Germany and the United States: Changing Political, Social, and Economic Relations* (Boulder, Colo., 1984), 176.

While the Germans were trying keep European détente separate from the global confrontation between the superpowers, the new U.S. president, Ronald Reagan, was trying to recruit the West Europeans – including the Germans – for an anti-Soviet confrontation.

THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION'S APPROACH

The German question was at first completely insignificant for Ronald Reagan's foreign policy. Indeed, he initially even seemed to jeopardize the pragmatic successes achieved by European détente. "According to his way of thinking, dedication to ending the Cold War did not require creating a 'favorable' atmosphere.... Reagan was the first postwar president to take the offensive both ideologically and geostrategically."¹⁹ Under these circumstances, Reagan had a particular fear that the Soviet Union might weaken German commitment to NATO through deployment of SS-20 missiles and the resulting controversy over the deployment of American medium-range missiles in Europe.²⁰ When the new government in Bonn under Helmut Kohl and Hans-Dietrich Genscher eventually did force through the deployment of intermediate-range missiles, it was a particularly impressive success because it frustrated the Kremlin's attempt to intimidate Germany and Western Europe.

The chancellor drew fire within the Federal Republic for seeming too soft in his dealings with the Reagan administration, whose militant anti-Soviet rhetoric caused deep concern. Yet the fact is that Helmut Kohl was more interested in improving German-American relations through flexibility and adaptation than in demonstrative criticism. As a consequence of this policy, German and American pronouncements on the Soviet leadership during the 1980s became more consistent with one another. Kohl's main interest lay in maintaining the strength of the alliance. Washington, in

¹⁹ Kissinger *Diplomacy*, 772.

²⁰ See the chapter by Michael Broer, vol. 2, *Security*.

turn, paid greater attention to German arguments. Reagan came to value Kohl as his most important partner in Europe.

Behind closed doors, Kohl and Genscher tried to persuade the American leadership that economic sanctions against the Soviet Union would not advance the cause of East-West détente. They pressed hard for a stronger American commitment to détente policy, although the American president had distanced himself from this by the mid-1980s. Differences over security policy again became apparent in connection with Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), though even on this occasion the West German government stopped short of public criticism.

German reunification and all the issues associated with it became fixed as a form of political and rhetorical ritual during the 1980s. Hardly anyone believed, in either Washington or Bonn, that reunification was a practical possibility any time in the foreseeable future. All eyes on both sides of the Atlantic were on security policy and détente in Europe.

It was only beginning in March 1985, when the new Soviet leadership came to power under General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, that the horizons again broadened. Reagan knew that Gorbachev was under pressure to introduce reforms, and the American president himself hoped to increase that pressure from outside. In this context, the German question became interesting to Ronald Reagan. He even called upon Gorbachev to do something previously unthinkable: to put the German question on the political agenda once again. This was a sensational development. Ronald Reagan's visit to Berlin during the German capital's 750th jubilee celebrations became the emotional high point of German-American relations in the 1980s. Every American president had a duty to speak of freedom here, declared Reagan on June 12, 1987. His appeal to the Soviet leadership has entered into legend since the reunification of Germany. "General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev,

open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"²¹

Ronald Reagan may have frightened some Germans in 1987 and perhaps amused others, but, in retrospect, he has put many Germans to shame. Reagan was the courageous personification of American commitment to German unity within a free Europe, for that aim corresponded to American interests and American values. The attitude adopted by the United States toward German unity was more generous and more committed than that of any other country. This was apparent at the end of World War I, at the end of World War II, and again at the end of the global Cold War. Ronald Reagan did not end the Cold War, but he hastened its end. His actions were not without risk, but history has proven him right. He did not gallop backward into the 1950s, as his critics charged, but was the first man to glimpse the vision of the 1990s and to hammer on the gate for a united Germany within a united Europe.

CONCLUSION

Looking back, the importance of the German question to relations between the United States and the Federal Republic in the years 1969–90 fluctuated, but as far as the Americans were concerned, the basic premises remained unchanged until the fall of the Wall: The security of the alliance and American-Soviet détente, consistently pursued from Nixon through to Reagan, took priority. There was nothing urgent about the German question for successive American administrations. America's West German partner gave regular and credible assurances that it had no intention of pursuing its national interest outside of NATO. Anti-American leanings in the German public represented only a dwindling minority opinion and in no way affected the more general approval for the alliance with the United States.

²¹ Remarks on East-West Relations at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin, June 12, 1987, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1987* (Washington, D.C., 1989), 1:635.

It would be futile to speculate about what would have happened if the German question had occupied a different, much more important position in the context of American foreign policy than it actually did. Successive U.S. presidents did after all provide necessary backing within the alliance for Bonn's policies on Eastern Europe and Germany. Still, the Moscow and Warsaw treaties were in fact based on the firmly established position of the Federal Republic within the alliance, with the German question encapsulated within the treaties. At the same time, the Moscow and Warsaw treaties had created the conditions for détente that first enabled the East Europeans – and especially the Russians – not to oppose reunification when

it eventually became a tangible reality with the fall of the Wall. The deep significance of U.S. policy for reunification lay in the fact that although Washington had kept a low profile on the German question in the 1970s and 1980s, it immediately reintroduced the issue when President Reagan recognized the changes in the international situation resulting from Gorbachev's accession to power. The United States then showed more courage than all the other Western allies in declaring and acting upon its commitment to German reunification.²²

²² See the chapter by Stephen F. Szabo in this section and the chapter by Karl Kaiser, vol. 2, Security.

CHAPTER TWO

The Federal Republic of Germany Between the American and Russian Superpowers: “Old Friend” and “New Partner”

Gottfried Niedhart

Translated by Richard Sharp

The 1970s and 1980s were decades of change and transition that saw the importance and influence of the Federal Republic in international politics increase markedly. This development was linked to three political changes: the policy of détente between East and West in the late 1960s and early 1970s; the emergence of multipolar tendencies alongside the bipolar structure of postwar world politics; and the resolution and ultimate end of the East-West conflict in the second half of the 1980s. The Federal Republic itself also began to place greater emphasis in its view of its own role on gaining room for maneuver and on protecting its own interests. The Federal Republic was dependent on trends in international politics that the victors of World War II had determined. Yet, it was not condemned merely to adapt reactively to the changing climate of international affairs; it could exert influence in this realm, even if with only the limited capacity of a medium-sized power. For not only security and economic reasons but also for national reasons, it lay in the Federal Republic's interest to press for an easing of tensions in the East-West conflict. Doing so served its most important goals: security, prosperity, and unity.

STRUCTURAL ASYMMETRY

As it ascended to become a joint leader among the Western European powers and took on a central place in the Atlantic alliance, the Federal

Republic no longer had to confine itself to a passive role in the shadows of the relations between the two superpowers. It successfully brought about normalization in its reciprocal relations with both of them. In its dealings with the Soviet Union, normalization meant leaving behind a deep-seated hostility. This was replaced by the renunciation of force and the opening of cooperative relations. In German-American relations, which were the vital foundation of the Federal Republic's foreign policy, normalization meant carrying through, as earlier envisioned, with the turn away from the model of symbiotic friendship. The Federal Republic sought not separation but emancipation from the dominant Western power in order to express its own specific interests in its policies toward both West and East and, further, in its dealings with the Third World.

The “friend or foe” orientation of the early Cold War that had shaped Bonn's foreign policy from the outset faded in the late 1960s and early 1970s during the second formative phase of the Federal Republic. It came to be replaced by a policy of rational self-interest vis-à-vis the two superpowers in terms of both West Germany's interests and those of the divided German nation as a whole. In the case of the United States, differing assessments and conflicts of interest arising from this policy change had no effect on the underlying foundations of the bilateral relationship. German-American relations expanded in a growing number of areas and within the framework of interests that, although

not completely identical, were certainly compatible. Fundamental areas of agreement co-existed with differences over economic and monetary policy and military strategy. In the case of the Soviet Union, by contrast, relations took the form of a conflict of interest whose long-term aim was the peaceful transformation of the status quo. German policy aimed at preserving the stabilizing power of the United States within the alliance, weakening the hegemonial position of the Soviet Union, and persuading Moscow to accept peaceful change.

All West German governments of the period followed this basic pattern: the social democratic-liberal coalitions under Willy Brandt and Walter Scheel (1969–74) and Helmut Schmidt and Hans-Dietrich Genscher (1974–82) as well as the Christian democratic-liberal coalition of Helmut Kohl and Genscher after 1982.¹ Efforts to secure continuity were prompted both by an assessment of the constellation of international power, which defined the perimeters of any future action, and by the definition of national interests, which were articulated relatively autonomously. West Germany was a medium-sized power in the ascendant. But it could not disregard the fact that as a regional power its relations with the two world powers – the United States and the Soviet Union – were structurally asymmetrical. This was the case not only because its dependency in security matters or its military inferiority, but also because its sovereignty remained restricted² until 1990 as a result of the rights of the Allied victors of World War II. A further limitation on the growing international influence of the Federal Republic was that Bonn could never pursue a policy “between” the superpowers in the sense of a third way and found it more necessary than other Western states to take its European and transatlantic ties into account. To end the division of Europe, which could only be achieved with the acquiescence of the Soviet superpower, Bonn

and Washington needed to present a united front. Put another way, each West German government accepted that it was the junior partner in the German-American partnership. A mirror image of this situation existed in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), which to a lesser degree faced a comparable situation to that in the Federal Republic; it, too, broadened its room to maneuver within and outside of its own alliance system. Both German states were tied to “their” superpowers, although the effects were very different in the two cases. This was particularly true for the German question. When it became an issue in international politics during the 1970s and 1980s – quietly and almost implicitly at first, but then carrying increasing weight – the West German government had to make sure that its integration in the Western alliance was not affected.

INDEPENDENCE WITH AMERICAN BACKING

The way in which the superpowers were perceived in Bonn at the end of 1969 and the way in which the German government went about determining its own position were revealed clearly by a paper written by Egon Bahr in September 1969 that was to serve as the foundation of social democratic-liberal foreign policy under Chancellor Willy Brandt and Foreign Minister Walter Scheel. The Soviet Union would remain a “power of the first rank,” but the basis of its power would be jeopardized by its economic inefficiency and technological backwardness, and by problems within the Warsaw Pact and the conflict with China. “Ultimately, all the Soviets can hope to do is to delay the erosion of their dominant position as far as possible.”³

¹ On this point and for a general overview of the evolution of the Federal Republic as a rising force on the international stage, see Christian Hacke, *Die Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Weltmacht wider Willen?* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997).

² See the chapter by Richard Wiggers in this section.

³ “Überlegungen zur Aussenpolitik einer künftigen Bundesregierung,” Memorandum des Planungsstabs, Sept. 18, 1969, Archiv der sozialen Demokratie der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Bonn (hereafter AsD), Bahr Dep. 425/2. It is now also available in Hans-Peter Schwarz, ed., in cooperation with the German Foreign Office and the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1969* (Munich, 2000), 2:1049–57.

The pressure for change on the United States, which also faced the risk of overextending its empire, seemed less dramatic but nonetheless real. The United States' increased concern with "its own internal affairs" and the "trend toward reducing the American presence" in Europe would continue. This, however, would not lead toward increased isolationism in American politics. From Bonn's point of view, it was of absolutely critical importance that Washington should go on believing that vital American interests were still at stake in Western Europe, for the United States was regarded as "our most important partner." Bahr believed that West German security ultimately depended on the United States. There were signs that relations with the Soviet Union were improving. This also seemed to be in the interests of the Soviet leadership, with its reliance on détente. But the "basis of our policy" had to remain "the Atlantic alliance and our close relations with the United States."⁴

As an ally of the United States – and clearly leaning more closely to that superpower than the Soviet Union – Bonn wanted to initiate its new Ostpolitik. The United States would retain its "old friend" status, while the Soviet Union was to be recruited as a "new partner."⁵ At the same time, the détente-oriented Ostpolitik would be not merely a reflection of American-style détente, as it had been seen since the days of Kennedy, but a demonstration of the Federal Republic's increased power to negotiate in the foreign policy arena. Brandt aimed for the Federal Republic to be seen as "'more equal' than before."⁶ The desire for equal status, which had had a lasting influence on the foreign policy of the Federal Republic since the Adenauer era, reflected the Federal Republic's own perception that it had, to quote a frequently used image, "grown up" and begun "to define its own interests, to analyze its capabilities and its role, and to implement them in the form of practical pol-

icy."⁷ While still foreign minister in the CDU-SPD "Grand Coalition," Brandt had viewed a policy of mere "passivity always conforming to the framework of a Western alliance policy" as obsolete and inadequate. The Federal Republic, he said, must behave as befit its increased "responsibility in world politics."⁸ In other words, Bonn thought that a basic feature of America's European policy after World War II – the dual containment of the Soviet Union and the Federal Republic – needed to be revised.⁹

The United States was, on the one hand, still West Germany's most important backer but, on the other, the Federal Republic's government was claiming a more independent role. These two factors became apparent immediately after the social democratic-liberal electoral victory. Even before he was formally elected chancellor by the Bundestag, Brandt dispatched Bahr, his closest foreign policy adviser and comrade-in-arms, to Washington, not to seek American consent to his political initiatives in Eastern Europe (which had already been planned and worked out in detail) but simply to provide accurate advance information. The West German government owed it to the leading Western power that the United States should be "kept informed earlier than anyone else, including the Bundestag and the German public."¹⁰ In the

⁷ Bahr in a note to Brandt dated Jan. 30, 1967, AsD, Bahr Dep. 299/3. See also Gottfried Niedhart, "Deutschland in Europa: Interessenperzeption und Rol-
lendifinition," in Gottfried Niedhart, Detlef Junker, and Michael W. Richter, eds., *Deutschland in Europa: Nationale Interessen und internationale Ordnung im 20. Jahrhundert* (Mannheim, 1997), 375–89.

⁸ Minutes of the SPD executive meeting of Nov. 1 and 2, 1968, AsD.

⁹ Wolfram F. Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe: Forty Years of German Foreign Policy* (New Haven, Conn., 1989); and, more recently, Herbert Dittgen, "Die Ära der Ost-West-Verhandlungen und der Wirtschafts- und Währungskrisen (1969–1981)," in Klaus Larres and Torsten Oppelland, eds., *Deutschland und die USA im 20. Jahrhundert: Geschichte der politischen Beziehungen* (Darmstadt, 1997), 178–203; Michael Jochum, "Der Zerfall des sicherheitspolitischen Konsenses und die Verschärfung der Wirtschafts- und Währungskrisen (1981–1989)," in Larres and Oppelland, eds., *Deutschland und die USA*, 204–29.

¹⁰ Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, 271.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Egon Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit* (Munich, 1996), 333.

⁶ Willy Brandt, *Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 1989), 189.

period that followed, both superpowers came to regard the policy adopted by Bonn as important for East-West relations that began to develop at the superpower level (arms limitation), at the level of European security (the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe), and on the German question (relations between East and West Germany and the Berlin problem).

In the initial phase of détente policy, the West German government's increased leverage in foreign policy brought it into difficulty. There was no mistaking Washington's disquiet. "I'll tell you this," said Henry Kissinger to a German visitor in June 1970, "if anyone is going to engage in détente policy with the Soviet Union, *we* will be the ones."¹¹ Warning notes such as this stemmed from Kissinger's fear of resurgent German nationalism and the risk that Germany might go it alone, forsaking its loyalty to the Western alliance. Similarly, Moscow had also had many occasions since 1970 to remind the East German leadership of the need for East bloc discipline.¹² In addition, the West German government had to deal with the Rapallo trauma of its Western allies and avoid anything that might suggest vacillating attachments to East and West. It ought not overestimate its importance as an international player "in the broad East-West context," but should also not "underestimate" itself "as a partner of the Soviet Union."¹³ The new era in

German-Soviet relations came in the wake of the Moscow treaty (1970) and the Four-Power Agreement on Berlin (1971), and was above all reflected in an informal exchange of views between Brandt and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev at Oreanda in Crimea in September 1971. In practice this new turn, however, went hand in hand with a steady and punctual flow of information to the Western allies.¹⁴

Accordingly, it was made clear to the Soviets that Bonn could develop East-West relations only in "in complete loyalty" to its Western allies.¹⁵ On this basis, Brandt promised his support for the Soviet Union's long-standing desire for a European security conference, and he subsequently attempted to persuade the Americans to abandon their coolness toward this plan. The Soviet Union finally had to abandon its long-cherished dream that the role of the Federal Republic in the West and the cohesion of NATO as a whole could be changed to the advantage of the Soviet Union. Even the Soviet Union had to recognize postwar realities, including the lasting presence of the United States in Europe, the integration of Western Europe, and West Berlin's ties to the Federal Republic. As a member of NATO and the European Community (EC), the Federal Republic remained an integral part of the West. But it made successful efforts to defuse the confrontation between the two blocs and develop some form of cooperation with Warsaw Pact states. In fall 1973, Helmut Schmidt, then finance minister, expressed the view to his American counterpart George Shultz that the "traditional classifications of 'East' and 'West'" were of "less significance" than they used to be.¹⁶

¹¹ Kissinger to Paul Frank, Staatssekretär im Auswärtigen Amt, quoted in Paul Frank, *Entschlüsselte Botschaft: Ein Diplomat macht Inventur* (Munich, 1985), 287.

¹² Hannes Adomeit, "Russland und Deutschland: Perzeptionen, Paradigmen und politische Beziehungen 1945–1995," in Niedhart, Junker, and Richter, eds., *Deutschland in Europa*, 341, 345.

¹³ Foreign minister Brandt on March 4, 1969, to the SPD group in the Bundestag, Mar. 4, 1969 (AsD, SPD group, 5th electoral period, 119). Regarding policy toward the Soviet Union, see Andreas Vogtmeier, *Egon Bahr und die deutsche Frage: Zur Entwicklung der sozialdemokratischen Ost- und Deutschlandpolitik vom Kriegsende bis zur Vereinigung* (Bonn, 1996); Avril Pittman, *From Ostpolitik to Reunification: West German-Soviet Political Relations Since 1974* (New York, 1992); Hélène Seppain, *Contrasting U.S. and German Attitudes to Soviet Trade 1917–91: Politics by Economic Means* (London, 1992).

¹⁴ For details, see the chapter by Werner Link elsewhere in this section. See also Gottfried Niedhart, "The Federal Republic's Ostpolitik and the United States: Initiatives and Constraints," in Kathleen Burk and Melvyn Stokes, eds., *The United States and the European Alliance since 1945* (Oxford, 1999), 289–311.

¹⁵ Note by Brandt after his discussion with Brezhnev on Sept. 18, 1971, in the Willy Brandt Archive, AsD, Federal Chancellors' records, 92.

¹⁶ Welcome address for Shultz at the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik in Bonn on Oct. 5, 1973, AsD, Schmidt Dep., 5990.

DIVISIBLE DÉTENTE, INDIVISIBLE
DETERRENCE

Helmut Schmidt, soon to become Brandt's successor as chancellor, was not implying that the East-West conflict and the bipolarity of world politics it created had already been consigned to history and thereby made irrelevant. What he meant was that the world had become more complex. The emergence of new centers of power (Europe, Japan, and China) had resulted in an increasingly multipolar world. At the same time, however, Schmidt repeatedly emphasized that the two superpowers and their nuclear capacities were still the decisive factors shaping world politics.

From the standpoint of West Germany, a NATO member without equal military rights, it was desirable that the economic version of power politics should take on more significance than the military version. That would allow West Germany the trading power to pursue its interests more effectively. In reality, of course, the policy of détente did not result in a scaling-down of armament levels or a devaluation of military power. As a major economic power, the Federal Republic was playing an increasingly important part, making it, in Schmidt's view, "the second world power of the West." Its security policy, however, was dependent on the United States. Although NATO, in Schmidt's judgment, was "an essentially American-German alliance,"¹⁷ – perhaps precisely for that reason – the Federal Republic's status as an economic great power had no parallel in security policy or power politics.

This was the most important of the limitations imposed on the Federal Republic as an international player. The economic problems created since 1973 by the increase in oil prices were another limiting factor. Apart from security policy questions, financial and economic issues exercised the greatest influence on German-American relations, often controversially. The main issues in the 1970s in relations with the Soviet Union were developing economic ties,

pressing ahead with negotiations on disarmament, and preserving the status of détente in Europe although a central expectation of Ostpolitik – that the Soviet Union would scale back its armaments – had not been fulfilled. West Germany continued to seek rapprochement with the Soviet Union in its own best interests, even after the fall of the social democratic-liberal government in 1982. In the United States, however, détente became increasingly discredited during the second half of the 1970s.

Differences over financial, economic, and security policy as well as over how to respond to Soviet policies resulted in what were probably the most difficult German-American disagreements during the postwar era and in extreme personal animosity between Schmidt and President Jimmy Carter. Of primary interest here are the issues that also affected West German relations with the other superpower. Even under the Nixon and Ford administrations, there had been no mistaking the United States' "discomfort over détente policy."¹⁸ America, as a world power, viewed the Soviet Union as a global competitor. From the American perspective, Soviet good conduct in Europe – a major issue for Europeans – was offset by Russia's deployment of new arms, especially naval weaponry, and by increasing Soviet influence in Third World countries. The West European and especially West German interest in the consolidation of détente was at odds with American perceptions of a global competition between the rival superpowers.

Referring to "Basket III" of the Helsinki Final Act, Carter confronted the Soviet Union with the human-rights issue in a way that Schmidt and his foreign minister, Genscher, regarded as contrary to a rational calculation of interests and détente. These differences of opinion peaked after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in December 1979. However much Schmidt might have disapproved of the invasion – he even said so openly in discussions with the Soviet leadership – he had an equally deep interest in avoiding a reaction along the

¹⁷ Note by Schmidt dated December 1976, "Erwägungen für 1977," AsD, Schmidt Dep., 6567.

¹⁸ Henry A. Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York, 1994), 733–61.

lines of American sanctions policy and in doing nothing to jeopardize the advancement of economic relations. Unlike the U.S. government, the West German government took the view that in practical political terms, détente must be divisible. The position of the Federal Republic of Germany as a regional power differed radically from that of the United States as a superpower. A "regional view of détente" guided Bonn.¹⁹ Even during the critical deterioration of the situation in Poland, which culminated in the declaration of martial law in late 1981, Schmidt endeavored "to keep the lines of communication open between the superpowers, and more generally between East and West."²⁰ He regarded it as one of his "principal tasks to create understanding on one side for the other and vice-versa." In the interests of "easing tensions," Schmidt urged that the two German states should use their influence for restraint in Washington and Moscow respectively. In his own view, his achievement was "that virtually no state at the time exercised a stronger influence over the American president than the Federal Republic." Of course, he added, even that influence was limited, since Schmidt was only the "head of government" of a "medium-sized state."²¹

Situated on the European front line of the East-West conflict, the Federal Republic was, however, not merely interested in continuing détente or preventing a relapse into the Cold War; it was also concerned to ensure that the West adequately countered Soviet armaments and that the security policy of West Germany and Europe was not divorced from that of the United States. Carter's plans to build the neutron bomb or arms limitation confined to strate-

gic systems served German security interests inadequately.²² Schmidt criticized the United States because its arrangements with the Soviet Union amounted to "equal security" for the superpowers, but "unequal security for their partners."²³ Whereas détente policy seemed to Bonn to be divisible and indeed had to be divisible for good political reasons, security policy and the deterrence of Soviet military power had to be indivisible. This was what Helmut Schmidt was trying to emphasize in October 1977 when he drew attention to the disruption of the Eurostrategic equilibrium posed by Soviet intermediate-range weapons and pointed out the need for corrective action. That action would preferably take the form of arms-control measures, but might if necessary involve the deployment of Western intermediate-range missiles, which in 1979 led to the NATO double-track resolution²⁴ and, subsequently, to charged mass protests by the peace movement in West Germany.

CONTINUITY IN POLITICS AND PERCEPTIONS

The implementation of the NATO double-track decision of 1979 again highlighted how little influence the West German government could ultimately exercise to ensure that Washington preserved a balance between arms reductions and arms-control measures in its negotiations with Moscow. Much of the criticism leveled by what was otherwise a heterogeneous peace movement was directed at this very issue, and it was also one of the causes behind the 1982 political shift in the Federal Republic that resulted in the formation of the Kohl-Genscher government. The new government emphasized continuity. It demonstrated its loyalty to NATO with a resolution on the deployment of the Pershing II missiles and allayed the suspicion, refueled during the missile debate, that the Federal

¹⁹ Hans-Dietrich Genscher, *Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 1995), 474.

²⁰ Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (New York, 1993), 95.

²¹ Schmidt to Erich Honecker in a telephone call on Oct. 30, 1981; Schmidt to Honecker at the summit discussion of Dec. 11 and the delegation discussion of Dec. 12, 1981. Heinrich Potthoff, *Bonn und Ost-Berlin 1969–1982: Dialog auf höchster Ebene und vertrauliche Kanäle: Darstellung und Dokumente* (Bonn, 1997), 623, 660, 661, 673.

²² See the chapter by Matthias Dembinski, vol. 2, Security.

²³ Helga Haftendorn, *Sicherheit und Stabilität: Aussenbeziehungen der Bundesrepublik zwischen Ölkrise und NATO-Doppelbeschluss* (Munich, 1986), 12.

²⁴ See the chapter by Michael Broer, vol. 2, Security.

Republic might be planning to follow a course of its own between the superpowers or to pursue closer rapprochement with the Soviet Union.

At the same time, however, West Germany demonstrated an interest in the continuity of East-West détente, as did the East German government. The East German argument for "damage control" was also carefully noted in Washington, before the GDR fell once again into a shadow existence because of its criticism of *perestroika*.²⁵ The Federal Republic, however, had no thought of going along with President Ronald Reagan's suggestion and reducing its economic ties to the Soviet Union. The natural gas pipeline business, in particular, remained unaffected. What the Federal Republic, other EC countries, and the EC as a whole²⁶ saw as a matter of practical politics, the United States viewed as dependence on the Soviet Union and a stabilization of the "evil empire" that ran counter to Western interests. At the same time, Bonn discovered that it could not dictate relations with the Eastern superpower to suit its own wishes. Moscow initially treated the Federal Republic with coolness after the missile deployment. Not until the second half of the 1980s did West Germany again become the Soviet Union's most important contact in Europe. This was connected with the Federal Republic's international standing, achieved back in the 1970s, but was also helped by the fact that Foreign Minister Genscher had since summer 1986 been firmly convinced that Gorbachev was "ready for a fundamental change in the direction of Soviet policy." He pressed for negotiations with the East. Once again, Bonn seemed desirous of playing a leading role in East-West relations. Skeptics in the West called this "Genscherism." Against the background of the zero option for intermediate-range missiles achieved in 1987 and the modernization of

the Lance short-range missiles – favored by the United States since 1988 and always rejected by Genscher – the old fears resurfaced about how the Germans would use their new scope for action to approach the German question. Genscher noted "fears that the Federal Republic would drift toward the East." In the West, "the neutralization of the Federal Republic" was repeatedly "conjured up as a bad dream."²⁷ The actual continuity of West Germany's loyalty to the West contrasted with the external perception of the Federal Republic, in which the specter of Germany taking a third way perpetually resurfaced. Supported by Chancellor Kohl, Genscher had to work to prevent every manifestation of West German independence from being seen as a test case of the country's loyalty to the West.

The old Federal Republic had to live with such suspicions in the forty years of its existence.²⁸ In reality, it was a Western state that had been speaking out in favor of East-West détente since the late 1960s. Just as it had been a product of the Cold War as a ward of the United States, so it now worked as an increasingly valuable ally of the United States to put an end to the Cold War. It had evolved from being a unilaterally dependent state on the front line into the partner of choice for both the United States and the Soviet Union. President George Bush, speaking in Mainz in late May 1989, referred to the Federal Republic as a "partner in leadership."²⁹ Visiting the Federal Republic two weeks later, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev declared that the postwar period was over. On the threshold of the unification of the two German states, the Federal Republic had "come to occupy a key position in East-West relations."³⁰

²⁷ Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 501, 582, 585.

²⁸ See Klaus Larres, "Germany and the West: The 'Rapallo Factor' in German Foreign Policy from the 1950s to the 1990s," in Klaus Larres and Panikos Panayi, eds., *The Federal Republic of Germany Since 1949: Politics, Society, and Economy Before and After Reunification* (London, 1996), 278–326.

²⁹ Remarks to the Citizens of Mainz, Federal Republic of Germany, May 31, 1989, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George Bush*, 1989 (Washington, D.C., 1990), 1:650–4, esp. 651.

³⁰ Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 617.

²⁵ Christian F. Ostermann, "Im Schatten der Bundesrepublik: Die DDR im Kalkül der amerikanischen Deutschlandpolitik (1949–1989/90)," in Larres and Oppelland, eds., *Deutschland und die USA*, 247–8.

²⁶ Erhard Forndran, "Tendenzen zu größerer Eigenständigkeit Westeuropas," in Wolfgang Wagner et al., eds., *Die Internationale Politik 1981–1982* (Munich, 1984), 57–75.

Ostpolitik: Détente German-Style and Adapting to America

Werner Link

Translated by Richard Sharp

ACTIVELY ADAPTING TO AMERICAN DÉTENTE POLICY

Germany's new Ostpolitik and its most important concrete expression, the Moscow and Warsaw treaties, were and still are seen as evidence of an independent policy of an economically and politically strengthened Federal Republic. At first glance, and up to a point, this view is accurate. On closer inspection, however, it is apparent that the new Ostpolitik was equally a reflection of dependence on Western policy, particularly the policy of the United States. Ostpolitik was in effect American détente policy translated into German.

Even the initial concepts underlying West Germany's new Ostpolitik and Deutschlandpolitik (policy on the German question) reflected American Ostpolitik. President John F. Kennedy's "strategy of peace." In a programmatic address to Evangelical Academy in Tutzing on July 15, 1963, Egon Bahr, the intellectual progenitor and later the chief architect of West German Ostpolitik, argued that the new concept of "change through rapprochement" would "fit seamlessly into the Western concept of the strategy of peace," and represented the "transfer of [Kennedy's] strategy of peace to Germany":

The change in East-West relations that the United States hopes to bring about serves the purpose of surmounting the status quo, by leaving the status quo unchanged for the time being. This may sound paradoxical, but it does open up future prospects, whereas

the existing policy of exerting pressure and counter-pressure has merely led to the rigidity of the status quo. Confidence in the fact that our world is the better world, a world stronger (in a peaceful sense of the word), and a world that will prevail, makes it possible to contemplate an attempt to open our own minds and those of our opponents, and to set aside previous notions of liberation.¹

Posing the question of whether "a special German task within this conception" existed, Bahr answered in the affirmative, for German policy would otherwise be excluded from the continuing development of East-West relations. Within that framework, he said, there were indeed tasks "that only the Germans can perform, because we find ourselves in the unique position of being a divided nation in Europe."²

This was not just an attempt to use the policy of the United States for legitimizing a new policy on Eastern Europe and the German question. It was much more a matter of adapting German policy, as the United States had repeatedly insisted, to the policy of the Federal Republic's hegemonic protector – an active

¹ Lecture by Egon Bahr, head of Berlin's Press and Information Office, to Tutzing Evangelical Academy, July 15, 1963, in Bundesministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen, ed., *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, ser. 4, vol. 9, no. 2 (Frankfurt am Main, 1978), 572–5; see also Andreas Vogtmeier, *Egon Bahr und die deutsche Frage: Zur Entwicklung der sozialdemokratischen Ost- und Deutschlandpolitik vom Kriegsende bis zur Wiedervereinigung* (Bonn, 1996).

² Ibid.

adaptation, in Germany's interest and with a German accent, that led to differences of opinion in German-American relations despite general satisfaction with the Germans' change of course. The characteristic feature of the new German Ostpolitik – that it was a policy of *active*, participatory, and constructive adaptation – explains the different dynamics that developed in the various phases of the East-West conflict. During the phase of reduced international tensions, there was a dynamic between American détente policy and the Federal Republic's own efforts to reduce tensions; during the phase of renewed confrontation on the global stage, there was a dynamic between adaptation to the American policy of a balance of power against the East and a continuation of cooperation with the East; and finally, in the phase of comprehensive global détente, this dynamic eventually dissolved, developing into that unprecedented concord and cooperation between Germany and the United States that led to Germany's reunification.

THE POLICY SHIFT OF THE "GRAND COALITION"

As the formerly sealed files of the German Foreign Office have been opened and published, it has become increasingly clear that the real shift in West German policy toward the East bloc and on the German question took place at the time of the Christian Democratic-Social Democratic Grand Coalition, after years of resistance to the new trend in American policy.³

Konrad Adenauer's government had vehemently rejected America's status quo-oriented policy. That rejection was expressed through a combination of sharp criticism (Adenauer even directed a threat to resign at the United States)

and resignation ("We are the victims of American détente policy!").⁴ Gaullist policy, by contrast, appeared in a more favorable light because it aimed at changing the status quo.

The government under Ludwig Erhard had tried in vain to revive the old policy on the German question, despite American misgivings, while at the same time partially adapting to President Lyndon B. Johnson's policy on Eastern Europe, the "policy of bridge building." Foreign Minister Gerhard Schröder's "policy of movement" toward the states of Central and Eastern Europe was, however, slowed down by a double avoidance – of the Soviet Union and East Germany – and resulted in a tendency on the part of the Federal Republic to isolate itself from its main allies. This was the central point made in a blunt analysis presented to the cabinet by Undersecretary of State Karl Carstens on October 14, 1966 (and that later, with slight revisions, became the basis for a memorandum on foreign policy and the German question presented to the Grand Coalition government).⁵

Federal Minister Heinrich Krone summarized Carstens's arguments with the succinct phrase "the days of actively seeking reunification are over."⁶ And Free Democratic Party (*Freie Demokratische Partei*, or FDP) leader and Federal Minister for all-German affairs Erich Mende concluded, "The coordinates of policy on Germany and of foreign policy are no longer valid. The foundations of Bonn's conception have to be adapted to the new international political situation to restore the Federal Republic's ability to act."⁷

Conceptually, the Grand Coalition did make the necessary adjustment by drafting its "grand

³ See Hans-Peter Schwarz, ed., in cooperation with the German Foreign Office and the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1964* (Munich, 1994–9). The volumes covering the years 1963 through 1968 have been published so far; see also Dirk Kroegel, *Einen Anfang finden! Kurt Georg Kiesinger in der Aussen- und Deutschlandpolitik der Grossen Koalition* (Munich, 1997).

⁴ Entry in the diary of Heinrich Krone, Aug. 5, 1963, quoted in the article edited by Klaus Gotto, *Adenauer-Studien* 3 (1974): 178.

⁵ Karl Carstens: *Erinnerungen und Erfahrungen*, ed. Kai von Jenu and Reinhard Schmoecker (Boppard, 1993), 762.

⁶ Quoted in Klaus Hildebrand, "Von Erhard zur Grossen Koalition 1963–1969," in Karl Dietrich Bracher et al., eds., *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 5 vols. (Stuttgart, 1984), 4:199.

⁷ "Wiedervereinigung – Schweigen Ehrensache," *Der Spiegel* 20 (Oct. 24, 1966): 27–8.

design for a future European order for peace.” This was the shibboleth of the new Ostpolitik and policy on the German question in the years that followed. Initially, a treaty renouncing the use of force was to be concluded with the Soviet superpower on the basis of existing borders. A treaty would subsequently be concluded with the German Democratic Republic on “regulated coexistence” (*geregeltes Nebeneinander*) for what was expected to be a long transition period, whereby the West German government would concede something along the lines of “short-term competence” (*befristete Geschäftsfähigkeit*) to the East German government (pending reunification). It seemed German unification would be realizable only after the gradual and procedural development of a European peace order, with a system of arms-control policy as an intermediate step:

Germany, a reunited Germany, has critical mass. It is too big to play no part in the balance of power, and too small to hold the balance among the powers around it by itself. In fact, therefore, it is hard to imagine how a united Germany could align itself directly with either side if the present political structure in Europe were to continue. That is precisely why the coming together of the divided parts of Germany can only form part of a process of overcoming the East-West conflict in Europe.⁸

It was the Soviet refusal, not dissension within the coalition, that initially blocked the implementation of the new concept of Ostpolitik, the entry into the first stage. Only after the power question in its own area of rule and hegemonic influence had been clarified (by, for instance, the suppression of the “Prague Spring” in 1968) was the Soviet Union ready to talk. And only when the new American administration under Richard Nixon had opened the “era of negotiations” in summer 1969 could operational implementation of the new concept of German

Ostpolitik begin, with the opening of German-Soviet talks on an expanded renunciation-of-force treaty. It was left to this new government to continue the process. In October 1969 the German Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, or SPD) and the FDP formed a new German government against the most powerful caucus in the Bundestag, the joint caucus of the Christian Democratic Union (*Christliche Demokratische Union*, or CDU) and the Christian Social Union (*Christliche Soziale Union*, or CSU). As a result, Ostpolitik would fall victim to the bitter conflicts between the government and the opposition.

AMBIVALENT AMERICAN BACKING

The Erhard government had reacted defensively and the Grand Coalition government offensively to the international, especially American, pressure to fall into line. The new SPD-FDP government of Chancellor Willy Brandt could take action. The government was fully aware of the critical part played by the United States, as is clearly evident from Bahr’s memorandum “On the foreign policy of a future federal government,” dated October 1, 1969 (which formed the basis for the coalition agreement). The memorandum states: “The United States remains our most important partner; our security ultimately depends on our relations with the United States. . . . The Atlantic alliance and our close links with the United States must remain the foundation of our policy.”⁹

In line with this principle, the new West German chancellor – two weeks before his first address before the Bundestag – dispatched Bahr to Washington and thereby opened up a “back channel” to Nixon’s security adviser, Henry Kissinger. (At the same time, a direct channel to Brezhnev and his security adviser was also established, albeit by way of the intelligence service.) The United States, though ambivalent, gave support that was of decisive importance to the new, active Ostpolitik.

⁸ Speech by Federal Chancellor Kiesinger on the occasion of the formal celebration of the “Day of German Unity” on June 17, 1967, in Bonn, in Kurt Georg Kiesinger, *Die Grosse Koalition 1966–1969: Reden und Erklärungen des Bundeskanzlers*, ed. Dieter Oberndörfer (Stuttgart, 1979), 77–83.

⁹ Copy in the author’s possession.

The bilateral détente policy pursued by Germany and the Soviet Union led within a few months to the conclusion of the Moscow Treaty (August 12, 1970), which was supplemented by the Warsaw Treaty (December 7, 1970). Not until 1973 did West Germany succeed in concluding a treaty with Czechoslovakia. These treaties created a *modus vivendi* based on the territorial status quo and fit organically in America's détente policy.

Meanwhile, the semi-Gaullist, seemingly more independent style of the social democratic-liberal government and the possible long-term effects of the new Ostpolitik greatly irritated the American government. Although the Germans kept the leading Western power informed, they tended to inform rather than consult; instead of asking for advice, they requested cooperation in pursuit of a political course whose basic outline they had determined independently. Kissinger perceived the bilateral German-Soviet efforts at détente as a disruptive factor in the orchestration of his own détente policy.¹⁰

The more the West German government pushed its Ostpolitik beyond mere factual recognition of the status quo, however, the more clearly it had to realize that its room for maneuver was very constricted. Although the American government could thus regard its misgivings about Germans' policy as obsolete, the long-term effects of the new German Ostpolitik still caused concern. Henry Kissinger had no doubts about the basic pro-Western orientation of the leading Social Democratic politicians. However, the problem as he saw it was "to control a process which, if it results in failure, could jeopardize their political lives and if it succeeds could create a momentum that may shake Germany's domestic stability and unhinge its international position."¹¹ In a memorandum to the president dated February 16, 1970, Kissinger declared that the greatest danger seemed to him to be that the favorable effects that the Germans hoped to

see after "normalization" would not in fact occur. The Federal Republic of Germany might consequently drift away from the Western alliance, returning to the old concept of being a "bridge" between East and West in an attempt to gain something for Germany as a whole from its investment in Ostpolitik.¹²

What the national security adviser suggested privately to the president was discussed publicly two months later by the U.S. ambassador in Bonn, Kenneth Rush. He feared that "the political dynamic in the German situation" might – in the event of American disengagement in Europe – result in a loss of confidence in America on the part of Germany's political leaders. Those leaders might become more receptive toward Soviet influence, with fateful consequences for German policy:

It would perforce be aimed at a gradual adjustment with a neighboring power whose strength would be so great one could only hope to accommodate to it.

An important characteristic of such German policy might be abstention from actions which German leaders would believe might annoy or aggravate the Soviet Union. . . .

The end result of this gradual, undramatic process of shifting balance through a slow shift of the German position could well be the extension of Soviet influence and control over Western Europe.¹³

This marked the beginning of a theory that later emerged: that the Federal Republic of Germany was in danger of (self-) Finlandization. This trend was so dangerous, Ambassador Rush's central argument ran, because the Federal Republic of Germany was "the fulcrum of the European balance of power." Germany's new Ostpolitik, which was welcomed for adapting to U.S. détente policy, threatened to turn into a gradual adaptation to Soviet policy.

¹² Ibid., 529–30.

¹⁰ Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York, 1983), 415–22.

¹¹ Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, 1979), 408–9.

¹³ Rush's remarks in U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Europe of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, 91st Cong., 2d sess. (Apr. 8, 1970), 390.

THE UNITED STATES AS THE
"CRITICAL ELEMENT"

American power and the dependence of the Federal Republic of Germany and – especially West Berlin – on the United States for security were sufficiently great to restrict Bonn's bilateral dealings with the Soviet Union for the time being. In his memoirs, Kissinger described with pleasure how the American government became the critical element as a result of the Four-Power negotiations over Berlin and so regained control.¹⁴

The settlement of the Berlin question was linked in many ways both to the Moscow and Warsaw treaties and to American détente policy. In its negotiations in Moscow and its public statements, the West German government had made it unmistakably clear that the treaties could not be ratified unless the close ties between the Federal Republic of Germany and West Berlin were preserved and access to and from Berlin was unobstructed. The United States sought to link a satisfactory agreement on Berlin to the U.S.-Soviet arms-control negotiations and the planned summit between Nixon and Brezhnev, as well as to the agreement to a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and troop withdrawals from Central Europe. This strengthened the American position, but it also made the U.S. government "responsible for the ultimate success of Brandt's policy."¹⁵

The West German government was not formally a party to the Four-Power negotiations, which took place between ambassadors in Berlin. In addition to negotiating with the East German government on a transit agreement regulating free access to and from Berlin, the West German government was also involved in the secret negotiations between the principal parties, the United States and the Soviet Union. These negotiations took place separately from the Berlin negotiations and brought about a breakthrough on the decisive issues – secret talks between U.S. Ambassador Rush, Soviet

Ambassador Falin, and State Secretary Bahr in Bonn.¹⁶

The result of the negotiations, the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin signed on September 3, 1971, was based – like the Moscow and Warsaw treaties – on the status quo without affecting the conflicting legal positions. West Berlin continued to be neither a "constituent part" of the Federal Republic nor directly governed by it. The Soviet Union not only guaranteed transport access to West Berlin, but also accepted the principle that "the ties between the western sectors of Berlin and the Federal Republic of Germany will be maintained and developed."¹⁷ The survival of West Berlin was thus ensured and a dynamic element was introduced.

As would soon become apparent, however, one problem was that West Berlin's representation abroad by the Federal Republic of Germany and the extension of the Federal Republic's international law treaties to include West Berlin was worded as a possibility and therefore had to be expressly agreed upon in each case. It also remained unclear whether and to what extent the ties between West Berlin and the Federal Republic could be "developed" by the addition of new elements without violating the restrictions on Berlin's status. When the Soviet Union reacted to the building of the Federal Office for the Environment in West Berlin in 1974 with reprisals (obstructions to transit traffic), it became clear that what was ultimately preserving the freedom of West Berlin was neither the Four-Power Agreement nor the new Ostpolitik, but American protection. Brandt had further developed the bilateral German-Soviet relations – in spectacular style in the case of his meeting with Brezhnev in Oreanda in September 1971, but, after unsuccessful representations in Moscow, he was forced to ask President Nixon, in an official but secret letter of January 28, 1974, to use his influence on the Soviet government. He hoped that the United

¹⁴ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 823–33.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 824.

¹⁶ Egon Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit* (Munich, 1996), 344–71.

¹⁷ Four-Power Agreement on Berlin of Sept. 3, 1971, and the supporting documents, *Europa-Archiv* 19 (1971), D 444.

States would persuade the Soviet Union to guarantee unimpeded transit access to West Berlin through East Germany.¹⁸ This incident revealed the true distribution of power and proved that West Germany's Ostpolitik and German policy ultimately depended on U.S. backing.

DOUBLE STAGNATION AND NEW READJUSTMENT

The Basic Treaty between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic of December 21, 1972, recognized the existence of the two separate states, but at the same time placed on record their disagreement over the national issue. It created the framework for difficult, long-term negotiations between West and East Germany on a great many practical questions,¹⁹ negotiations that gradually came to obscure the prospect of reunification. At the same time, the vision of Ostpolitik – of a new security order for Europe as a whole – faded. The critical factor here was the gradual change in the overall climate of East-West relations. The new Ostpolitik stagnated before it attained a second stage because American détente policy stagnated: a case of double stagnation.

The Helsinki Final Act (1975), which brought the first CSCE in Europe to a relatively successful conclusion,²⁰ marked both the high point and the turning point of détente in Europe. The West German government could again thank direct bilateral negotiations conducted by U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger outside the conference for the fact that the Final Act included what was known as the German option, the possibility of a peaceful change of borders. Also useful from the West German point of view was the fact that the principles of humanitarian and human-rights policy

were included in the Final Act and could be exploited to remind the East German government to behave accordingly. But the “tough” security issues had been excluded from the Helsinki process. Separate negotiations on “mutual balanced force reductions” (MBFR) stagnated and produced no results.

The Schmidt-Genscher government tried to pursue a pragmatic Ostpolitik on the basis of the Moscow and Warsaw treaties, to develop “interdependencies” between Western and Eastern Europe through economic and personal networks, and so to create a general European infrastructure. This was compatible with American policy, provided that negotiations on strategic arms limitation (SALT: Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) were successful; however, the exclusion of medium-range weapons was a cause of considerable irritation.²¹ When the Soviet Union's active rearmament policy, Soviet or Soviet-supported interventions in the Third World, and the invasion of Afghanistan brought about a new confrontation between the superpowers, the Federal Republic of Germany came under new pressure to adapt to U.S. policy. The former “new Ostpolitik” was now running counter to American policy. The Schmidt-Genscher government adopted stalling tactics to resist U.S. sanctions policy to rescue anything that could be rescued from the results of détente policy, especially the laboriously developed relations between West and East Germans (through tourism, telephone links, sports, and other means). As Schmidt explained to Carter on March 5, 1980, he (Schmidt) “believed in the reality of the [German] nation.”²² In the controversial process of implementing the NATO “double-track” decision of December 1979, Schmidt, under pressure from the extremely compromise-oriented SPD and the “peace movement,” risked clashing with the United States. There was even talk in the chancellery of rescuing détente policy by leaving “politics in mid-convoy” to the alliance and

¹⁸ Werner Link, “Aussen- und Deutschlandpolitik in der Ära Brandt 1969–1974,” in Bracher et al., eds., *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 5(1): 280.

¹⁹ Peter Bender, *Die “Neue Ostpolitik” und ihre Folgen: Vom Mauerbau bis zur Vereinigung*, 3d rev. and enl. ed. (Munich, 1995), 248–54.

²⁰ See the chapter by Michael R. Lucas in this section.

²¹ See the chapter by Matthias Dembinski, vol. 2, *Security*.

²² Cf. Werner Link, “Aussen- und Deutschlandpolitik in der Ära Schmidt 1974–1982,” 5(2): 327.

risking a strategy of conflict with the Reagan administration. The fears Kissinger and Rush voiced in 1970 now seemed to be well-founded.

Not until the CDU/CSU-led government of Kohl and Genscher took office did German policy come back into line with that of the United States, ensuring – after the failure of the arms limitation talks – that the new INF deployment would go ahead. The SPD could then pursue its “second Ostpolitik” only as the parliamentary opposition (in dubious cooperation with East Germany’s Socialist Unity Party); in other words, it no longer had the power to determine policy.²³ The Kohl-Genscher government, operating on an unambiguous commitment to the alliance and unequivocal adherence to the principle of reunification, sought to pursue a pragmatic policy on Eastern Europe and the German question, and in fact it enjoyed success as far as the unfavorable international political climate allowed.²⁴

GERMAN AND AMERICAN POLICY ON EASTERN EUROPE AND GERMANY IN HARMONY

As Reagan’s strategy of strength and dialog coincided with Gorbachev’s domestic and foreign policy reforms, opening the way for a new, all-embracing policy of détente and reconciliation between East and West, German Ostpolitik under Kohl’s leadership seized the opportunity. The West German government did so in harmony with U.S. policy, after initial American misgivings about optimistic “Genscherism.” The INF Treaty and the CFE Treaty²⁵ meant more than an arms-control regime, as had initially been envisaged as an intermediate step

toward a new all-European peace order. An asymmetrical reduction in nuclear and conventional arms and in troop levels in Europe was agreed upon, along with on-site inspections, and thereby was the Soviet Union’s ability to attack Western Europe eliminated.

The revolutionary changes in the East bloc created new conditions for German policy toward Eastern Europe and on the German question. The give-and-take policy, whereby West Germany granted credits and East Germany eased travel restrictions, could now be replaced by an active policy of reunification, in collaboration between West Germany and the United States, with critical American support, and through direct negotiations with Gorbachev. The economic and financial potential of the Federal Republic was now used not only to create “interdependencies,” but also to make reunification politically possible. The fact that both the West German and U.S. governments thought it crucial and in their mutual interest that a united Germany should be a member of NATO was decisive for the positive outcome of the negotiations. Contrary to Kissinger’s expectations, the whole of Germany could join the West. The creation of a new European peace order had not been a precondition for reunification, but it could now be addressed as the result of reunification.

The new German Ostpolitik launched at the end of the 1960s certainly helped to bring about favorable circumstances for peacefully resolving the division of Germany and Europe. However, German reunification had been brought about not so much by “change through rapprochement” as by “rapprochement through change.” Change through rapprochement had been minimal for twenty years, and it had proceeded slowly; the rapprochement that led to reunification took place in a peaceful revolution over the course of a few months in 1989–90. The German chancellor and the American president, Kohl and Bush, made courageous and skillful use of what the Ancient Greeks had called *kairos*, the advantage of the hour, the favorable moment in history.

²³ Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe’s Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (New York, 1993), 312–42.

²⁴ Karl-Rudolf Korte, *Deutschlandpolitik in Helmut Kohls Kanzlerschaft: Regierungsstil und Entscheidungen 1982–1989* (Stuttgart, 1998).

²⁵ See the chapter by Michael Broer, vol. 2, Security.

CHAPTER FOUR

Creative Tension:

The United States and the Federal Republic in the CSCE

Michael R. Lucas

INTRODUCTION

In a speech commemorating Abraham Lincoln's 150th birthday in February 1959, the governing mayor of West Berlin, Willy Brandt, cautioned his audience that there would be "neither an isolated nor sudden solution" to Germany's division. He therefore called for a new policy based on "gradual changes."¹ Brandt's sober vision led to the détente policy of "small steps" of cooperation between the two German states and anticipated Ostpolitik and the Eastern treaties of the early 1970s under Brandt's chancellorship.² The inter-German *modus vivendi* was in tandem with the Soviet-American détente that had tentatively begun shortly after President John F. Kennedy's inauguration in January 1961. Although Ostpolitik followed the American global lead, it also laid the foundation for European détente by making possible the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and its inaugural document, the Helsinki Final Act of 1975.³

The CSCE was a series of roving, "follow-up" diplomatic conferences of thirty-five states⁴ in which a gradual, uneven thawing of the Cold War helped prepare the ground for the revolutions of 1989 and the peaceful closure of the East-West conflict. The extraordinary and underrecognized role of the CSCE as a forum of European and global détente cannot be separated from the partnership of the United States and the Federal Republic. By turns they confronted each other in the Helsinki process in serious disagreement, only to reforge their common positions and reestablish consensus among the NATO allies. The differences between the United States and the Federal Republic produced a creative tension and an unintended division of labor: The United States brandished a stick of Cold War confrontation and radical change, while West Germany, with support from the majority of other West European states, strove to sustain a process of incremental change in the framework of European détente. This combination pressured the Soviets to accept radical, systemic changes but at the same time cultivated a framework in which Moscow, under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, could design and implement such monumental change peacefully and in cooperation with the West.

¹ Cited in Manfred Görtemaker, *Unifying Germany, 1989–1990* (New York, 1994), 24. See also Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (New York, 1994), chap. 2.

² See the chapter by Werner Link in this section.

³ The Final Act of Helsinki, reprinted in Arie Bloed, ed., *The Conference on Security and Co-operation: Analysis and Basic Documents, 1972–1993* (Dordrecht, 1993), 141–217.

⁴ At the Budapest Meeting of the CSCE, its name was changed to the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), marking its transformation from a series of conferences to an international organization with a permanent secretariat in Vienna.

What follows is an attempt to briefly sketch the role of the Federal Republic, German-German relations, and the United States in the CSCE to illuminate the basic consensus between Bonn and Washington on the major goals of Western policy and the differences behind this consensus in dealing with the Warsaw Pact states.

THE WESTERN CONSENSUS ON THE ROLE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The Helsinki Final Act establishes a link between the promotion of détente and security in Europe and the implementation by member states of CSCE human-rights obligations. Principle 7 in the Decalogue of the first chapter (Basket 1) of the Final Act makes this linkage explicit:

The participating nations recognize the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the respect for which is an essential factor for the peace, justice and well-being necessary to ensure the development of friendly relations and co-operation among themselves as among all states.⁵

The Soviets at first strongly resisted allowing human rights to become an issue in East-West relations; they considered them an internal affair and therefore not subject to interference by other states or international bodies.⁶ Western states staunchly defended human-rights goals as the foundation of the CSCE's credibility in international relations.

The Madrid CSCE follow-up meeting (November 11, 1980–September 9, 1983) opened in a period of marked deterioration of East-West détente caused by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on December 28, 1979, the deployment of Soviet intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Eastern Europe, and the escalating conflict between the Solidarity movement and

the Polish government following the declaration of martial law.⁷ These events marked a return to heightened East-West tension and triggered disagreement among the Western and the Neutral and Nonaligned (NN) states within the CSCE on how to respond to the Soviet Union. At the preparatory meeting prior to the official conference opening, the United States, France, and Denmark called for a postponement of the conference, a motion opposed by the Federal Republic and the NN states. After considerable hesitation, President Jimmy Carter gave way on postponement but made it clear that the United States would use the Madrid conference to spotlight Soviet and Eastern European violations of the Final Act and to insist that the Soviets meet their international human-rights commitments. The United States was supported by Britain, the Netherlands, and several other states. In response to the confrontational style of the Americans, the Federal Republic, with support from France and several other delegations, argued that the conference should not merely criticize the Soviet record, but also contribute to preserving and deepening East-West cooperation.

In the official opening speeches at Madrid, all Western delegations criticized the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan as a gross violation of détente and spotlighted human-rights violations in the Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe. In the ongoing internal Western discussion, held separately in preparation for the East-West plenary sessions, the Federal Republic opposed allowing Eastern human-rights violations or the war in Afghanistan to block progress at Madrid. The West German position was a response to both the aggressive criticism of the Soviet Union by the United States and also to President Carter's earlier public statements that the continuation of the Madrid meeting would be contingent on the withdrawal of

⁵ Final Act of Helsinki, reprinted in Bloed, *Conference on Security and Co-operation*. The number of participating states in the OSCE has increased to fifty-five.

⁶ John J. Maresca, *To Helsinki: The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1973–1975* (Durham, N.C., 1985), 154.

⁷ On the Madrid Meeting, see Peter Schlotter, *Entspannungspolitik für die 80er Jahre: Modelle und Strategien* (Frankfurt am Main, 1985), 60–90; Victor-Yves Ghébal, *La Diplomatie de la Détente: CSCE, d'Helsinki à Vienne (1973–1989)* (Brussels, 1989), 26–32; William Korey, *The Promise We Keep: Human Rights, the Helsinki Process, and American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1993), 131–62.