

Correspondents and the Cold War

How foreign correspondents acted
during the chancellery of Helmut Schmidt
(1974-1982) in Germany and abroad

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eaders as far back as Napoleon knew of the decisive role journalists play in diplomacy and interstate relationships – especially in times of crisis and war – and named the press the “fifth great force” in Europe (Augstein, 2004). Today the mass media are decisive in international relationships, foreign correspondents are part of the infrastructure of transnational public spheres (Wessler & Brüggemann, 2012: 82), and are considered representative of their home country. Especially with the so-called “CNN (Cable News Network) Effect”, global communication became more and more influential in foreign policy in the 1990s (Gilboa, 2000: 276; Gilboa, 2002). But still we know quite little about international diplomacy and the media before CNN.

This paper presents a case study on the role foreign correspondents played in German politics in the 1970s, a period when Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, a man with ample experience in press-related issues, governed the country (1974–1982). He continually authored articles promoting his policies and, after leaving office, became publisher of the influential German weekly *Die Zeit*. His time in office seems to be a very interesting case study through which we can examine the interactions between media and politics on the individual level.

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The paper is part of a larger project investigating Schmidt's relations and interactions with the media. Here, we will deal with concrete examples of how Schmidt communicated with foreign correspondents. The aim is to widen our understanding of the media management important politicians engage in and of the role journalists play in the field of global diplomacy. Foreign correspondents are a "*species incognita*" in international journalism research, communication and media studies (Hahn, Lönnendonker & Schröder, 2008: 11) – all the more striking given that, "[w]hile it seems daunting to analyze a profession so closely linked to the unprecedented changes in modern journalism, foreign correspondents are at the forefront of this evolution and therefore deserve more attention from media scholars and other professional observers" (Willnat & Martin, 2012: 498); especially since this is a global phenomenon (Löffelholz & Weaver, 2008; Reese, 2008; Weaver & Willnat, 2012).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

While within the media, foreign correspondents were the first to be *globalized*, in the field of politics, international diplomacy had been *mediatized* later than other fields, such as election campaigning. The concept of "mediation" or "mediatization" has been established over the last decades (Altheide & Snow, 1979, 1988; Kepplinger, 2002; Couldry, 2008; Krotz, 2007, 2009; Lundby, 2009; Strömbäck, 2008; Strömbäck & Esser, 2009; Livingstone, 2009; Meyen, 2009; Marcinkowski & Steiner, 2014; Marcinkowski, 2014; Birkner, 2015; Birkner & Nölleke, 2015; Hepp, Hjarvard & Lundby, 2010; Hjarvard, 2008, 2013). Couldry and Hepp (2013: 196) differentiate between a social-constructivist and an institutional tradition and argue, that "*they have come closer to each other in recent years.*"

Especially concerning politics, mediatization was often described as an adoption of the political system to the logic of the media system (Mazoleni & Schulz, 1999; Kepplinger, 2002; Altheide, 2013), even understood as hegemony of the media (Martín-Barbero, 1987) or as politics colonialized by the media (Meyer, 2002). That limited the perspectives on the interactions between media and politics.

In this paper, media and politics are conceptualized as two separate but equal systems (Marcinkowski & Steiner, 2014). These systems follow their own logics, but need each other for fulfilling their role in modern societies. Coming from system theory, journalism can be regarded as society's "self-observation system" (Görke & Scholl

2006) while politics has the function of producing "collectively binding decisions" (Marcinkowski & Steiner, 2014: 75). In democracies, the journalists have the role of the mediator (Moraes & Adghirni, 2011) and especially political journalists act as communicators (Reinemann & Baugut, 2014). For a better understanding of the interaction of politics and media a historical perspective is unavoidable (Hepp, 2013). This paper focuses on the 1970s and early 1980s. These were times where above all foreign correspondents were regarded as political actors (Bösch & Geppert, 2008) and can be understood – somehow – as a soft power in international relations. If we are investigating the *Mediatization of Politics in History* (Wijffjes & Voerman, 2009), still the field of international diplomacy is also *terra incognita*. It is quite difficult to peak behind the curtains in diplomacy. Nowadays, media coverage "*of negotiations and summit meetings among leaders [has] transformed traditional, mostly secret, formal, professional diplomacy*" (Gilboa, 2008: 2853). In the time of Schmidt's chancellery the development of international diplomacy shifted from "secret" to "open" (Gilboa, 2000: 282) and therefore this period of time seems to be so interesting when researching foreign correspondents.

MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

This case study is explorative and innovative in character – and maybe a bit offside mainstream communication studies – but we know comparatively little about the concrete communication processes that exist between politicians and correspondents on the micro level of individuals. The aim is to provide some general hints on these interactions in media diplomacy. Of course, case study research (Gerring, 2007; Yin, 2014) has its limitations and this special case does not allow any generalisations. Nonetheless, it provides relevant information about the political communication of one head of government regarding his contacts and communication with journalists, especially foreign correspondents.

This study is part of a larger research project, investigating the interrelations of Helmut Schmidt and the media, supported by the Helmut and Loki Schmidt-Foundation. Thanks to the access to two important archives – the private archives of Helmut Schmidt in his private house in Hamburg (AHS) and the Archiv der sozialen Demokratie (AdsD) of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung of the German Social Democratic Party – it has been possible to determine how interpersonal communication between the head of the German government and some foreign correspondents really worked. Therefore, we combined

document analysis and qualitative interviews with historical analysis in media and communication research (Berger, 2011). Of course, this single-outcome study (Gerring, 2006) of a unique case (Stake, 1995: 1-15) has its limitations and lacks possible generalization but is in itself relevant as it helps to understand how one head of government interacted with the media.

Central to the empirical research presented in this paper is a qualitative analysis of the documents found in the archives (Mason, 2002: 103-119; Mayring, 2002: 46-50), especially letters from journalists written to Helmut Schmidt and his replies. On the basis of these documents, the paper develops a model of possible relations and interactions between politicians and journalists concerning foreign relations. The analysis of the secret and private correspondence of the German Chancellor with journalists in general and especially foreign correspondents, as well as interviews with Schmidt and the former foreign correspondent Gerd Ruge, shed some light on the “social interaction” (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2013) between politicians and journalists and contributes to the research of the interaction of media and politics in the field of foreign diplomacy on the micro level of individual communication.

HELMUT SCHMIDT

Besides a very impressive, two-volume biography by Harmut Soell (2004, 2008), some journalists (Carr, 1985; Schwelien, 2003; Sommer, 2010) contributed to our knowledge about Helmut Schmidt. He was born in the winter of 1918 shortly after World War I ended. One of the few rules he remembers from his parents’ home was that children do not read newspapers (Schmidt, 1992: 193). Concerning his media-biography we can state that he suffered under the propaganda of the Nazis. Shortly after the end of World War II Schmidt started to write in smaller newspapers for the social democrats in his hometown Hamburg. From these experiences in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Schmidt had obtained a quite good understanding of journalistic working routines as well as a keen and growing interest in journalistic expertise (Birkner, 2014). As early as the 1960s, although he was not yet in power in Bonn, Helmut Schmidt began to visit with Joachim Schwelien in Washington, D.C., where Schwelien was a correspondent for the main German TV station, *ARD*, covering American politics (Schwelien, 2003: 61). With his book *Defense or Retaliation* Schmidt (1962) had become known in the United States and had keen interest in American democracy and in political developments abroad.

Schmidt was one of those who criticized the lack of transparency that typified the years immediately following World War II in German politics under governments headed by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer (Birkner, 2013a). Schmidt aimed to promote an open communicative policy in government, with German and foreign journalists alike. When he became the fifth Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1974, his time in office was dominated by the worldwide economic crisis of the 1970s and the fight against far-left terrorism in Germany, which was supported by Palestinian groups. The most important time of terrorist attacks in autumn 1977, the so-called “Deutsche Herbst”, was very intense, also in relations between politics and the press. In this crucial crisis the journalists collaborated with the government, even though the media were not given all the information (Schmidt, in an interview with the author, January 6, 2011). That might be due to the fact that private broadcasting had not yet started in Germany.

Although his strategic communication with the media in times of crisis was successful, Schmidt began to recognize the negative consequences of the mediatization of politics, especially the influences of television on politicians (Birkner, 2013b). In 1978, he had the idea of instituting one TV-free day per week in Germany (Schmidt, 1978). Nevertheless he continued his good personal relations with some journalists. Perhaps not surprisingly, one of the first biographies of Schmidt was written by a foreign correspondent. Jonathan Carr had been in Bonn since 1965 for the *Financial Times* and published in 1985 his book *Helmut Schmidt: Helmsman of Germany* (Carr, 1985). The copy of the book included in Schmidt’s private archive bears a personal signature from Carr, which reads: “*With respect for the past and all best wishes for the future*”.

Schmidt was voted out of office on October 1, 1982. Leaving office was not too difficult, as he was offered the publisher’s position of the influential weekly, *Die Zeit*, published in his hometown where he would be a colleague of his good friend, Marion Gräfin Dönhoff. In our interview, Schmidt stated that he felt lucky and thankful for this opportunity (Schmidt in an interview with the author, January 6, 2011); he has held this position from May 1, 1983 until his death in 2015. Although he largely ignores television, radio and the Internet, he read up to eight newspapers a day, including the *Herald Tribune* and the *Financial Times* (Schmidt in an interview with the author, January 6, 2011). He has always had respect for brilliant thinkers and analysts in the media. When he wrote about journalists in his book *Weggefährten* [*Companions*], he considered in particular James

“Scotty” Reston of the *New York Times* and the well-known author of *Public Opinion*, Walter Lippmann, to be statesmen (Schmidt, 1996: 221).

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS

Foreign news dominated the earliest newspapers in the 17th century and, since the end of the 19th century, it became increasingly common for larger publishing houses to maintain their own networks of correspondents in the economic and political centres of the world: “*American journalists were, in the early decades of this century, the first to interview the pope, the first to interview British cabinet officers, the first to interview German ministers*” (Schudson, 1991: 437; Birkner, 2012a).

As sources of information and means of communication, foreign correspondents exerted a strong influence on the fates of nations and governments. Against the widespread idea that nowadays “foreign correspondents are doomed to disappear” (Archetti, 2013: 847), the importance of foreign reporting in the early 21st century is likely greater than ever (Scherer, Tiele, Haase, Hergenröder, & Schmid, 2006: 201). Regardless some exceptions (Cassara, 2002; Hannerz, 2005; Hohenberg, 1964) we “still know relatively little about” foreign journalists (Willnat & Martin, 2012: 499). There have been interesting investigations, however, in the fields of the profile (Junghanns & Hanitzsch, 2006), the role (Hahn, Lönnendönker, & Schröder, 2008) and the working conditions (Kopper, 2006) of German foreign correspondents and the political dimensions of their work (Hafez, 2002; Domeier & Happel, 2014). Current studies in Germany on foreign correspondents have concentrated on times of extreme crisis, focused on actual problems (Weichert & Kramp, 2011) or sought to deal with historic topics such as the Third Reich (Herzer, 2012; Zacher, 2013).

The new German democratic beginning post 1945 was overshadowed by the Iron Curtain. Foreign correspondents were quite critical in discussing the German government, while in German journalism – as in all relevant parts of contemporary German society – Nazi-era people were still around. That changed with the so called “45ers” (Hodenberg, 2006), a generation of journalists who had had positive experiences with the Allies and were poised to become the first German journalists to really engage in investigative journalism. One such individual was Klaus Bölling, who had worked as an editor for the *Berliner Tagesspiegel*, as head of the ARD-Studio Washington, as chief editor for the public broadcasting station NDR, and as Director of *Radio Bremen*. Both NDR and *Radio Bremen* are

regional broadcasting units of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (ARD). The ARD was built up after World War II as a decentralised version of the British BBC and can be regarded the birthplace of political TV in Germany. Schmidt had always been a man of the printed word but appreciated the information programs provided by the ARD as highly important for the German democracy (Birkner, 2014). Journalists like Bölling and Ruge were part of the program in these years.

When Bölling became the spokesman for the Helmut Schmidt government in 1974, he had his own experiences as a foreign correspondent to draw upon and was very cooperative with the correspondents based in Bonn. For example Moszczanski (1982: 179), in Bonn on behalf of the Polish *Trybuna Ludu*, stated that he often worked with background information from the Bölling office, as did Motokazu Funyu (1982: 199), writing for the Japanese *Yomiuri Shimbun*.

Researchers working in the fields of communication science and journalism in those years noted that foreign correspondents were more than just journalists. They were representatives of their home country (Dovifat & Wilke, 1976: 23-26) and that TV journalists in particular had an outsized impact on the formation of the image of the country they reported from in their home country (Neudeck, 1977: 26-28). In this international context it is important to remember that, within the final act of the *Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, from August 1, 1975 – the so called Helsinki Declaration – the signing states explicitly promised the improvement of working conditions for journalists (Loth, 1998). The Iron Curtain was effectively dividing Germany and the two German states belonged to the two respective systems. Therefore Germany was a special and unique environment for foreign journalists.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Willnat and Martin (2012: 501) have noted that “[n]o systematic surveys of U.S. foreign correspondents were done between 1967 and 1992”. According to Fischer (1982: 35), there were 385 accredited foreign journalists in Bonn and in West Berlin in 1981; 320 of them were organised into the Foreign Press Club in Bonn (Jaura, 1982: 55): “*For diplomats and journalists trying to find out what was really happening in Bonn, or more interestingly what was likely to happen next, the Chancellery became more important than it had been since Adenauer’s time.*” (Carr, 1985: 109)

As Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt had good contacts with foreign correspondents and the German media, especially with the weekly *Die Zeit* in his hometown of Hamburg. In 1975, Theo Sommer, then chief editor of *Die Zeit*, wrote to him to ask if Schmidt had read the *New York Times* article by John Hersey, who had spent a week at the side of President Gerald Ford. Sommer went on to ask whether Schmidt could envision a similar story to appear in *Die Zeit* and to note that he already had the journalist for such a portrait in mind – Nina Grunenberg (letter from Sommer to Schmidt, June 2, 1975, AdsD, 1/HSAA010631). Schmidt replied that the Hersey article was an impressive piece of journalism and agreed to allow Grunenberg to accompany him for a period of four days (letter from Schmidt to Sommer, June 18, 1975, AdsD, 1/HSAA010631). The result was a personal portrait of the Chancellor that was published over a period of four weeks, appearing as four long-form articles in *Die Zeit*. Along with information about the day-to-day work of the German Chancellor, the published article also gave the reader information about how Schmidt talked with foreign correspondent Peter Jenkins, in Bonn writing for *The Guardian*, when he came to interview Schmidt (Grunenberg, 1975).

The same day Sommer wrote the letter in which he asked Schmidt to agree to Grunenberg's piece he wrote a second letter reporting to Schmidt on a conversation he had had with the Soviet ambassador, Valentin Falin, because he felt that the information he got ought to be given directly to Schmidt (letter from Sommer to Schmidt, June 2, 1975, AdsD, 1/HSAA010609). This second letter shows that, on certain occasions, journalists could act as special channels for political communication when other means of communication were perhaps not possible.

These examples demonstrate concrete forms of social interaction that existed between Chancellor Schmidt and journalists in Bonn. Unpublished sources from the Schmidt Archives offer further insight into other forms of communication, especially with German correspondents working in the capitals of the world powers of the time, the United States of America, the USSR, and also China.

The German situation – in central Europe and on the frontline between the two superpowers, the United States of America and the Soviet Union, with their allies organised into NATO and under the Warsaw Pact, respectively – was quite complicated. The Federal Republic of Germany had little room in which to manoeuvre when it came to international relations but, in order to have at least some freedom of action, it was imperative for the governments to

have reliable information. An understanding of the policy of the Soviet Union toward the West and the policy of the United States toward the East was therefore vitally important.

Schmidt was elected Chancellor on May 16, 1974. Only a few days later he received a letter from Gerd Ruge, a new correspondent for the German newspaper *Die Welt*, based in China, about secret talks being held there (letter to Helmut Schmidt, June 26, 1974, AdsD, 1/HSAA010608). Ruge had been the first correspondent for the German public broadcasting union ARD to be stationed in Moscow in the late 1950s. He was in Moscow in 1955 with the first German Chancellor after World War II, Konrad Adenauer and, together with a Russian colleague, had the idea that the two countries should exchange not only diplomats but journalists as well (Ruge, 2008: 303). Hodenberg (2006: 248) refers to him as one of the “45ers”. In the summer of 1956, he began his work on the other side of the Iron Curtain. The working conditions were very difficult and he and his wife suffered under the permanent observation of the Soviet Secret Service (Gerd Ruge in an interview with the author, August 29, 2012).

Ruge was the one who smuggled the first English copies of *Doctor Zhivago* to its author Boris Pasternak in the Soviet Union, where his work was prohibited (Ruge, 2013: 137; e.g. Metger, 2014: 445). In 1959, Ruge was expelled from the USSR and returned to Germany but nearly immediately went to Washington as a correspondent for the ARD. At a certain point in his career he was disappointed by the bureaucratic behaviour of the ARD and at the same time had become very interested in China. He travelled there in 1973 as the Beijing correspondent for the conservative newspaper *Die Welt*. He knew some Chinese diplomats and correspondents through his connections in Bonn. The Chinese were interested in German foreign policy and Ruge became somewhat of an expert for them. His contacts helped him acquire information that other foreign journalists could not access. He remembers that he was sometimes used as a means of communication between German politicians and their Chinese counterparts, a special channel (Gerd Ruge in an interview with the author, August 29, 2012).

From talks held with Schmidt before he became Chancellor, Ruge had gotten the impression that Schmidt was interested in what he had to say (Gerd Ruge in an interview with the author, August 29, 2012). In the concrete case of the aforementioned letter, he had promised not to circulate the information but regarded it as likely being of some great interest for the German Chancellor (letter from Ruge

to Schmidt, June 26, 1974, AdsD, 1/HSAA010608). He remembers a number of cases in which he gave information he had acquired in Beijing to Schmidt (Gerd Ruge in an interview with the author, August 29, 2012).

He continued with this practice upon returning to Moscow in 1977. The circumstances had changed and contacts with scientists from the political institutes were more common. Journalists had been part of the new détente since 1969 (Metger, 2014). Ruge wrote to Schmidt about the current situation (letter from Ruge to Schmidt, October 30, 1977, AHS). What he remembers most strongly about his correspondence with Schmidt was the fact that the Chancellor was not only interested in information but in Ruge's judging of the situation (Ruge in an interview with the author, August 29, 2012). He had been there for only four weeks and provided Schmidt with his first impressions (letter from Ruge to Schmidt, October 30, 1977, AHS).

1977 was the year of the before mentioned terrorist attacks against the West German state, culminating with the hijacking of a German airplane by Palestinian terrorists to Somalia. When German special police forces rescued the hostages in Mogadishu, Schmidt was at that moment one of the most respected politicians across the world for his management of the crisis. The correspondent Ruge wrote that Schmidt's standing in Moscow was also very high, far higher than one might have guessed based only on the Soviet press – and that not only because of his handling of the terrorist threat. Since Jimmy Carter had been elected as President of the United States, relations between the two blocs were becoming increasingly unstable but Schmidt was seen as a guarantor of stability (letter from Ruge to Schmidt, October 30, 1977, AHS). Helmut Schmidt answered very kindly and was thankful for Ruge's description of the situation (letter from Schmidt to Ruge, November 11, 1977, AHS).

Six months later, ahead of a visit to Bonn by Leonid Brezhnev – then General Secretary of the Central Committee (CC) of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) – Ruge again wrote to Schmidt to stress that many of his sources had on several occasions mentioned a meeting in 1973 between Brezhnev and Schmidt, then German Finance Minister. All agreed that Brezhnev was still touched by the emotional exchange of terrible war experiences he and Schmidt had shared (letter from Ruge to Schmidt, April 15, 1978, AHS). In Ruge's original letter, Schmidt marked the respective paragraph with a green pen and the word "agree". Ruge recommended that Schmidt should keep that in mind and that this emotional aspect could play a role

during Brezhnev's visit to Bonn (letter from Ruge to Schmidt, April 15, 1978, AHS). Again it is obvious that Ruge was presenting not only facts but also his evaluation of the situation in Moscow. Schmidt was grateful for the information and for the hints from Ruge (letter from Schmidt to Ruge, April 25, 1978, AHS). He confirmed that he had had a "good personal contact" with Brezhnev in 1973 and agreed that Brezhnev's war experiences were a strong influence on his willingness to seek peace and a détente. The tone between Chancellor Schmidt and the foreign correspondent Ruge was professional yet friendly, not too close but not overly distant.

Reliable information from correspondents about the often completely inaccessible Communist states of China and the Soviet Union was indispensable for Schmidt – and so were reliable information from and about the foreign policy of the USA. With the change in the United States' administration from Gerald Ford to Jimmy Carter, who took office on January 20, 1977, the policy toward the Soviet Union changed as well. Schmidt (1987: 222-229) was quite sceptical from the beginning about Carter as politician. In *Newsweek* (October 18, 1976), he was quoted during the election campaign in America as saying that he had "great personal feeling" for Ford but could say nothing – "neither positive nor negative" – about Carter.

In this situation Schmidt's open talks with foreign journalists in Bonn very nearly morphed into a disaster. One evening after Carter's inauguration, Schmidt was chatting with *New York Times* journalists Craig R. Whitney and Leonard Silk in a restaurant in Bonn (Wiegrefe, 2005: 90); the following day, Silk (1977: 2) wrote in the *New York Times* that Schmidt considered Carter's speech as eloquent but "lacking in clear direction". Whitney (1977), meanwhile, repeated that Schmidt had hoped to see Ford re-elected. The damage was done and Schmidt received a letter from the *New York Times*, which read in part as follows: "Nothing could have been further from my mind than to provoke an artificial crisis between the West German Government and the new American Administration" (letter from Whitney to Schmidt, January 25, 1977, AHS).

Schmidt needed to know how much damage had actually been done and he turned for that information to journalists and friends who were then travelling the United States. One of his closest friends was the publisher of *Die Zeit*, Marion Gräfin Dönhoff. They had known each other for a long time and had exchanged innumerable letters, many of them handwritten and full of personal statements and observations about politics. On this occasion, she wrote him some "keywords" after delivering talks at Harvard

University, in New York and in Washington, D.C. in February 1977, describing her impressions of the great deal of activity and confusion that typified Washington at the time. She had also had the opportunity to speak with Zbigniew Brzezinski, then Security Advisor to President Carter, who cited Carter as saying the following in regards to Schmidt: “*I like this guy. I think we will fight together, but I will get along well with him*”.

She asked whether she would be allowed to pass this quote along to Schmidt and Brzezinski agreed, adding that the things Schmidt had said during the election campaign had genuinely offended Carter (letter from Dönhoff to Schmidt, March 4, 1977, AHS). Here Dönhoff worked as a special communication channel engaged in the practicing of diplomacy between Washington and Bonn. On this occasion, Dönhoff wrote to Schmidt’s private address and not to his office in Bonn. The tone of the letters is very personal, as it was in most of the letters the two exchanged, for instance having been written “*from Marion*” and “*to Helmut*”.

The next letter from her was addressed to the office of the German Chancellor in Bonn. The issue was still her US tour and she reported on the “new spirits and the old values” that had the Germans so sceptical (letter from Dönhoff to Schmidt, May 11, 1977, AHS). Dönhoff attached a letter from George Kennan of Princeton University, whose expertise Schmidt was interested in. In his response, Schmidt expressed his thanks not only for the letter from Kennan and the information given by Dönhoff but also for her engagement in explaining German policy to important American thinkers on the East Coast (letter from Schmidt to Dönhoff, July 7, 1977, AHS). She was, in short, acting as a diplomat. Perhaps the things Kennan wrote about the “reduction of armaments” and “reciprocal measures” (letter from Kennan to Dönhoff, April 24, 1977, AHS) might have inspired Schmidt to deliver his so-called “London speech” in late 1977, the same speech in which he introduced his thoughts about the future of NATO’s defence strategy in Europe. Marion Gräfin Dönhoff played a decisive role later in 1982 and into 1983, when Schmidt changed sides and went from politics to journalism. For him, of course, it was the same side. In our interview, he stated that his work as a publisher has always been political in nature (Schmidt in an interview with the author, January 6, 2011).

Another friend of Schmidt’s was journalist Conrad Ahlers, who also wrote about his impressions following a trip to the United States. Schmidt knew Ahlers from their time spent studying at Hamburg University after World War II.

They both had survived prosecution by the state in the so called *Spiegel* Affair in the 1960s (Birkner, 2012b). Ahlers had been the spokesman of Schmidt’s predecessor Willy Brandt and in 1977 was working for the *Hamburger Morgenpost*, a Hamburg newspaper broadly aligned with the Social Democrats, while simultaneously serving as a member of the German parliament. In April 1977, he wrote to Schmidt in a very friendly tone but one that seemed entitled in a most unconventional way (Dear Mr. Chancellor), to say that everyone he had spoken with in Washington was sure that Carter desired good relations with Schmidt and Germany (letter from Ahlers to Schmidt, April 28, 1977, AHS).

In his similarly friendly answer, Schmidt agreed with Ahlers’ assessment that German-American relations were in good shape and that – despite some worries in the media – his first bilateral meeting with Carter had been very positive (letter from Schmidt to Ahlers, May 5, 1977, AHS). We can see from the letters journalists wrote to Schmidt that also in German-American relations journalists played an important role.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The interactions between politics and media work as interrelations between different social systems within our societies. In the time period under research in this study, we cannot identify any predominance of one system over the other. On the micro level of the individual, the interrelations between politicians and journalists are institutionalised in modern democracies: “*Politicians need the news media to get their message across and to reach out to voters and colleagues. The political journalist needs to know what is going on in the world of politics, needs this information fast, and prefers to have it first-hand*” (Van Dalen & Van Aelst, 2012: 514-515).

The letter as “classical” medium of interpersonal communication played a decisive role in the processes of “social interaction” between politicians and journalists. Therefore, we can conclude that in the period of time investigated here, the media, journalists and especially foreign correspondents have played decisive roles in the foreign policies of the German Chancellor. In office, however, Schmidt was aware of negative influences of television and fought against the implementation of private TV. And shortly after leaving office, Schmidt criticized the mediatization of diplomacy – for example when he stated in *Newsweek*, (May 30, 1983: 68) about the ninth G7 summit in Williamsburg (USA): “*The*

press has taken over. Three thousand journalists, it's ridiculous. This almost inevitably forces world leaders to talk to the press. They will not address their counterparts on the other side of the table. I would exclude the press. The summits have become media festivals."

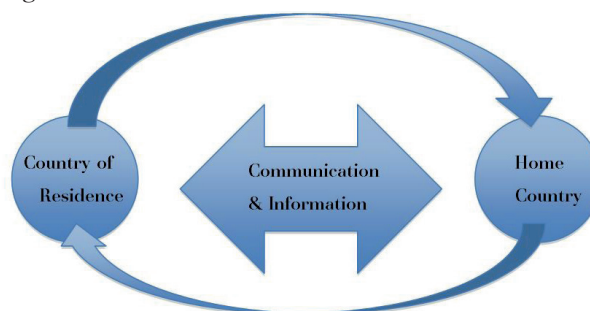
Schmidt already anticipated the upcoming "teledemocracy" (Gilboa, 2000: 276), although the "CNN Effect" came up later in Germany. He knew how to use the media for political purposes but considered that certain aspects of political work should remain free from permanent media coverage.

A statesman such as Schmidt, one experienced in journalism, and acknowledged the role of the media in modern society. Long-term studies on the mediatization of politics have not indicated any negative effects concerning Schmidt's term in office (Kepplinger, 2002; Reinemann & Wilke, 2007). He used his contacts outside of the traditional diplomatic channels to acquire information he could hardly have otherwise obtained. We can state, however, that media diplomacy (Cohen, 1986; Gilboa, 2008) can trace its beginnings as far back as the 1980s.

In most cases, the head of the German government not only received information but also interpretation and assessment. That corresponds with the research findings of Willnat and Weaver (2003; Willnat & Martin, 2012). Working out from the concrete case of Schmidt, a model for the different methods and forms of communication that exist between single persons in politics on the one hand and foreign correspondents on the other can be presented as a result of this analysis (see Figure 1):

- Correspondents of the home country act as sources of information while working in their respective country of residence;
- Correspondents of the home country act as a means of communication with the government, journalists or intellectuals in their respective country of residence;
- Correspondents of foreign media in the country act as sources of information about their home country; and
- Correspondents of foreign media in the country act as a means of communication with the government, journalists or intellectuals in their respective country of residence.

Figure 1



Of course, additional research is still needed, as "[o]verall, the number of studies on foreign journalists is surprisingly small and indicates a gap in the academic literature on professional journalism" (Willnat & Martin 2012: 504).

Kepplinger (2007: 20) stated: "From an academic point of view, it is clearly better to get some information, however small, rather than not at all." This study tries to contribute to a better understanding of the complex process of interpersonal communication between politics and media and represents only a starting point for further research. In addition to this case study on the fifth German Chancellor, other heads of states of other countries and in other epochs should be investigated to provide a more complete picture of the important role of foreign correspondents in international politics, comparing the differences and similarities grounded in various media systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Brüggemann, Engesser, Büchel, Humprecht, & Castro, 2014).

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En This paper addresses the role of foreign correspondents during the Cold War. More specifically, it focuses on the case study of the relationship between former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and foreign correspondents in Germany and abroad. A synthesis of historical research and qualitative analysis of documents and interviews provides a behind-the-scenes look at media diplomacy during the 70s and early 80s. From the perspective of system theory and the concept of mediatization, media and politics are understood as separate but equal social systems that interact with each other. This case study is based on documents from the private archives of Helmut Schmidt and from the annals of his party, the German Social Democrats, as well as interviews conducted with Schmidt and former journalist and correspondent Gerd Ruge. Analysis of the interviews and the private and secret correspondence of Schmidt with journalists affords an inside view into the role foreign correspondents played during the Cold War when communication across the Iron Curtain was especially challenging. Our conclusions show how important foreign correspondents are in international relations, while also demonstrating that aspects of international diplomacy, though involving journalists, were not necessarily included in media coverage. This study helps to clarify the complex interactions between media and politics. On the basis of our explorative research, a model is proffered of possible relations and interactions between politicians and foreign correspondents. As sources of information and means of communication, foreign correspondents exert a strong influence on the fates of nations and governments, before and behind the scenes.

Keywords: foreign correspondents, media diplomacy, journalism research, political communication, head of government

Pt Esta proposta aborda o papel dos correspondentes estrangeiros durante a Guerra Fria. Mais especificamente, centra-se no estudo de caso da relação entre o ex-chanceler alemão Helmut Schmidt e os correspondentes estrangeiros na Alemanha e no exterior. A síntese da pesquisa histórica e da análise qualitativa de documentos e entrevistas permite um olhar nos bastidores da diplomacia da mídia durante a década de 1970 e início de 1980. Do ponto de vista da teoria dos sistemas e do conceito de mediatização, mídia e política são entendidos como espaços separados, mas se constituem em sistemas sociais equivalentes e que interagem um com o outro. Este estudo de caso é baseado em documentos dos arquivos privados de Helmut Schmidt e dos anais do seu partido, o Social-Democrata alemão, bem como entrevistas realizadas com Schmidt e com o ex-jornalista e correspondente Gerd Ruge. A análise das entrevistas e da correspondência privada e secreta de Schmidt com os jornalistas proporciona uma visão interna sobre o papel desempenhado pelos correspondentes estrangeiros durante a Guerra Fria, quando a comunicação através da Cortina de Ferro foi especialmente desafiadora. Nossas conclusões mostram a importância dos os correspondentes estrangeiros nas relações internacionais, ao mesmo tempo, demonstrando que os aspectos da diplomacia internacional, mesmo quando envolviam jornalistas, não foram necessariamente incluídos na cobertura da mídia. Este estudo ajuda a esclarecer as complexas interações entre mídia e política. Com base na nossa pesquisa exploratória, apresentamos m modelo sobre as relações e interações possíveis entre os políticos e os correspondentes estrangeiros. Como fontes de informação e meios de comunicação, os correspondentes estrangeiros exercem uma forte influência nos destinos de nações e governos, atuando tanto na cena principal como nos bastidores.

Palavras-chave: correspondentes estrangeiros, diplomacia da mídia, pesquisa em jornalismo, comunicação política, chefe de governo.

Fr. Cet article aborde le rôle des correspondants à l'étranger pendant la guerre froide et s'attache plus précisément, dans le cadre d'une étude de cas, à examiner les rapports entre l'ancien chancelier allemand Helmut Schmidt et les correspondants en Allemagne et à l'étranger. La recherche historique, alliée à l'analyse qualitative de documents et d'entrevues, permet de jeter un regard dans les coulisses de la diplomatie médiatique des années 1970 et du début des années 1980. Du point de vue de la théorie systémique et du concept de médiatisation, les médias et la politique sont considérés comme des systèmes sociaux distincts mais d'importance équivalente qui interagissent l'un avec l'autre. Cette étude de cas s'appuie sur des documents extraits des archives privées de Helmut Schmidt et des archives de son parti, les sociaux-démocrates allemands, ainsi que sur des entrevues menées avec Schmidt et l'ancien journaliste et correspondant à l'étranger Gerd Ruge. L'analyse des entretiens et de la correspondance privée et confidentielle de Schmidt avec des journalistes offre un aperçu, depuis l'intérieur, du rôle qu'occupaient les correspondants à l'étranger pendant la guerre froide, lorsque le rideau de fer rendait la communication particulièrement délicate. Nos conclusions font d'une part la lumière sur l'importance des correspondants à l'étranger dans le cadre des relations internationales et montrent d'autre part que certains aspects de la diplomatie internationale, bien qu'impliquant des journalistes, n'étaient pas nécessairement intégrés dans la couverture médiatique. Cet article offre ainsi des outils permettant de mieux comprendre les rapports complexes entre médias et politique. Nos recherches exploratoires servent de base au développement d'un modèle de relations et d'interactions possibles entre représentants politiques et correspondants à l'étranger. En leur qualité de sources d'informations et moyens de communication, les correspondants à l'étranger exerçaient une forte influence sur le sort des nations et des gouvernements, aussi bien sur le devant de la scène qu'en coulisses.

Mots-clés : correspondants à l'étranger, diplomatie médiatique, recherche journalistique, communication politique, chef de gouvernement

