

MASTER'S THESIS

Risky business: difficulties in the American perception of and reaction to Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik, 1969-1971

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Date of Award:
1998

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Risky Business:
Difficulties in the American Perception of and Reaction to
Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, 1969-1971

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Philosophy

December 1998

Hong Kong Baptist University

TH
M. PHIL
1998LR

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the American perception of and response to Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* from late 1969 to 1971. The topic has long been given insufficient attention partly due to the difficulty in accessing the archival materials about the Nixon foreign policy. Moreover, most of the studies which deal with *Ostpolitik* were conducted from the German perspectives, thus downplaying its impact on American-West German relations. This thesis will employ the new materials available in Richard M. Nixon Presidential Materials Project, which is the main collection of Nixon's presidential papers, to offer a new insight on *Ostpolitik* from the American perspective. It will first review the historical context of American-West German relations to see how the framework of "double containment plus," the main feature of post-war American-West German relations up to 1969, affected the American perception of *Ostpolitik*. It will also examine the American perception against the general orientation of the Nixon foreign policy and the contemporary European situation. Then, it will analyze the backgrounds of the executors of *Ostpolitik* to see how they affected their reliability of Brandt's government in the eyes of American leaders. The first phase of *Ostpolitik* consummated in Brandt's Eastern treaties in late 1970, then the Berlin talks began in which Bonn could not actively participate. Since Brandt was pressured into clinging to the claim that his recently concluded treaties with the East could not be put into force before a satisfactory agreement on Berlin, this linkage gave the U.S. a subtle leverage to monitor the tempo of *Ostpolitik*. This thesis will use the first stage of the Berlin talks as a case study to see how *Ostpolitik* created a quandary for American foreign policy and the American efforts to integrate it into its strategy of détente.

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