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The collapse of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 and the breakup of the Soviet Union two years later represented such a pronounced turning point in the history of the twentieth century that many spoke of the end of an era. The British historian Eric J. Hobsbawm paid proper homage to the significance of these events when he christened the twentieth century the “short century” and limited it to the years 1914 to 1991.¹ The watershed years from 1989 to 1991 saw not only the downfall of Communism as an alternative system of rule in Europe, but also the end of the Cold War, which had split Germany, Europe, and, indeed, the whole world into enemy camps shortly after the Second World War. The events of these years reverberated throughout the rest of the world as well: democratic liberation movements were given new impetuses, and, in terms of significance, some observers put the upheavals of 1989 on a par with the French Revolution, which had taken place exactly two centuries earlier. There was talk of the “era of democracy” and of the end of history as shaped by competing ideologies. The triumphal procession of liberal democracy had supposedly gotten under way.²

But the euphoria was short-lived. Without the balancing force of the Cold War, the international system began to totter, and existing hostilities were joined by new armed conflicts from Yugoslavia to Zaire. International terrorism assumed new forms, and some societies crumbled under the challenges of democratization. What had been established in previous decades as “the West” – including its systems of alliances, NATO and the European Union (EU) – had (and still has) to adapt to these new conditions, a process not without difficulties.³ When it came time to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the events of 1989, hardly anyone was still thinking about the peaceful revolutions that had thrilled the world a decade earlier; but their historical significance remains nonetheless.⁴

As a central power in the heart of Europe, Germany played a key role in this so-called short century. In the first half of the twentieth century, when radical systemic changes – from the Kaiserreich to the Weimar Republic, and finally, to the Third Reich – were determining factors

on the national level, Germany branded itself internationally through expansionist wars and the systematic mass murder of millions of people. In the second half of the twentieth century, Germany was the place where the Cold War began and ended; it was a place that occupied a special position on the frontline between two competing ideological systems. The division of Germany into separate states was symbolic of this larger divide. The implosion of the Communist system of rule in Central and Eastern Europe allowed Germany to reconstitute itself as a single nation-state within universally accepted postwar borders – an event that many had already written off as a pipe dream. At the same time, the historical watershed of 1989-1991 also entailed new adjustments in international politics.

Initially, the unification of Germany in October 1990 generated a variety of contradictory responses and expectations. For some, it conjured up old fears of German “special paths” [*Sonderwege*] and of renewed German dominance in Europe. Others, however, saw it as a chance for Germany to be recognized in the international community as a “normal” state like any other. As a result, the whole world was interested in seeing how Germany would develop. At first, however, the country was preoccupied with the challenges of unification. The transfer of the Federal Republic's political, economic, and social systems onto the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) proved longer and more difficult than expected and revealed points of mental and cultural friction between East and West. The economic challenges of unification delayed the introduction of economic and social reforms that had been called for in West Germany since the 1980s but repeatedly put off, making them all the more urgent and difficult to implement.⁵

This concluding volume of *German History in Documents and Images* will look at Germany's development since 1989. Many of the challenges confronting Germany affect other postindustrial nations as well. How can one respond to the risks of modern societies and the pressures of globalization? How can the welfare state be reformed without polarizing society and provoking conflicts over the distribution of wealth? What can be done to advance the cause of European integration, and what role does Europe play in the hierarchy of world powers?⁶

For Germany, the years since 1990 have been of particular importance, since various political developments have called into question the customary balance between continuity and constant but generally measured change. It was not only the discrepancy between expectations and the reality of unification that led to disappointment. Globalization and Europeanization also imposed

their share of rapid changes, which left many politicians and citizens overburdened, since they had anticipated neither the extent of these changes nor the responses demanded by them: namely, new approaches to problem-solving and new patterns of thought and behavior. At the same time, the years since 1990 have also seen the gradual broadening of Germany's international status and scope of responsibilities. The country's development into a middle power – one whose interests are no longer focused exclusively on Europe but instead defined increasingly globally – proceeded on the basis of a broad political consensus. The unity in international politics stood in stark contrast to the divisiveness that characterized domestic politics.

The Bonn Republic (1949-1990) was gradually superseded by the Berlin Republic. The term “Berlin Republic” emerged in conjunction with the debate over Germany's capital and initially expressed some Germans’ fears that moving the seat of government from Bonn to Berlin might also signal a turning away from the post-nationalist orientation of the “successful democracy” [*geglückte Demokratie*] of the “old” Federal Republic.⁷ Now the term is used mostly to emphasize the fact that unification (and the government's move to Berlin) represented a turning point in the history of the Federal Republic.

This introduction will present the most important topics of discussion of the past years, arranged thematically.⁸ Together with the documents, this text aims to give the reader insight into the major trends in Germany's domestic, foreign, economic, and social policies, and to convey their sometimes controversial nature. Debates about the success or failure of unification, the causes, responses, and effects of political and economic reforms, or the role of the Federal Republic on the world stage are often very pointed, since individuals are affected in a manner that is both personal and immediate, but also because the assessment of contemporary events necessarily neglects long-term perspectives. This introduction and document collection emphasize both the significance of German unification and the transitional character of the past two decades.

1. From Separation to Unity

Encouraged by liberal reforms introduced by the Communist governments of the Soviet Union, Poland, and Hungary, GDR citizens hoped for political concessions from their own government. When these concessions failed to materialize – and when, instead, the GDR government stubbornly insisted on the correctness of its authoritarian path – citizens decided to take action.

In the fall and winter of 1989-90, they left the GDR in droves, fleeing by way of neighboring Communist countries. This mass exodus was followed by demonstrations in GDR cities, where citizens demanded long hoped-for political concessions, including the dissolution of the old-guard Communist leadership around Erich Honecker. In quick succession, civic protests compelled the government to open the Berlin Wall, negotiate with oppositional forces at the so-called Round Table, and allow the formation of new parties.

The call for political participation inherent in the slogan “We are the people” [“Wir sind das Volk”] quickly developed into a demand for German unification under a new motto: “We are one people” [“Wir sind ein Volk”]. The success of the “Alliance for Germany” in the first democratic elections in March 1990 and the ongoing flood of GDR citizens into the Federal Republic strengthened support for a swift merger of the two German states. Thus, any notion of a “third way” – i.e., reforming the GDR – was firmly rejected. German unification had entered the realm of the tangible practically overnight.

Events proceeded at breakneck speed, and the feeling of needing to seize the moment drove both German-German and international negotiations.⁹ A solution to the German question required the approval of the Allied powers, and international reservations vis-à-vis German unification came not only from the Soviet Union, but also from the Western Allies, who articulated their concerns with varying degrees of forcefulness (with Great Britain being more vehement in expressing its reservations than France). In the “Two-Plus-Four” talks between representatives of the two German states and the U.S., France, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, the U.S. government took a decisive leading role.¹⁰ At first, the Soviet Union, under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, expressed reservations about unification in and of itself, then about a unified Germany's entry into NATO, and finally about the withdrawal of Soviet troops from GDR territory; but these issues were resolved through skillful negotiation and the extension of generous financial assistance packages to the Soviet Union, which had been greatly weakened both politically and economically. After some initial hesitation, Chancellor Helmut Kohl allayed Polish fears about a revision of Germany's postwar borders by officially recognizing the Oder-Neisse Line as the border between the two countries. In a departure from its usual admissions procedures, the European Community acted quickly and unbureaucratically in agreeing to allow the Federal Republic of Germany, one of its member states, to expand its territory to include the former GDR.

The ongoing wave of GDR citizens leaving for the West, and the expectations they had about enjoying the benefits of political freedom and economic consumption as soon as possible, increased the pressure on politicians. The West German government responded with an unusual centralization of the decision-making powers in the Federal Chancellery and the Ministry of the Interior.¹¹ On July 1, 1990, the social and economic unification of East and West Germany took place; the favorable exchange rate (i.e., for the East German Mark) was politically motivated and economically difficult to sustain: 1:1 for wages and salaries, and 1:2 for financial assets. The political unification of the two German states followed on October 3, 1990. In the unification treaty, representatives of both German governments agreed to carry out the merger in accordance with Article 23 of the Basic Law. Whereas Article 146 would have offered an opportunity to build a republic on the basis of a new constitution, the chosen course allowed the former GDR to be incorporated into the existing Federal Republic. This entailed the transfer of West German institutions, symbols, and laws onto the former GDR.¹² In the course of administrative restructuring, the five East German federal states that had been dissolved in 1952 were reconstituted (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Brandenburg, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia, and Saxony). The intention, at least, was to maintain continuity rather than introduce change. Many factors contributed to this tendency: real and perceived time pressures, insufficient planning for the eventuality of unification, but also the conviction that the West German political and economic system had proven itself.¹³

2. The Crisis of Unification

All regime changes are accompanied by a high degree of uncertainty, since it is unclear who the winners and losers will be. Euphoria often turns quickly into disillusionment, and the willingness for political engagement declines accordingly. This was also true of the former GDR, even though unification with the democratically sound and economically superior Federal Republic was supposed to cushion GDR citizens from ensuing burdens and to minimize the load placed on those in the old Republic as much as possible. Nonetheless, unification shock, which had already begun to set in early in 1991, was more all-encompassing and drawn-out than many had expected.

How should one deal with both the victims and the leaders of the old regime? How should the bankrupt command economy be converted into a profitable market economy? And how should GDR institutions be dismantled and rebuilt according to West German models? All of these

questions elicited clashing opinions, and the differences were often only superficially linked to East-West oppositions. Additionally, West German dominance determined all of the political, economic, and social questions pertaining to the unification process. Talk of a unification crisis began to circulate. Initially, there had been a general sense that unification would proceed without consequences for the old Federal Republic. Some hoped that this forecast would prove true, others were critical of it.¹⁴ It soon became evident, however, that all of Germany would be affected by unification. The political changes prompted by unification included the alteration of the party landscape and the coalition pressures associated with it. For example, within only a few years, the successor party to the Socialist Unity Party [*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* or SED], the Party of Democratic Socialism [*Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus* or PDS] – which had been repeatedly declared dead – established itself as a regional party in the East, integrated the actual and purported losers of unification into the political system, and frustrated West German politicians. The party (which has since been integrated into The Left [*Die Linke*]) regularly receives the second highest percentage of votes in regions of the former East.

Mass layoffs undermined the foundation of the workers' society of the GDR (90% of its citizens had been gainfully employed, over 20% more than in West Germany) and robbed many East Germans of part of their identity. Within a short time, over two-thirds of East German workers were forced to change jobs or accept early retirement. Women were particularly hard hit: their employment rate dropped from 80% to approximately 50%.¹⁵ To this day, transfer payments in the billions from West to East continue to fund social services and guarantee hefty investments in infrastructure, but the economic disparities between East and West persist. Helmut Kohl's promise of "blooming landscapes" [*blühende Landschaften*] in which a functioning, competitive economy would replace the GDR's worn-out planned economy failed to become reality. Mass protests weren't the only result. In the early 1990s, for example, a sense of insecurity and general upheaval caused birthrates in the new federal states to plummet, resulting in the sort of decline normally seen only during wartime.¹⁶ Young people, above all, left the rural areas of East Germany for the West. The disillusionment was evident in the political, social, and cultural distance between West and East Germans; though stereotypical, the neologisms "Ossi" and "Wessi" expressed this sense of alienation.

It is difficult to properly assess the success (or failure) of German unification and the transformation of East Germany. The processes that occurred were multifaceted and the

accompanying developments often contradictory; ultimately, assessment varies according to extent of one's own personal involvement and the exact nature of the matter at hand.¹⁷ The majority of Germans regularly express their approval of the decision to unify Germany¹⁸ Since the mid-1990s, East-West differences have been consciously barred from the spotlight of public discussion, which is driven almost exclusively by Western media. The banishment of persistent problems from the headlines has diminished their potential political explosiveness but done nothing to solve them. The reconstruction of the East has long ceased to be a matter of high priority for the chancellor [*Chefsache*].¹⁹ But there is evidence that problems continue to exist: the unemployment rate is twice as high in the new federal states, migration from East to West continues, and the East still depends on Western transfer payments. Nonetheless, the celebrations marking the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall mostly made it seem as though the difficult aspects of the transformation process had already been overcome.

3. Normality and Identity

The Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic adopted different approaches to the struggle for normality after 1949, but the process was a defining one for both. For a long time, however, it was precisely this dual statehood that called the notion of normality as much into question as the burden of the Nazi past. The shadow of the past remains, but unification has offered an opportunity to come closer to the goal of a presumed sense of national "normality." As before, the answer to the question of whether Germany has finally become a normal state depends on the perspective of the respondent, but there is indeed growing evidence that Germans' relationship to their state, and that of the world to the Germans, has become less complicated than it once was.²⁰ But the changes have been gradual and not absolute. The perception of such changes is necessarily subjective and is made more difficult by the vagueness of the concept of "normality."

Germany's turbulent history has resulted in frequent changes to flags and national holidays, and today there are relatively few remaining memorials of national significance.²¹ National Socialist propaganda engaged in excessive abuses of nationalism and patriotism for the benefit of the Hitler regime. Consequently, the display of national symbols was long regarded with suspicion in postwar Germany, and pride in the Fatherland could hardly be justified politically. Today, Germany's political system stands as a source of pride along with its science, culture, and economy, as well as certain national characteristics, and the government's social welfare

legislation. Right-wing attempts by a radical minority to usurp the theme of national pride are increasingly rejected by the mainstream public. The transition to a different kind of patriotism, with new substance and form, has also been facilitated by the rise of a new generation. A decade ago, nearly a third of the members of parliament belonged to the war generation. In the 16th legislative term (2005-2009), this was true of only 15 of 614 members.

The theme of remembrance will always be current in Germany. But the controversial discussion of the GDR's Communist dictatorship has by no means supplanted the Holocaust as the central pillar of the culture of memory. Almost all of the historically significant topics that have been hotly debated in recent years – starting with the reception of the Wehrmacht exhibition and Daniel Goldhagen's book *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996), through the Walser-Bubis debate, the compensation of forced laborers, and the victim-perpetrator discussion, up to the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin and the planned center commemorating the expulsion of Germans from present-day Poland – can only be understood from the standpoint of this hierarchization of memory. Nevertheless, the “dual *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*” – meaning the coming to terms with both the Nazi and Communist pasts – remains topical. Over the course of decades, a widely accepted consensus has been achieved on the appropriate remembrance of the Third Reich and the Holocaust. But the second German dictatorship is still surrounded by ongoing debate about proper educational policy and adequate historiographical assessment. The intense and contentious public reappraisal of the GDR past initially focused mainly on those who collaborated with the GDR state security service [*Stas*], and then on the repressive character of the regime in general. To this day, contrasting and often emotionally charged worlds of memory face off in the former GDR. In the West, however, GDR history is only selectively incorporated into German history as a whole.²²

Unification cast a spotlight not only on the historical confrontation with the GDR, but also on the coexistence of citizens from East and West. Germany might be faulted for missing the opportunity to attempt to construct a common identity for itself in the wake of unification. No course was laid toward the creation of a new constitution, new symbols, or a grand project.²³ The vivid epithets *Besserwessi* and *Jammerossi* (“Wessi know-it-alls” and “Ossi whiners”) made clear that tearing down the “Wall in the head” and reconciling different political orientations and patterns of behavior took time.²⁴ At the same time, however, we must not ignore the fact that Germany has strongly pronounced regional differences, and that political preferences and

patterns of behavior are not only shaped by East-West differences but also by considerable differences between North and South.

4. Germany and the World

The unification of Germany and its resulting acquisition of full sovereignty strengthened the role of the Federal Republic as a European middle power and expanded the scope of its activities and responsibilities. With a population of 82 million, Germany is the most populous country west of Russia and the most significant economic force in Europe. International pressure on Germany to abandon its policy of restraint in foreign affairs in favor of more active participation on the world stage – a pressure that had already begun mounting toward the end of the “old” Federal Republic – rose dramatically with the Gulf War of 1991 and the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. At first, this pressure was tempered by fears that Germany could become the dominant power in Europe.

As in the past, the trademarks of German foreign policy continue to be broad consensus-building among the key political players, with France and the U.S. serving as basic touchstones. Continuity and consensus can be seen, above all, in Germany's commitment to multilateralism, which involves making an effort to solve international problems through cooperation with other governments and international organizations instead of going it alone as a single state. Multilateralism has become a fundamental axiom of national policy. This policy binds Germany to the EU, in particular, and facilitates its ability to work in concert with other powers.

Expectations about Germany's responsibilities on the world stage have risen both at home and abroad, and Germany is now under pressure to play a more active and extensive role in international affairs. These expectations have translated into concrete action above all in the area of national security. The Bundeswehr has evolved from a purely defensive army into an operational peace-keeping force, whose soldiers participate in NATO, EU, and UN missions on various continents. At the same time that Germany assumed new military responsibilities in hot spots around the world, its armed forces were cut from 340,000 to 250,000 soldiers. Despite widespread German pacifism, the reorientation of the role of the armed forces met with relatively little public friction, even though the majority of the population is opposed to foreign deployments. Germany's conception of itself as a civilian power has remained intact.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, Germany's central location at the heart of Europe became both an opportunity and a liability. It was a liability because the permeability of national borders stoked anxieties about immigration and sparked fears about the potential negative economic and political side effects thereof. But its central location also offered Germany the opportunity to expand its relationships with its neighbors to the East and surround itself with democratic allies. German politicians therefore became early advocates of the Eastern expansion of NATO and the EU.

If consensus and pragmatic adaptation characterize Germany's foreign policy in general, then this is even truer of its European policies in particular. The democratic revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe forced Western European politicians to simultaneously intensify European integration and expand EU membership. The Treaty of Maastricht (1992) proposed a common foreign and security policy, collaboration in judicial and domestic affairs, and the creation of a single currency. In order to signal the intended move toward greater integration linguistically, the European Community was renamed the European Union. Between 1995 and 2004, the number of member countries grew from 12 to 25. Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007; other candidates are already lining up at the door. These far-reaching and rapid changes have raised more and more questions about the limits of the EU, questions that concern not only its territorial expanse, but also its purview and its conception of democracy. Since the summer of 2005, when voters in France and the Netherlands failed to ratify the European constitution, the EU has been forced to undergo a period of self-reflection. During Germany's EU council presidency in the first half of 2007, important aspects of the rejected constitutional treaty were integrated into the Treaty of Lisbon, which, after being ratified by the member countries, took effect on December 1, 2009.

Since unification, the Federal Republic, in its usual fashion, has supported the initiatives of the EU and has even taken the lead in many areas (e.g., expansion into Central and Eastern Europe and greater engagement in Southeastern Europe).²⁵ In general, as before, the majority of German citizens identify with Europe.²⁶ Despite premature pronouncements of its demise, the French-German partnership continues to be the driving force behind the EU even after its territorial expansion. The pace of European integration and the attendant geographic enlargement of the EU, disputes over isolated issues, and concerns about protecting German interests have created a situation in which the German people view the EU more skeptically than their government does. This is also true of the citizens of other European countries.

Nonetheless, this skepticism is coupled with a fundamental acceptance of EU decisions, even when they are unpopular, as was the case with the adoption of the Euro, the common European currency. The Federal Constitutional Court's ruling on the Treaty of Lisbon (2009) provided at least the legal basis for the expansion of the rights of the Bundestag and the Bundesrat in EU affairs. Critics lamented the strengthening of the national state that occurred in the process, while supporters welcomed the fact that the ruling put clearer limits on European integration. The Euro Crisis of 2010 reawakened popular skepticism toward the European Union, which is perceived as being forced on the citizenry by the political elite.

Changes in German foreign policy are first and foremost responses to transformations in the international arena and not the result of deliberate new strategies. Opinions differ, however, on whether these changes are merely a matter of adaptation or the sign of a new orientation in German policies toward Europe and the world.²⁷ Germany is once again a middle power, and it also conceives of itself as a team player [*Mitführungsmacht*]. The self-restraint that characterized the foreign policy of the old Federal Republic is still predominant, but it is being increasingly supplemented by signs of self-assertion. This brand of politics was advanced in particular by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, whose articulation of German interests on the international stage was more open and confident than that of his predecessors.²⁸ His vehement opposition to German participation in the Iraq War and his ability to parlay that opposition into electoral victory in the fall of 2002 led to considerable transatlantic tensions. Still, both sides undertook damage control measures; these efforts were stepped up after the change of government in Germany in 2005, when Angela Merkel replaced Schröder, and were strengthened once again in the U.S. three years later when Barack Obama replaced George W. Bush. In contrast to the influence that Germany wields within Europe, its global-political influence still remains limited. Germany's bid for a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council has foundered, not least on U.S. resistance in the wake of transatlantic turbulence. On the other hand, Germany is now being consulted ever more frequently on global issues – for instance, the conflict with Iran – and is included in decision-making processes. German foreign policy is still trying to find the right balance.²⁹

5. Overcoming Reform Gridlock

After a brief economic upswing fuelled by unification, the Federal Republic was quickly overcome by the unresolved economic and social problems of previous decades. Unification

and the insistence on continuity allowed Germany to make a seamless transition from the old to the new republic and helped the country maintain political stability, but the approach also meant that Germany missed an important opportunity to pursue plans for social and economic reform. This strategy would take its toll.

For years, calls for significant reform have filled the pages of newspapers and the speeches of opinion makers like no other subject. Unlike the reforms of the 1960s and 1970s, which held out the promise of more democracy, social services, and education (and thus found widespread public support), today's reforms bring the prospect of greater completion and fewer social benefits. Therefore, they provoke resistance and protest time and again. In the face of higher national debt, persistent structural unemployment, slow economic growth, low birthrates, and the aging of the population, not to mention global competition, practically no area of politics has escaped the call for reform. Subjects that are (or have been) under review include: the financing of pensions and health insurance, the restructuring of the labor market and social welfare, the revamping of educational policies, and the reorganization of the relationship between the federal government and the states.

The now familiar term "reform gridlock" [*Reformstau*] was coined back in 1997 and became the word of the year; the term was eventually joined by other catchwords, such as "paralysis" [*Lähmung*], the "German disease" [*deutsche Krankheit*] and the "immobilized republic" [*gefesselte Republik*]. These expressions attempted to capture a basic condition that was replete with contradictions. Although problems were identified and the desire for reform clearly articulated, the proposed solutions fell short of expectations. Commentators suggested various reasons for this. Some believed that the cause could be found primarily in the so-called inter-linkage trap that dominates the political system of the Federal Republic. The term refers to the fact that politics occurs on various levels and that these levels depend on one another (i.e. are linked) in decision-making processes. This kind of political system demands a negotiative brand of democracy that seeks broad consensus and therefore usually proceeds at a snail's pace. In discussions of the inter-linkage trap, the relationship between the Bundestag and the Bundesrat (the lower and upper houses of parliament), and the use of the Federal Constitutional Court as a political instrument often emerge as the subject of criticism. In explaining the failure of the government to find appropriate solutions to the question of reform, others emphasized that the political class is too set in its established patterns of thought, doesn't do enough to communicate reform strategies to the citizenry, and is incapable of assuming a leading role. The

reform debate has been infused with ideological meaning and used to fan the flames of partisan squabbles. The position of the citizens has not been free of contradictions either. On the one hand, they have been critical of the obvious impotence of politics; on the other hand, they have vehemently defended their own entitlement levels.³⁰ The less that happened, the more threatening the future scenarios became.

In the context of globalization and European integration, judgments about Germany's standing – whether positive or negative – proceed on the basis of international comparison. Success is measured according to how well Germany's economic and social system fares in comparisons on the international level and how compatible competitive principles are with social justice on the national level. In international comparisons, the comparative data that one chooses to employ plays a very significant role: for instance, if one wants to emphasize that the German economy can meet the challenges of globalization, then one should stress Germany's role as a world leader in exports or its high level of foreign investment. If, however, one believes that Germany is still not competitive on the world market, then one can support that argument by producing numbers reflecting the high cost of employee benefits, the inflexibility of the labor market, and the slow rate of economic growth. As helpful as comparative data can be in determining Germany's international standing with respect to economic productivity and competitiveness, such data allow for little consideration of national characteristics, which, in the case of Germany – with its exceptional situation (resulting from unification) and its strongly developed principles of social justice – must be taken into account. If we can escape the fixation on economic data for a moment, and add reforms in defense, education, and social welfare into the mix, then the picture becomes much more multifaceted than the public often perceives it to be.

No one disputes the fact that the zeal for reform has been repeatedly blocked and undermined; nonetheless, one can certainly say that the political system has made progress over the years in tackling various tasks.³¹ Reform in Germany is usually a cautious process of adjustment that seeks to modify old structures in order to make them more effective. Radical breaks, on the other hand, are rare. Still, we must not overlook the fact that many small steps toward reform can also yield change that is both far-reaching and structural. The wheels of the political mill turn slowly, yet a number of changes – tax and pension reform, the restructuring of capital and labor markets and higher education, and, not least, a series of laws that promoted a rethinking

of social attitudes toward foreigners and gender roles within society – have altered the republic in lasting ways.³²

6. Politics in a Unified Germany

The dilemma of reform consumed day-to-day politics for years, heightened political disillusionment, and undermined Germany's collective self-confidence. And to think it all started in 1990 with so much promise. Unification had fuelled a boom in the German economy, and Germans were celebrating the coming together of their once divided nation and the attendant return of full international sovereignty. In the political sphere, an optimistic *Zeitgeist* ensured Helmut Kohl's reelection as chancellor in December 1990. This optimism quickly dissipated, however, when the breakdown of the GDR economy and clashes over East Germany's transformation posed substantial challenges to the Kohl government. So, too, did the increase in right-wing extremism and xenophobia that accompanied the arrival of growing numbers of ethnic German remigrants from the East [*Aussiedler*] and asylum-seekers. In 1994, despite the frustrations of unification, Kohl's government was reelected once more. But by 1998, Kohl had been in office for sixteen years, and most voters believed it was time for a change. And with that change came the end of an era. Helmut Kohl will always be remembered as the driving force behind the modernization of Germany's Christian Democratic Union [*Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands* or CDU], as a committed European who led the negotiations for a single currency, and as the chancellor of unification. Still, his involvement in and handling of the financial scandal of 1999-2000, in which illegal contributions to CDU party accounts were revealed, cast a lasting shadow over his years in office.

In 1998, for the first time in the history of the Federal Republic, a government was elected directly by the voters, not through the coalition-building maneuvers of the parties. In contrast to 1969 – when some felt that the advent of a social-liberal coalition would shake the foundations of the republic – the losers of the 1998 election greeted the new coalition between the Social Democratic Party [*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* or SPD] and Alliance 90/The Greens [*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*] with democratic composure. Common to both transitions was the feeling of embarking on a new path. But the 1998 election marked more than just a change of government: a generational changing of the guard was also taking place at the top levels of the political leadership, with the wartime generation giving way to the postwar one. The so-called generation of '68 had earned its first political spurs during the rebellious 1960s and had

made its way through the institutional ranks. Now some of its representatives, with Gerhard Schröder and Joschka Fischer at the fore, had come to power.

As was the case with the social-liberal coalition of 1969-1982, the red-green government was preoccupied with internal party squabbles and the often underestimated difficulties of day-to-day politics. Political roadblocks between the federal government and the states [*Länder*] hindered the implementation of reforms, just as they had done in the final years of the Kohl government. Often, the political process could succeed only when an agenda was presented by an informal advisory committee and then negotiated by an equally informal Grand Coalition between the two major parties, the SPD and the CDU. Virtually all of the major political undertakings of recent years – from the commission on reforming the armed forces, to the immigration commission, to the federalism commission and the pension and labor commissions – proceeded on this basis.

Despite all the difficulties, some long overdue liberal reforms were successfully introduced. These included a more modern citizenship law that allows dual citizenship under certain circumstances (1999), a domestic partnership law for same-sex couples (2001), and finally, after four years of negotiations, an immigration and integration law (2005). Important changes were also introduced in other areas, with reforms being made to the armed forces, the tax code, and the social welfare system. Chancellor Schröder, however, had promised in 1998 to make reducing unemployment the measure of his success. In recent years, nothing has occupied political minds more than unemployment figures. In a political show of strength on Schröder's part, Agenda 2010 – a multistep labor market program – was passed in March 2003. The program sparked nationwide protests above all because it called for cuts in unemployment payments and the merger of unemployment and welfare benefits (the implementation of the so-called Hartz IV proposal). In response, frustrated SPD members and trade unionists founded the Electoral Alternative for Labor and Social Justice [*Wahlalternative Arbeit und soziale Gerechtigkeit* or WASG], which established itself as a political party in January 2005. High unemployment, which stood at 4.8 million (11.6 percent) in May 2005, internal party disputes over economic and social policies, and one defeat after another in regional elections – with a particularly bad blow being dealt to the party in the traditional Social Democratic stronghold of North Rhine-Westphalia – led Chancellor Gerhard Schröder to call for early national elections. A fake vote of confidence, which Schröder purposely lost in the Bundestag, paved the way for early Bundestag elections in September 2005.

The unpopular image of an official Grand Coalition between the CDU, its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union [*Christlich-Soziale Union* or CSU], and the SPD had been painted on the wall time and again since 1998, but after the early Bundestag elections of September 2005, it actually became a reality. At the same time, however, it should be said that the coalition also represented a political opportunity to implement long overdue reforms that had been under discussion for years. The fact that a woman from the former GDR, Angela Merkel, has stood at the head of the government as federal chancellor since the fall of 2005 was newsworthy for a short period of time (and is symbolically meaningful) but is hardly significant in political terms. In September 2009, the Grand Coalition was superseded by a coalition between the CDU/CSU and the Free Democratic Party [*Freie Demokratische Partei* or FDP]. The choice of coalition partners presupposes continuity, but that continuity can be deceptive. In the last two decades, the mainstream parties CDU/CSU and SPD have continuously lost votes to small parties, e.g. Alliance 90/The Greens, The Left [*Die Linke*], and the FDP. In the long term, this situation will open up new opportunities for coalitions between the CDU/CSU and Alliance 90/The Greens or between the CDU, the FDP, and Alliance 90/The Greens. Such coalitions already exist today at the state level. In other words: the party landscape has changed dramatically since 1990. Up to now, right-wing extremist parties have not garnered enough votes to earn a place in the Bundestag. To the left of center, the competition for votes heated up after the PDS, a regional party, merged with the WASG, a populist leftist party in the West, to form a new party, The Left [*Die Linke*], in 2007. The presence of new competition on the left was never more evident than in the Bundestag elections in September 2009, when the SPD registered its worst election results since the founding of the Federal Republic.

The coalition of “new possibilities,” with its focus on “redevelopment, investment, and reform” [*Sanieren, Investieren und Reformieren*], as put forth by Chancellor Merkel, has the necessary votes in both houses of parliament to push through its agenda. But when Merkel took office, she also spoke of a politics of “small steps.” Defying all prophecies of doom, the Grand Coalition survived the four-year legislative period and could point to successes at the end of its term. Overdue reforms were passed, among them federalism reforms, the raising of the retirement age, the lowering of non-wage labor costs to under 40 percent, the introduction of child benefit allowances [*Elterngeld*], the promise of new daycare facilities, and the liberalization of family policy. At the very moment when economic growth was increasing and the unemployment rate and the state deficit were declining, the international financial crisis of 2008/09 also hit Germany. United as seldom before, the coalition partners pulled together and passed economic

stimulus packages and bank reforms that made decisive contributions to stabilizing the economy. Still, the Grand Coalition's report card is not exclusively positive. In many areas of politics, the political structure and clashing mentalities made it harder to settle on compromise solutions. Even in areas in which reforms were sought, as in health care, it is only a matter of time before we see a reform of the reforms. But even when ideological differences came to the fore, the coalition's work was pragmatic. In the end, when the CDU and the SPD faced off in the election battle, the coalition partners behaved in a way that prevented the usual exchange of hard, ideologically-driven blows. The election campaign was limited to a few weeks and never really got going.

In terms of demographics, German society has become older and more heterogeneous. This being the case, political problems that have been simmering for a long time but still remain only partially resolved – the question of immigration and the integration of foreigners, issues regarding family policy – are repeatedly thrust into the spotlight. Among these unresolved problems is violent right-wing radicalism, which rears its ugly head time and again, particularly in the new federal states.

7. Transitions: From the Bonn to the Berlin Republic

In 1990, politicians in the Federal Republic promised continuity in domestic and foreign policy. From the perspective of 2010, we see that a good deal more has changed for the Republic and its citizens than anyone could have predicted two decades ago. Unification came extraordinarily quickly and changed virtually every aspect of life for citizens of the former GDR. The political, economic, and social reforms affecting Germany as a whole were pushed through rather hesitantly in comparison, but their long-term effects have been no less significant. At the same time, Germany's international standing and the scope of its foreign policy have gradually grown.

These years have often been perceived as a time of crisis. This perception, however, runs contrary to the fact that, despite difficulties, the citizens of East and West Germany have managed to forge common ground without shaking the fundamental democratic order. Germany has secured a place on the international stage as a responsible and cooperative nation in Europe and the world, and it has been successful in diffusing anxieties about a new German supremacy in Europe. Significant progress has been made in the normalization of the Federal Republic's international status, and the relationship of German citizens to their state is

characterized by a new national consciousness that combines distinct layers of criticism and pride, love of one's homeland, and international openness.

The disappearance of the Bonn Republic and the arrival of the new Federal Republic was not an abrupt process; rather, it was an evolutionary adaptation to new national and international conditions along a continuum. The characteristics of the Bonn Republic are easier to define in retrospect than those of the current Berlin Republic.³³ The past two decades have been a time of transition, one that set in just when people had found their bearings in the old Federal Republic. For that reason, too, many political decisions were primarily a response to changes in national and international circumstances and not part of any strategy – the constant attempt to reconcile change and continuity notwithstanding.

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¹ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London, 1995).

² Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, 1992).

³ Gunter Hofmann, *Familienbande. Die Politisierung Europas* (Munich, 2005); Timothy Garton Ash, *Free World. America, Europe, and the Surprising Future of the West* (New York, 2004).

⁴ Aleksander Smolar, "History and Memory: The Revolutions of 1989-1991," *Journal of Democracy* 12, 3 (July 2001), pp. 5-19.

⁵ Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit. Die Wiedervereinigung und die Krise des Sozialstaates* (Munich, 2006).

⁶ Paul Nolte, *Riskante Moderne. Die Deutschen und der neue Kapitalismus* (Munich, 2006); Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande, *Das kosmopolitische Europa. Gesellschaft und Politik in der Zweiten Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main, 2004).

⁷ The concept of "successful democracy" [*geglückte Demokratie*] is taken from Edgar Wolfrum, *Die geglückte Demokratie. Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart, 2006).

⁸ See also Konrad H. Jarausch, "Anfänge der Berliner Republik (1990-2005)," in Ulrich Hermann et al., eds., *Kleine Deutsche Geschichte* (Stuttgart, 2006), pp. 463-96.

⁹ Konrad H. Jarausch, *Die unverhoffte Einheit 1989-1990* (Frankfurt am Main, 1995) and *The Rush to German Unity* (New York, 1994); Wolfgang Jäger, *Die Überwindung der Teilung. Der innerdeutsche Prozeß der Vereinigung 1989/90* (Stuttgart, 1998); Charles S. Maier, *Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and the End of East Germany* (Princeton, NJ, 1997); Hanns Jürgen Küsters and Daniel Hofmann, eds., *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik. Deutsche Einheit. Sonderedition aus den Akten des Bundeskanzleramtes 1989/90* (Munich, 1998).

¹⁰ Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany United and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, MA, 1995); Werner Weidenfeld with Peter M. Wagner and Elke Bruck, *Außenpolitik für die deutsche Einheit. Die Entscheidungsjahre 1989/90* (Stuttgart, 1998); Mary Elise Sarotte, *1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe* (Princeton, NJ, 2009).

¹¹ Wolfgang Schäuble, *Der Vertrag. Wie ich über die deutsche Einheit verhandelte*. With an introduction by Dirk Koch and Klaus Wirtgen, eds. (Stuttgart, 1991); Horst Teltschik, *329 Tage. Innenansichten der Einigung* (Berlin, 1991); Claus J. Duisberg, *Das deutsche Jahr. Einblicke in die Wiedervereinigung 1989/90* (Berlin, 2005).

¹² Wade Jacoby, *Imitation and Politics: Redesigning Modern Germany* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 2000).

¹³ The following are representative of the abundant literature on the topic: Gerhard Lehmbuch, "Die deutsche Vereinigung: Strukturen und Strategien" *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 32 (1991), pp. 585-604; Roland Czada, "Schleichweg in die 'Dritte Republik'. Politik der Vereinigung und politischer Wandel in Deutschland," *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 35, 2 (1994), pp. 245-70.

¹⁴ Wolf Lepenies, *Folgen einer unerhörten Begebenheit. Die Deutschen nach der Vereinigung* (Berlin, 1992).

¹⁵ Raj Kollmorgen, "Das Ende Ostdeutschlands? Zeiten und Perspektiven eines Forschungsgegenstandes," *Berliner Debatte Initial* 14, 2 (2003), p. 12.

¹⁶ Rainer Hufnagel, "Leere Wiegen Ost. Zum dramatischen Rückgang der Geburtenziffern in den Neuen Bundesländern nach der Wiedervereinigung," in Hufnagel and Titus Simon, eds., *Problemfall Deutsche Einheit. Interdisziplinäre Betrachtungen zu gesamtdeutschen Fragestellungen* (Wiesbaden, 2004), pp. 147-54; Nicholas Eberstadt, "Demographic Shocks in Eastern Germany, 1989-1993," *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, 3 (1994), pp. 519-33.

¹⁷ See, for instance, a comparison of the opposing positions in Raj Kollmorgen, *Ostdeutschland. Beobachtungen einer Übergangs- und Teilgesellschaft* (Wiesbaden, 2005) and Hannes Bahrmann and Christoph Links, eds., *Am Ziel vorbei. Die deutsche Einheit – Eine Zwischenbilanz* (Berlin, 2005). For a stimulating essay on the topic see Richard Schröder, "Lob der Einheit. Richard Schröder zum 3. Oktober 2006," *Der Spiegel*, No. 40, 2006, pp. 50-51.

¹⁸ Forschungsgruppe Wahlen e.V., ed., *Politbarometer Extra – Deutsche Einheit* (Mannheim, September 2004) and *Politbarometer Extra – 20 Jahre Mauerfall* (Mannheim, November 2009).

¹⁹ Thomas Kralinski, "Warum der Westen den Osten braucht," *Berliner Republik*, no. 3 (2003), p. 10; *Zum 15. Jahrestag des Mauerfalls: Vom gemeinsamen Anliegen zur Randnotiz – DDR, Wiedervereinigung und der Prozeß der Deutschen Einheit im Spiegel der Medien*. Media

analysis, 1994-2004, by the Stiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur and the Forschungsinstitut Medien Tenor.

²⁰ Steve Crawshaw, *Easier Fatherland. Germany and the Twenty-First Century* (London and New York, 2004); Volker Kronenberg, *Patriotismus in Deutschland. Perspektiven für eine weltoffene Nation* (Wiesbaden, 2005).

²¹ Peter Reichel, *Schwarz-Rot-Gold. Kleine Geschichte deutscher Nationalsymbole nach 1945* (Munich, 2005); Etienne François and Hagen Schulze, eds., *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte* (Munich, 2001).

²² Norbert Frei, "Der Erinnerungstisch ist reich gedeckt. Geschichtsaufarbeitung in Deutschland: Die DDR-Diktatur wird vorbildung erforscht. Doch die Ergebnisse dürfen nicht politische instrumentalisiert werden," *Die Zeit*, no. 14, March 26, 2009.

²³ Michael Naumann, "Toward the Berlin Republic – Past, Present, and Future," in Dieter Dettke, ed., *The Spirit of the Berlin Republic* (New York and Oxford, 2003), pp. 236-37.

²⁴ On this issue, see J. W. Falter et al., eds., *Sind wir ein Volk? Ost- und Westdeutschland im Vergleich* (Munich, 2006).

²⁵ On the various aspects of Germany's role in Europe, see the special issue of the journal *German Politics* (vol. 14, no. 3; September 2005), *From Modell Deutschland to Model Europa: Europe in Germany and Germany in Europe*, as well as Kenneth Dyson and Klaus H. Goetz, eds., *Germany, Europe and the Politics of Constraint* (Oxford, 2003).

²⁶ Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann and Thomas Petersen, "Die Bürger in Deutschland," in Werner Weidenfeld, ed., *Europa-Handbuch. Vol. II: Die Staatenwelt Europas*. Third edition, revised and updated (Gütersloh, 2004), pp. 32-51.

²⁷ Gisela Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet, "Deutsche Leadership in der Europäischen Union? Die Europapolitik der rot-grünen Bundesregierung 1998-2002," in Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet et al., *Deutsche Europapolitik von Konrad Adenauer bis Gerhard Schröder* (Opladen, 2002), p. 196.

²⁸ Helga Haftendorn, *Coming of Age: German Foreign Policy since 1945* (Lanham, MD, 2006).

²⁹ Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Republik ohne Kompaß. Anmerkungen zur deutschen Außenpolitik* (Berlin, 2005); Regina Karp, "The New German Policy Consensus," *The Washington Quarterly*, 29, 1 (Winter 2005-06), pp. 61-82.

³⁰ A thorough account has been given, among others, by Helga A. Welsh, "German Policymaking and the Reform Gridlock," in David P. Conradt et al., eds., *Precarious Victory. The 2002 German Federal Election and its Aftermath* (New York and Oxford, 2005), pp. 205-19; and Hans Vorländer, ed., *Politische Reform in der Demokratie* (Baden-Baden, 2005).

³¹ The literature on this topic has grown so extensive that only a few recent publications will be mentioned here: Klaus F. Zimmermann, ed., *Deutschland was nun? Reformen für Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Munich, 2006); Peter Bofinger, *Wir sind besser als wir glauben. Wohlstand für alle* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 2006); Franz Walter, "Die ungleichzeitige Wirklichkeit. Eine

Besichtigung der deutschen Gesellschaft im Jahr 2005”, *Internationale Politik*, 60 (October 2005), pp. 6-13. On the reform debate, see the essays in Simon Green and William E. Paterson, eds., *Governance in Contemporary Germany. The Semisovereign State Revisited* (Cambridge, UK, 2005) and Jürgen Kocka, ed., *Zukunftsfähigkeit Deutschlands. Sozialwissenschaftliche Essays*. WZB Jahrbuch 2006 (Berlin, 2007).

³² See, for example, Perry Anderson, “A New Germany?”, *New Left Review*, 57 (May/June, 2009), pp. 5-40.

³³ Roland Czada, “Nach 1989. Reflexionen zur Rede von der ‘Berliner Republik,’” in Roland Czada and Hellmut Wollmann, eds., *Von der Bonner zur Berliner Republik. 10 Jahre Deutsche Einheit*. Special issue of *Leviathan* 19/1999, pp. 13-45; Gunter Hofmann, *Abschiede, Anfänge. Die Bundesrepublik – eine Anatomie* (Munich, 2002); Hans Jörg Hennecke, *Die dritte Republik. Aufbruch und Ernüchterung* (Munich, 2002); Werner Süß, ed., *Deutschland in den neunziger Jahren. Politik und Gesellschaft zwischen Wiedervereinigung und Globalisierung* (Opladen, 2002); Winand Gellner and John D. Robertson, eds., *The Berlin Republic. German Unification and a Decade of Changes* (London and Portland, OR, 2003); James Sperling, eds., *Germany at Fifty-Five. Berlin ist nicht Bonn?* (Manchester, UK, and New York, 2004).