The Silent Partner

West Germany and Arms Control

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FOREWORD

Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev appears to have made arms control initiatives a central element in his European policy, with dramatic effects on European perceptions of the two great powers, the threat of war, and the possibilities of significant cutbacks in military forces. Conclusion of the Stockholm Agreement on Confidence and Security Building Measures in 1986 and the 1987 U.S.-Soviet Treaty on Intermediate-range Nuclear Missiles are the first tangible results. Budget pressures in all NATO countries, as well as within the Warsaw Pact, the convening in 1988 of European talks on conventional forces, and the proposals for major reductions in conventional forces already put forward by the Warsaw Pact guarantee that arms control negotiations will remain central among European security issues for some time to come.

Mr. Gorbachev no doubt has many reasons for the high priority he accords to arms control. Domestic political and economic factors are important parts of his motivation. It also seems clear, however, that the potentially negative impact of arms control initiatives on political harmony within the Federal Republic of Germany and, most importantly, on Bonn's relations with its allies in NATO—particularly with the United States—are key considerations in Gorbachev's arms control offensive. The intermediate-range missile negotiations have already had divisive political effects within West Germany, causing heated controversy within the ruling party coalition, straining U.S.-FRG ties, and embarrassing Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Moreover, the preparations within NATO for the talks on conventional arms have revealed differences in perspective between West Germany and several of the allies, differences which if not resolved effectively could have serious long-term consequences for the Alliance.

Arms Control Issues and Processes in the Federal Republic of Germany provides a comprehensive factual base for understanding West German attitudes on arms control issues, the role these questions play in the German political system, and the complex military and political considerations that determine Bonn's positions on these matters. It also provides a road map

for understanding the FRG's decisionmaking system, identifying the key organizations and individuals who play a part in the decision process, and laying out the formal and informal arrangements through which arms control decisions are made.

This book is a modified version of a report prepared for IDA in 1987. The primary authors, Barry Blechman and Cathleen Fisher, thank Robbin Laird and Victor Utgoff for their advice and assistance in the project. The opinions expressed in this book are those of the listed authors and are not necessarily endorsed by the Institute for Defense Analyses.

W.Y. Smith
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1 OVERVIEW

Geopolitics, history, and events since World War II have rooted the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) firmly in the West; however, the same factors have given Bonn a substantial interest in developing good relations with its eastern neighbors. As a significant but nonnuclear member of NATO, the FRG's relationship with the United States and other allies is the cornerstone of its security policy. This special dependency, of course, has enhanced West German security, but has tied Bonn's security inextricably to American and Soviet policies, and to the general climate of East-West relations.

West German arms control policy, as part of its broader security policy, is no exception. The arms control policy of the Federal Republic is shaped by a continuing interplay between domestic considerations and changes in the international context, both in the East and the West. This persistent tension between the internal and the external, and between Bonn's *Westpolitik* and *Ostpolitik*, is a necessary background for understanding the FRG's arms control policy.

In a very real sense, Bonn's arms control policy is "hostage" to Germany's commitment to a close relationship with the United States and to NATO. Initially, the arms control process was seen solely as part of the superpowers' relationship, to be left in the hands of the United States. As the process expanded to include multilateral forums, however, and became more institutionalized, the FRG was compelled to develop both the capacity and the decisionmaking procedures to address arms control matters. The development of a more independent decisionmaking capacity is likely to continue in the future, particularly if Bonn becomes increasingly dissatisfied with what it perceives as an American predilection toward unilateralism.

Over time, moreover, arms control has come to be linked in the West German public's mind with an ongoing process of détente, or *Ostpolitik*.

On the whole, West Germans are inclined to give a positive assessment of the relative benefits and costs of the détente of the 1970s, particularly with regard to the value of improvements in inter-German relations. Accordingly, West German politicians and government decisionmakers tend to embrace a hazy notion of détente and arms control as serving German interests, or at least offering reassurance to an *Angst*-laden public.

This general orientation notwithstanding, specific arms control policy decisions may be explained on the basis of governmental decisionmaking processes and the views of specific officials. In the Federal Republic, real power is lodged solely in the executive branch, and on arms control issues, the voice of the Foreign Minister and his deputies is decisive. The Federal Republic's constitution and other legal documents, a long history of powerful bureaucracies, and the structure of Bonn's parliamentary system of government effectively guarantee the executive's predominance; legislative organs play only secondary roles. The Bundestag may provide a setting for public debate, but it cannot determine executive decisions, or even influence them directly, as can the U.S. Congress; opposition parties can only seek to educate the public on alternative views (and the talents of their security experts), in order to influence future elections and to prepare for a return to power. National political parties do channel information on public attitudes to government officials, however.

The future evolution of West German arms control policy will depend similarly on both domestic and international developments. National elections in January 1987 returned the center-right coalition to power, but by a substantially smaller margin than had been expected, given West Germany's then-favorable economic prospects. The election also resulted in a shift of weight within the coalition between the Christian Democratic and Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and the small Free Democratic Party (FDP). The gains of the FDP were widely interpreted as a vote of confidence in the foreign policy leadership of Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher. Thus domestic factors favor continuity in FRG arms control policy. However, future policy decisions will depend also on developments in the international context, in particular the course of Soviet-American, Soviet-German, and German-American relations.

This study explores the sources of West German arms control policies and the processes through which they are determined. In this overview, we review the key actors in the process, both within and outside the government, and discuss the sources of their beliefs and the specific positions they tend to prefer. The concluding section projects rough

outlines of FRG arms control policies in light of the January 1987 electoral outcome under alternative international scenarios.

The "Special Analyses" which follow include more detailed descriptions of the preferred arms control policies (and the sources of such views) of each of the major political parties in the FRG (CDU/CSU, SPD [Social Democratic Party], FDP, and Greens), an assessment of West German public attitudes toward arms control, and a detailed description of the decisionmaking process within the West German government. Short biographies of key actors are included in the Appendix.

DECISIONMAKING PROCESSES AND ACTORS

Arms control policy in the Federal Republic in large measure bears the stamp of executive actors. The Basic Law and related legal documents assign primary responsibility for the conduct of foreign policy, which has been interpreted to include arms control negotiations, to the Foreign Office. By the same token, the Basic Law's right of concurrence (*Mitzeichnungsrecht*) guarantees the Ministry of Defense (MoD) an input into the policy process. The long-standing tradition of professional civil service and the one-sided balance of power inherent in a parliamentary system further cement the predominance of executive agencies. Consequently, although the Bundestag as an institution, all national political parties, and other nongovernmental actors may attempt to channel their views to relevant decisionmakers, only the parties that govern can tap directly into bureaucratic sources of expertise and power. Opposition parties and nongovernmental actors may serve to inform government officials of new ideas and changes in public attitudes, but in general they can play only secondary roles.

Interagency coordination and conflict resolution are persistent problems in the decisionmaking process within the executive branch. Coordination among executive agencies is complicated by the generally decentralized character of the Bonn bureaucracy and the autonomy enjoyed by division heads. Within the executive branch, conflict often has developed between the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defense, or between one or the other and the Chancellor's Office. The Foreign Minister has been a member of the minority party in the governing coalition for almost two decades; this has tended to reinforce institutional conflicts. Indeed, in general, coalition

politics and the competing aims and agendas of the governing parties are an important source of friction and conflict.

A further complication derives from the Federal Republic's membership in NATO and its close relations with the United States. As already noted, domestic decisionmaking processes are never insulated from the influence of American attitudes. Within NATO, a complex structure of consultative bodies and procedures has evolved to handle arms control issues; many opportunities for bilateral exchanges exist as well. In theory, such channels can function as a "two-way street" to influence arms control policy either in Bonn or in Washington. In practice, NATO and bilateral channels provide more constraint than opportunity for decisionmakers in Bonn.

In the future, multilateral forums will constitute an increasingly important counterweight against American predominance in the arms control process. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) process has spawned a multitude of mechanisms to coordinate with Bonn's European allies in NATO and members of the European Community (European Political Cooperation). These have been supplemented since 1982 with frequent bilateral Franco-German consultations on a range of security matters.

WEST GERMAN ATTITUDES ON ARMS CONTROL

A variety of domestic and international factors influence the attitudes of all actors in the West German decisionmaking process. Geopolitical realities and the division of the German nation constrain all policymakers. The lessons of German history, ideological traditions, and the perceived benefits of *Ostpolitik* and détente shape perceptions of security needs and policies. Additionally, such internal factors as political and sociological changes may alter perceptions of security needs and the role of arms control. The net impact of these variables is a set of broadly shared attitudes and concerns.

Geopolitical Factors

All actors in the policy process share an awareness of West Germany's geopolitical situation. The fact that Germany is divided creates a

perception of special security needs. Close relations with the West, above all with the United States, are seen by a majority as indispensable to West German security; at the same time, the FRG has special interests in maintaining good relations with the East. The result is an underlying tension between policy components, sometimes more apparent than not, which poses problems for all West German leaders, regardless of party. In the 1950s, this tension took the form of a domestic debate over rearmament which, the SPD argued, would cement the division of Germany and eliminate any hope of reunification in the short run. A more recent example was the controversy over the deployment of intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF); critics of the NATO dual-track decision argued that deployment would threaten the gains of the inter-German détente of the 1970s. The CDU, which otherwise supported the decision, thus took parallel actions to prevent a deterioration in Bonn's relations with Eastern Europe and inter-German relations as the missiles were being deployed, granting trade credits to East Germany to coincide with the beginning of deployments. The division of Germany and Bonn's special interest in an East-West climate conducive to inter-German dialogue do not necessarily mean that a desire to continue *Ostpolitik* will override all other security considerations. But it will mean that any party in power will be at least concerned about the atmospherics of East-West relations.

The border running between East and West Germany obviously divides NATO and Warsaw Pact countries as well. This "frontline" position contributes to an acute sense of vulnerability; even the public's only dim awareness of the presence of large numbers of Allied troops and weapons on West German soil heightens the sense of being the "most exposed" member of the alliance. This "frontline" position influences attitudes toward arms control in a number of sometimes contradictory ways. For many West Germans, it underscores the importance of the American connection, and creates concern lest any specific arms control agreement be "decoupling," or introduce tensions to the relationship. This concern was reflected in the Kohl government's critical reaction to the arms control agreements discussed at the November 1986 Reykjavik summit, and in the reaction of CDU/CSU conservatives to the proposal in spring 1987 to remove all intermediate nuclear forces from the FRG. Similarly, Gorbachev's offer in March 1987 to delink an agreement on intermediate-range nuclear forces from negotiations on strategic defenses led Kohl, Dregger, and other figures in the CDU to caution the West against concluding an

agreement on INF unless measures were taken to address imbalances in shorter range systems and conventional weapons.

The general sense of exposure and vulnerability among members of the German electorate also may prevent any party, once in office, from implementing the more extreme aspects of its program. It is not certain, for example, that even an SPD majority government could proceed decisively with arms control policies that caused difficulties within the alliance and thus were perceived to run counter to the majority's pro-NATO sentiments. On the other hand, a latent *Angst*, surfacing primarily during times of increasing international tension, causes even CDU governments to press hard for progress in arms control, if only for its reassurance effects. In this sense, the arms control process itself may be more important to many West Germans than the specific terms of particular agreements. Many West Germans share the view that as long as the superpowers are talking, things cannot be all bad. Such attitudes are rooted fundamentally in basic feelings of insecurity due to West Germany's geopolitical place in Europe.

Historical Factors

No matter what their party affiliation, all West German arms control actors share a common historical legacy that may influence attitudes on security and nuclear weapons in the broadest sense. The experience of combat, devastation, and occupation during World War II undoubtedly continues to affect views on the role of force and the relative efficacy of military defense and détente. The impact of the war was most evident in the first decade of the Federal Republic's existence. Resistance, first, to rearmament and, subsequently, to the deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons in Germany, drew strength from antimilitarist sentiment. Civil-military relations, though generally good, can still be a point of contention. Though many of the West German leaders now in power were not directly exposed to war and its aftermath, there are sufficient reminders of the past. While younger West Germans may not feel the deep aversion to the use of force that was typical of the immediate post-war period, they are likely to be at least ambivalent, all the more so when the issue concerns the use of nuclear weapons. The German electorate's recognition of the implications of any war, conventional or nuclear, for West Germany is linked importantly to their perception of the relative utility of arms control for West German security.

The German ideological tradition continues to influence the policies of the political parties toward arms control. In its most basic form, an ideology may color a party's entire outlook on security. The Social Democrats' historical tradition of antimilitarism and internationalism was doubtless a factor in the party's opposition to rearmament in the 1950s. In one sense, the SPD's rejection of INF deployments in the 1980s, as well as its current departures from NATO's existing policies, are a return to normalcy—a revival of older SPD notions about security and German interests.

Similarly, the CDU/CSU's attitudes toward arms control are rooted in a strong tradition of anti-Communism. Among conservative West Germans, anti-Communism retains its potency, magnifying perceptions of a persistent Soviet threat and underscoring the importance of military readiness. Any departure from tried-and-true *Westpolitik*, any venture that is seen to lead to neutralism or "Finlandization" is rejected. Anti-Communism feeds the sense of primacy afforded the American connection. As a result of this more or less latent ideological underpinning, the CDU/CSU views arms control as an uncertain variable, and is particularly uneasy about the possible decoupling effects of many actual or prospective arms control agreements, including SALT I and II and the separate agreement that will bring about the total elimination of intermediate nuclear missiles from Europe.

Internal ideological disputes may affect the priority that parties assign to military defense and détente, or arms control, as well. The Social Democratic Party, for example, has suffered from internal tension between its doctrinaire socialist and reformist social democratic factions. While such ideological disputes are primarily a response to domestic political and social changes, they sometimes have spilled over into security issues. For example, the emergence of the Greens as a national political force in the late 1970s threatened to steal voters away from the SPD's left wing. Internal wrangling over whether to move the party leftward in response to changing social conditions led to the emergence of a counterelite (*Gegenelite*) that challenged Helmut Schmidt's leadership of the party. Eventually, this *Gegenelite* also began to explore alternative security conceptions, such as the "security partnership" with the East, as means of regaining the support of these defectors.

A third, more recent historical experience was the successful *Ostpolitik* in the 1970s. For many West Germans and, above all, for West Berliners, the Soviet-American and inter-German rapprochement of the early 1970s was not merely an ephemeral phase of East-West good feeling, but resulted

in concrete, visible improvements. Few would deny, for example, that the security of West Berlin was well served by the 1971 Quadripartite Agreement. Today, West Germans may disagree about the cost of further improvements in East-West relations, but few would favor a return to the hostile truce of the 1950s and 1960s.

This generally positive assessment of the détente period causes West Germans to view the arms control process more favorably than do most Americans; there was not a widespread sense of disillusionment about the process of détente in Bonn, as in Washington. In fact, both the FDP and the SPD currently proclaim hopes for a new phase of détente. Many, though certainly not all West Germans have come to view arms control as part-and-parcel of détente and support it as such.

Internal Changes

Domestic sociological and political changes may cause shifts in attitudes toward security and arms control. Two recent outgrowths of the INF debates, the "securitization" of West German politics and the revival of the German national question, have fostered a new-found sense of legitimacy for specific "German interests" and may lend security issues a lasting salience on the nation's political agenda.

Following the extensive mobilization of antinuclear groups in the early 1980s, some analysts suggested that security policy-making in the Federal Republic had been "democratized." But the controversy over the NATO dual-track decision, in fact, has not changed the process of arms control decisionmaking in the manner implied. There is little evidence that new channels for popular influence have been opened or new means created to check the predominance of executive agencies. Existing mechanisms for legislative input have not been exploited to their fullest due to persistent constraints on resources and know-how and the inherent limitations of a parliamentary system. Security policy-making, in this sense, has not been "democratized."

The true impact of the INF debates may be the lasting "securitization" of politics in the Federal Republic. Elections may continue to turn on economic issues—growth, unemployment, and tax reform—but security issues have greater saliency than before. Public acceptability has become a more important criterion of arms control decisionmaking. West German leaders have become more attuned to any policy's perceived impact on the overall *process* of arms control, though public understanding of, and