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POLITICS

Détente and Multipolarity

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

Klaus Schwabe

Translated by Richard Sharp

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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

¹³ See the chapter by Gottfried Niedhart in this section.

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

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.

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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.

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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.

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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.