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ABSTRACT

During the period 1974-1982, the Federal Republic of Germany's primary foreign policy objectives were to maintain the East-West military balance and continue *Ostpolitik*, which was designed to lead to German unification. The Federal Republic's approach to all foreign policy issues was shaped by these two not always complementary objectives. This thesis examines the resulting policies from the viewpoint of West Germany's principal policymakers on the interpersonal, national, and international level. Consistent with the conclusions of the 1967 Harmel Report, which combined military preparedness and the will to engage in an East-West dialogue, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt implemented a security policy that served as the basis for *Ostpolitik*. This was a delicate task as US-Soviet relations deteriorated because of Moscow's arms buildup and aggression in the Third World. At the same time, German-American relations became problematic because of systemic and interpersonal dynamics during Jimmy Carter's and Ronald Reagan's presidencies. Adding to Bonn's problems was the fact that the Carter administration at first did not perceive the deployment of the Soviet SS-20 as a threat, which forced Schmidt to push for NATO's December 12, 1979, dual-track decision. Then, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and the situation in Poland deteriorated, Bonn found itself out of step with Washington's response, which was exacerbated by the fact that neither superpower was willing to resolve the question of the growing Eurostrategic imbalance in the Geneva negotiations. The Kremlin clearly believed that a NATO counter-deployment to the SS-20 could be averted through the political pressure that the "peace movement" could bring to bear on the West German government. However, this "peace movement" only succeeded in turning the SPD against its chancellor, which was the primary reason for Schmidt's downfall. Although he failed domestically, overall Schmidt's foreign policy was relatively successful. The German chancellor initiated a policy which, with the deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles in 1983-1984, restored the East-West military equilibrium, and he accomplished this without wrecking Bonn's *Ostpolitik*. In fact, intra-German relations remained relatively unaffected by the new superpower ice age in the early 1980s.