Special Issue

FROM THE BONN TO THE BERLIN REPUBLIC: THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GERMAN UNIFICATION

Introduction

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Continuity through Change

'Tis the season of anniversaries in Germany. 2009 unfolded like a hit parade of history. March ushered in the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the Federal Republic and May witnessed the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Berlin Blockade. After a summer lull, the seventieth anniversary of Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland fell on 1 September and in October, the twentieth anniversary of the first Monday demonstration in Leipzig took place. Finally, the month of November offered up a major date—the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall—and a lesser one, suited more for the political connoisseur: the fortieth anniversary of the Social Democratic Party's (SPD) ratification of the Godesberger Program. 2010, of course, culminates in October with the twentieth anniversary of unification.

This string of national anniversaries is intertwined with a broader fabric of European remembrance. In 2008, Germans and their neighbors celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome, which launched the comprehensive European integration project that has culminated in the European Union. And just over a year from now, in 2011, Europe and the rest of the world will observe the twentieth anniversary of the collapse of the Soviet Union, which marked the formal begin-

ning of the post Cold War era, a period that is still taking shape. Both of these developments—the quest for European unity and the broader East-West conflict—have been central components of the narrative of recent German political development. Taken together, this list of anniversaries reads like an out-of-sequence capsule of modern Germany history—the plunge into the abyss of world war; the slow path to redemption through democracy; the hardening of the Cold War and the division of Germany; the embrace of a great political consensus around the social market economy; the yearning for change in the other part of Germany; the beginning of the end of division.

An anniversary can be a time of celebration, an occasion to tally up accomplishments and successes. Yet, it can also be a wistful time, laced with nostalgia and disappointment over opportunities lost and roads not taken. Whatever the dominant mood, an anniversary is a time for remembering, for searching one's personal and collective memories, and for thinking about how the past informs the present and future. Twenty years ago, Germans were in a reflective frame of mind, having just observed the fortieth anniversary of the inauguration of their postwar democracy. In the days and weeks following the breaching of the Berlin Wall, many Germans (and not a few of their neighbors) drew on memories to predict a weakening of democracy at home, and an eventual parting of ways for Germany and its European neighbors. These critics feared that unified Germany's political future would be patterned on its dismal prewar past. Their pessimism looked on four decades of peace and prosperity in West Germany—just months earlier, the Federal Republic had celebrated the fortieth anniversary of its founding—as an interlude of sorts, one whose end would see the country gravitate back toward an aggressive, unattached, and “realist” foreign policy. Germany would soon seek to hoist its western anchor, and chart its own way in Mitteleuropa; some pundits even forecasted a drive for nuclear weapons. Suffice it to say that the intervening twenty years revealed that the power of these historical memories and prognoses based on them have waned considerably.

In 1989, there were many who maintained that a more contemporary set of historical memories, drawing on the Bonn Republic's formula of stable democracy, social market economy, and membership in Western European and transatlantic networks, would have a tonic effect on a unified Germany. The strongest and most self-confident of these arguments were directed at the domestic formula for unification. Any notion of a “third way,” entailing a search for a blend of the best that both Germanys had to offer, was soon swept aside in favor of a wholesale transfer of west-

ern law and institutions to the east. This process was both comprehensive and rapid, and sprang from a firm belief on the part of West German elites and mass public that their system had proven itself over the past four decades and was capable of quickly stabilizing the east

When it came to foreign policy, however, the self-confidence of the west still shone through, but it took on more nuanced ones. The older pre-war memories still mattered, but benignly—in effect, leavened by forty years of democracy, capitalism, and western integration. Countering the dour outlook described above, these analysts predicted a continuation of two trademark characteristics of West German foreign policy that flowed from memories of world war, the attendant crimes against humanity, and the punishing aftermath of total defeat: a reflexive multilateralism (or, put another way, a distaste for unilateral initiatives); and an innate willingness to pool national sovereignty to further the European integration project.

In retrospect, one might venture that history has been kinder to the positive prognosticators. Democracy in a unified Germany is still functioning, perhaps not better, but certainly no worse than it did prior to the fall of the Wall. Internationally, Germany has been content to continue swimming in the European sovereignty pool—indeed, more so, given the decisions in the early 1990s to commit to monetary union and to push for intensified political integration. As such, indeed almost by definition, the vast majority of its foreign policy actions have been multilateral—that is, defined and embraced by the joint decision-making processes that the European Union utilizes. Few if any of its policy positions in Europe have altered to any appreciable extent as a result of its larger territory and population, or the new interests and actors residing in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) that came on board with unification. Although unified Germany is a changed country, it is the same country in the end.

Nevertheless, although this is a large part of the story, it is clearly not the whole story. For one, the political landscape in Germany bears the obvious marks of unification. Intergovernmental relations are now more complex and involved with the addition of five eastern *Länder* and a fully entitled (in a constitutional-administrative sense) Berlin. The party system has expanded to include a new grouping—the Left Party (*die Linke*, previously the Party of Democratic Socialism)—that can trace at least some of its roots back to the former communist party in the GDR, and which draws considerable support in eastern Germany (about 25 percent in the 2009 Bundestag election). The “Germany in Europe” we observe today, twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, does not appear to be simply an older and larger version of the Bonn Republic. Germany cuts a different figure in

Europe than it did twenty years ago, having grown more assertive and self-confident, and at the same time far less idealistic. We are fast approaching the tenth anniversary of the last time (2000) a heavyweight German politician (Joschka Fischer) called for a “United States of Europe.” German enthusiasm for enlargement has cooled considerably, as sticker shock over the recent expansions to the east and the specter of Turkish accession to the EU have settled firmly in the minds of many politicians and an even higher proportion of the citizenry. The Federal Republic, which previously could be counted on among the larger member states reliably to push hard for widening and deepening, has adopted a much more cautious and self-regarding stance. Support for the first embattled and then ratified Lisbon Treaty has been tempered by an understanding among elites that the limits of what the public will tolerate from the European Union may well have been reached already, a conclusion that is underscored by the recent ruling on the Lisbon Treaty by the Federal Constitutional Court. One gets the feeling that, with a small number of necessary additions to the European space—specifically, the Balkans—and necessary institutional fixes—i.e., Lisbon—the *finalité politique* or *Endstation* sought by the Germans is actually quite near.

This new mindset has begun to inform Germany’s dealings with the world outside of Europe as well. In fact, it is interesting that the two of the most prominent episodes in recent years where this new stance has been on display have involved relations with the United States. In 2003, the joint efforts of Germany and France to carve out a principled position to counter the U.S. drive to carry its global war on terrorism into Iraq can be interpreted as an early, and only partially successful, attempt to preserve a distinctive European position on international security affairs, one emphasizing diplomacy and restraint. More recently, Germany has emerged as chief spokesperson for a cautious and prudent approach to the global financial crisis, resisting American overtures to engage in additional stimulus spending and emphasizing the need to regulate the market excesses that sparked the crisis.

The Twentieth Anniversary Special Issues

The goal of this *German Politics and Society* initiative, which takes the form of two consecutive special issues of the journal, is straightforward: to present a comprehensive portrait of German politics and society two decades after unification. As such, the twentieth anniversary of German unification

is an occasion for stocktaking, and the ostensible common starting point—divided Germany circa 1990—suggests and obvious reference point for comparative statics. That said, unification is not necessarily a rigid frame or template for understanding each particular issue at hand. In other words, we asked our contributors to delve into their topics with open minds, allowing for the real possibility that whether they uncovered startling change, striking continuity, or something in between, unification—conceived as an historical event launching a process—was simply not a relevant theme in that particular area of inquiry.

Each issue begins with an essay by a prominent historian. The Winter 2009 issue opens with a *tour d'horizon* by Konrad Jarausch, who evaluates the two-decades-old Berlin Republic through the lenses of the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the Bonn Republic. Jarausch concludes that at sixty, the Federal Republic has entered a comfortable middle age, having shed some of the drama of its younger years and now exuding a kind of competent normalcy. Problems and challenges abound, some of them connected to unification, but these are not unique to Germany—the much-discussed *Sonderweg*, he maintains, has finally come to an end. Charles Maier launches the Spring 2010 issue with an essay on the historiography of the Bonn-to-Berlin Republic at twenty, with a focus on the ironies of the Angst and collective doubt that permeates much of the scholarship on contemporary German affairs, regardless of academic discipline. These opening arguments are not meant to serve as overarching frameworks for the essays that follow; rather, they challenge the reader from the start to consider alternative and, at times, competing historical narratives of the postwar, post-Wall, and postunification Germany(s).

We begin sketching our portrait of united Germany at twenty in the overlapping realms of culture and society. A. James McAdams, in “The Last East German and the Memory of the GDR,” imagines what it would be like to meet the last defender of the *ancien* and now long defunct regime. How might this fictional character seek to portray the virtues and strengths of East Germany? Would there be any merit to this hypothetical testimonial, and if so, how might it inform the current leadership of unified Germany? Eric Langenbacher also takes up the theme of memory in “The Mastered Past? Collective Memory Trends in Germany since Unification.” He examines three at times intersecting vectors of collective memory in Germany over the past two decades: the Holocaust, German suffering, and division. Langenbacher demonstrates that although the last twenty years saw a profusion of “memory work,” the wave probably has crested, meaning that Germany (and Germans) will be much less beholden

to pasts that refuse to pass. The final contribution in the vein of memory and discourse—"Obamamania and Anti-Americanism As Complementary Concepts in Contemporary German Discourse," by Ruth Hatlapa and Andrei S. Markovits—examines long-standing continuities in German identity with reference to a significant "other:" the United States of America. In contrast to other aspects of German memory politics, this is a value dimension that has escaped the trials and tribulations unleashed by unification relatively unscathed.

The remaining essays in the first special issue cover a range of important themes and topics in contemporary German culture and society. Brad Prager, in "Passing Time since the *Wende*: Recent German Film on Unification," surveys German depictions of unification in film, with special emphasis on "cinematic time"—the way films have represented the difference between the passage of historical time and its subjective experience. Dagmar Herzog's essay, "*Post coitum triste est...*? Sexual Politics and Cultures in Postunification Germany," examines the initial clash between, and later convergence of, the sexual cultures of East and West Germans after unification, as well as the links between these discourses and debates on the one hand, and government public policies (e.g., age of consent laws, access to abortion, disability rights, etc.), on the other.

Herzog's analysis is followed by two essays that take up the question of citizenship and identity in postunification Germany. Joyce Mushaben, in "From *Ausländer* to *Inlander*: The Changing Faces of Citizenship in Post-Wall Germany," tracks the fate and fortunes of foreigners and children of migrant descent under the Merkel government's new proactive measures to foster their education and integration. Mushaben argues that these new programs, paradoxically, have given the center-Right in Germany the opportunity to modernize its own identity. Complementing this essay, Hilary Silver takes up the question of national integration in postunification Germany in "The Social Integration of Germany since Unification." Arriving at a more measured, and perhaps less hopeful conclusion than Mushaben, Silver notes the persistence of social cleavages in unified Germany, and the higher degree of fragmentation in society.

Next, Myra Marx Ferree explores gender politics in the Berlin Republic, tracing four contested identity claims that inject gender meanings into politics: the cultural definition of the German nation in the face of immigration; the integration of the German state into the European project; the economic restructuring of unification and its impact on life chances and opportunities on either side of the former wall; and changes in the political representation of women in state offices and political parties. She out-

lines the continuities and changes in these four dimensions over the past twenty years, and shows how singly and in combination they engage passionate feelings about gender relations, and carry important implications for the lives of ordinary women and men in the new Berlin Republic. Finally, Helga Welsh takes us on a tour of the German higher education system since unification. After the practice of wholesale West-to-East institutional transfer had begun to reach its natural limits in the mid 1990s, the federal government launched new higher education policies for unified Germany that in many ways have transformed the landscape for students, faculty, and administrators. Welsh argues that autonomy, competition, differentiation, performance, and Europeanization have become the building blocks of a new model of higher education in Germany, but their implementation is as yet incomplete, at times stymied by entrenched interests, existing institutions, and old modes of thinking. The old East-West divide in higher education has faded, but the system remains a long way from an all-German, uniform model.

The second installment of this special issue focuses on politics and economics. Although it is perhaps risky to draw firm conclusions, the picture that emerges from this set of contributions reveals starker discontinuities in comparison to the analyses of culture and memory from the first issue. My overview of two decades of politics in unified Germany and Russ Dalton and Will Jou's careful analysis of the contemporary party system dovetail in demonstrating that unification has left a permanent mark on the body politic, in terms of interests, actors, and issues, if not institutions *per se*. The impact of unification is even more visible in the political economy. Articles by Holger Wolf and Stephen Silvia reveal the startling extent to which the original gap between the West and East German economies has persisted over the past twenty years, in spite of the billions of Deutsche Marks and then billions of EUROS that have been transferred from west to east. Anke Hassel examines the labor market, and Richard Deeg shines a light on developments in finance and industry since unification. Both find important changes underway that significantly alter the relationships within and between these two pillars of the German economy. These changes, while not attributable to the dynamics unleashed by unification specifically, nevertheless represent a major and ongoing transformation of the traditional German model of political economy. Finally, Christopher Allen examines the debate about the decline of *Modell Deutschland* since 1990, and in the end challenges the conventional wisdom that the model's best days are behind it, eclipsed by liberal market principles. He asks whether the recent financial and economic crisis, which has exposed the

flaws and limitations of neoliberalism, might not present an opportunity to recreate a form of coordinated market approach that characterized Modell Deutschland in its heyday.

Beverly Crawford and Abraham Newman close out the overview of politics and economics with contrasting takes on unified Germany's foreign policy. Although the two authors agree that the country's approach to external relations today is quite different from its preunification incarnation, they disagree over the nature and implications of the changes. Crawford sees a great deal of continuity in Berlin's foreign policy; she argues that while the original aims of cooperative security and multilateralism guiding German policy were shaped by division, they have shown remarkable resilience, even as Germany has regained sovereignty, unity, and power. Unified Germany is more powerful, but still maintains a foreign policy vision that downplays the role of power. Crawford concludes that this paradoxical combination of power and vision in postunification German foreign policy has introduced a new and effective form of "normative power" in global politics. Newman, by contrast, maintains that—in Crawford's lexicon—both power and vision in German foreign policy have changed with unification. Newman argues that since the end of the Cold War, German leaders have acted in ways that suggest that the role of identity in shaping their approach to Europe and to global politics in general has weakened. He goes on to argue that rather than a shift to national self-interest, the postunification period has ushered in, and elevated, a set of beliefs in foreign policymaking circles associated with risk avoidance.

The special issue concludes with a summary essay by Eric Langenbacher, the co-editor of these special issues. Noting that the default setting for contemporary German studies seems to be harsh criticism and deep skepticism, he counters that the twentieth anniversary of unification should also be a time for calm reflection on the real accomplishments in and of contemporary Germany. Despite the many problems and many challenges that confront Germany in 2010, there is much for Germans to be proud of, and much for the rest of the world to admire and to applaud—no more, but certainly no less than peer democracies in Europe and around the world. Langenbacher takes the reader full circle to the opening essay of this special issue project—Konrad Jarausch's conclusion that Germany has left the *Sonderweg*, and finds itself in a state of competent normalcy. Even the daunting challenges that the country undoubtedly faces—a looming demographic crisis, high levels of debt, structural reforms to the economy—are unexceptional in the European or Western context.

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Anniversaries are occasions for gift-giving, and so Eric Langenbacher and I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to those who gave liberally of their time and creative energies in order to bring this initiative to a successful conclusion. First, we would like to thank our contributors, many of whom came together at Georgetown University in May 2009 to present works-in-progress and to share ideas about how the essays might be improved and extended. The May workshop would not have been possible without the care and attention of Katherine Carta, Stacey Hall, and Christina Ruby of the BMW Center for German and European Studies. We also thank Vivian Berghahn and Martha Hoffman for their expert advice and guidance in the publishing phase of the process. Finally, we would like to thank each other for establishing an editorial partnership and intellectual exchange that made this venture truly enjoyable from the start.