



Volume 10. One Germany in Europe, 1989 – 2006

The collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 and the breakup of the Soviet Union two years later constitute what many have described as a major turning point in the history of the twentieth century. The British historian Eric J. Hobsbawm underscored the significance of these events when he christened the twentieth century the “short century,” limiting its span 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 entire world into enemy camps shortly after the Second World War. The events in Europe reverberated throughout the rest of the world as well: democratic liberation movements were given a new impetus, and some observers put the changes of 1989 on a par with those introduced by the French Revolution exactly two centuries earlier. There was talk of the “era of democracy” and of the end of history as shaped by competing ideologies. The triumph of liberal democracy had supposedly arrived.²

But the euphoria proved 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 Ten years after the fact, hardly anyone commemorated the peaceful revolutions that had thrilled the world in 1989. Their historical significance, however, remains fully intact.⁴

As a central power in the heart of Europe, Germany played a key role in this so-called short century. During the first half of the 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 century, Germany was

not only the place where the Cold War began and ended, it also assumed 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 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 adjustments in international politics.

The reunification of Germany in October 1990 generated a variety of responses and expectations. For some, it evoked old fears about German “special paths” [*Sonderwege*] and 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. Therefore, the whole world was interested in seeing how Germany would develop. At first, however, the country was preoccupied with the challenges of reunification. The extension of the Federal Republic's political, economic, and social systems to the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) proved a longer and more difficult process than had been expected and revealed sources of psychological and cultural friction between East and West. The economic challenges of unification delayed the introduction of much-needed economic and social reforms – which 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* raises questions concerning not only Germany: 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 further the cause of European integration, and what role does Europe occupy within the hierarchy of world powers?⁶

For Germany, the years since 1990 have been particularly important, since political developments have thrown into question the customary balance between continuity and constant but 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, leaving 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 seen the gradual broadening of Germany's international scope

and status. The country's development into a midsize power – whose interests are now defined increasingly globally, not solely in relation to Europe – proceeded on the basis of a broad political consensus that stood in stark contrast to the rifts that characterized domestic politics.

The Bonn Republic (1949-1990) was gradually succeeded by the Berlin Republic. The term “Berlin Republic” emerged in conjunction with the debate over Germany's capital and was initially symbolic of fears that moving the seat of government from Bonn to Berlin could also signal a turning away from the post-nationalist direction of the “accomplished democracy” of the “old” Federal Republic.⁷ Over time, the term has become increasingly popular as a simple expression of the fact that reunification (and the government's move to Berlin) represented a critical juncture 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 offer 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, because individuals are affected in a manner that is both personal and immediate, and when assessment is simultaneous with the event itself, long-term perspectives are necessarily neglected. This introduction and document collection emphasize both the significance of German reunification and the transitional character of the recent past.

1. From Separation to Unity

Encouraged by the liberalization of the communist governments of the Soviet Union, Poland, and Hungary, citizens of the GDR hoped for political concessions from their own government. When these did not materialize, and when the GDR government stubbornly insisted instead on the correctness of its authoritarian path, citizens voted with their feet. 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 and finally the long hoped-for political concessions, which included the dissolution of the old-guard communist leadership around Erich Honecker. In quick succession, civilian protests compelled the government to open the Berlin Wall, negotiate with dissident leaders 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 that was accompanied by a new motto: “We are one people” [“Wir sind ein Volk”]. The success of the “Alliance for Germany” in the first democratic elections, held in March 1990, and the ongoing flood of GDR citizens into the Federal Republic intensified the interest in 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 having to seize the moment drove both German-German negotiations and discussions in the international arena.⁹ A solution to the German question depended on the approval of the Allied powers, and reservations regarding the unification of Germany 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 than France in this respect). In the “Two-Plus-Four” talks between representatives of both German states and the U.S., France, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, the U.S. government took on a clear leading role.¹⁰ At first, the Soviet Union, under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, had reservations about unification in and of itself, then about a unified Germany's entry into NATO, and finally about the withdrawal of Soviet troops; but these issues were resolved through skillful negotiation and generous financial offers to the Soviet Union, which had been greatly weakened both politically and economically. After some initial hesitation, Chancellor Helmut Kohl allayed Polish fears regarding a revision of Germany's postwar borders by officially recognizing the Oder-Neisse Line. In comparison with its usual admission procedures, the European Community acted quickly and unbureaucratically in allowing the Federal Republic of Germany, one of its member states, to expand its territory to include the former GDR.

The wave of people leaving the GDR for the West – and the expectations that 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 to this pressure 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 merger of East and West Germany took place; the favorable exchange rate (i.e., for the East German Mark) was politically motivated but 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 effect the merger in accordance with Article 23 of the Basic Law. Whereas Article 146 would have provided the 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, 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 orientation: 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 reliable.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. The shock of unification, which had already begun to set in early in 1991, was far more encompassing and prolonged 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, but the differences were often only superficially linked to East-West oppositions. Additionally, all of the political, economic, and social questions concerning the process of unification were shaped by the dominance of West Germany. Talk of a unification crisis began to circulate. It had been anticipated that unification would proceed without consequence 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. Political changes included the alteration of the party landscape and the coalition pressures associated with it. The successor to the Socialist Unity Party (SED), the

Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) – which had been repeatedly declared dead – managed, within only a few years, to establish itself as a regional party in the East, to integrate the actual and purported losers of unification into the political system, and to frustrate western politicians. The party – officially renamed “The Left. PDS” (“Die Linke. PDS”) in 2005 – regularly receives the second highest percentage of votes in regions of the former East.

Mass layoffs deprived the GDR’s work-centered society (90% of its citizens had been gainfully employed, over 20% more than in West Germany) of its foundations 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 guarantee social services and hefty investments in infrastructure, but the economic disparities between East and West persist. Helmut Kohl’s promise of “blossoming landscapes,” in which a functioning, competitive economy would replace the GDR’s worn-out planned economy failed to materialize. Mass protests were not the only result. For instance, in the early 1990s, a sense of insecurity and upheaval caused birthrates in the new federal states to plummet, resulting in the sort of decline normally seen only in times of war.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; the neologisms “Ossi” and “Wessi,” though stereotypical, captured this alienation symbolically.

The success (or failure) of German unification and the transformation of East Germany are difficult to assess properly. Processes were multifaceted and accompanying developments often contradictory; ultimately, assessment varies according to extent of personal involvement and the particular nature of the matter at hand.¹⁷ Fifteen years after the fall of the wall, the majority of Germans signaled that the decision to unify Germany was indeed the correct one. And the number of people who perceive more commonalities than differences between East and West continues to grow.¹⁸ Living conditions and infrastructure in Germany have equalized to a great extent. At the same time, however, the number of unemployed in the new federal states – which is twice as high as in the old states – and the East’s ongoing dependence on high subsidies from the West indicate that the situation is still problematic.

That the subject also remains politically sensitive is evidenced not least by the fact that, since the mid-1990s, East-West differences among Germans have been consciously kept out of the spotlight of public discussion, which is driven almost exclusively by Western media. The widespread banishment of persistent problems from the headlines has diminished their potential political explosiveness but has 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

3. Normality and Identity

Although launched from different standpoints, the struggle for normality was a defining characteristic of both German states. For a long time, however, it was precisely this dual statehood that called the notion of normality as much into question as did the burden of the Nazi past. The shadow of the past remains, but reunification has provided an opportunity to approach the goal of a presumed sense of national “normality.” There is no end in sight to debates about normalization, even though there are increasing signs 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 made more difficult by the vagueness of the concept of “normality.”

Germany's turbulent history has resulted in the frequent alteration of 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 alongside its science, culture, and economy, certain national characteristics, and the government's social-welfare legislation. Right-wing attempts by a radical minority to usurp the theme of national pride have been increasingly undermined. 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, which began in 2005, this was true of only 15 out of 614 members.

The theme of remembrance will always remain 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 Walsler-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 how the Third Reich and the Holocaust should be remembered. The second German dictatorship, however, is still surrounded by ongoing discussion about appropriate 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 (the *Stas*), and then on the repressive character of the regime in general. To this day, contrasting and often emotionally charged worlds of memory confront one another in the former GDR. In the West, however, GDR history is only selectively incorporated into German history as a whole.

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.²² The vivid epithets *Besserwessi* and *Jammerossi* (“Wessi know-it-alls” and “Ossi whiners”) underscored the fact that tearing down the “wall in the head” and reconciling different political orientations and patterns of behavior required time.²³ 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 marked by East-West differences but also by considerable contrasts 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 midsize power and expanded its sphere of activity. With a population of over 82 million, it is the most populous country west of Russia and the most significant economic force in Europe. The international pressure on Germany to forego its policy

of restraint in foreign affairs in favor of greater participation on the world stage – which had already made itself felt toward the end of the “old” Republic – increased radically 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 rise to become the dominant power in Europe.

As was the case previously, the trademarks of German foreign policy are still continuity and wide consensus-building among the important political players, with France and the U.S. being the basic points of reference. Continuity and consensus can be seen, above all, in Germany's commitment to multilateralism – that is, in the effort to solve international problems by way of cooperation with other governments and international organizations, rather than going it alone as a single state – which has become a fundamental axiom of national policy. This policy draws Germany particularly close to the EU and facilitates its ability to work effectively in concert with other powers.

Expectations regarding a more engaged and expanded international role for Germany have risen both at home and abroad. These expectations have translated into concrete action particularly in the field of national security. The Bundeswehr has evolved from a purely defensive army into an operational peace-keeping force, which currently deploys nearly 8,000 soldiers on various continents in NATO, EU, and UN missions. This acceptance of military responsibility in hot spots around the world occurred simultaneously with the reduction of the armed forces from 340,000 to 250,000 soldiers. Perhaps even more astounding is the fact that, despite widespread pacifism, this reorientation in mission proceeded with relatively little friction and Germany's image as a civilian power did not suffer.

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 stirred up anxieties about immigration and gave rise to fears about the potential economic and political problems that could result. But it was also an opportunity to expand relationships with neighbors to the east and to surround Germany with democratic allies. German politicians therefore became early advocates of the eastern expansion of NATO and the EU.

If consensus and continuity characterize German foreign policy in general, then this is even truer of its specifically European policies. The democratic revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe forced Western European politicians to simultaneously strengthen 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 unified 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 increased 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, and these questions concern not only its territorial range, but also its purview and 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.

Thus far, the Federal Republic has supported the initiatives of the EU in the usual manner and has even spearheaded them in many areas (e.g., the expansion into Central and Eastern Europe and greater engagement in south-eastern Europe).²⁴ 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 geographic expansion it has entailed, disputes over isolated issues, and concerns about protecting German interests have instilled in the German population a greater degree of skepticism toward the EU. (The same has happened in other European countries as well.) Nevertheless, 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. In general, it is still true that the majority of German citizens identify with Europe.²⁵

Changes in German foreign policy are primarily a reaction 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 an indication of a new orientation in German policies toward Europe and the world.²⁶ Germany is once again a midsize power, but it conceives of itself as a team player. The self-restraint that characterized the foreign policy of the old Federal Republic still predominates, but it is being increasingly supplemented by signs of self-assertion. This political attitude 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.²⁷ His vehement rejection of German participation in the Iraq War and his ability to parlay this into electoral victory in the fall of 2002 led to considerable transatlantic tensions. In contrast to the influence 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 consulted with increasing frequency on global issues – for instance, the conflict with Iran – and is included in decision-making. German foreign policy is still engaged in seeking the right balance.²⁸

5. Reform Gridlock

After a brief economic upswing stimulated by unification, the Federal Republic was quickly overtaken by the unresolved problems of the previous decades. Unification and the insistence on continuity facilitated a seamless transition from the old to the new Republic and helped maintain political stability, but it also meant wasting an important opportunity to pursue plans for social and economic reform. This strategy would take its toll.

Calls for reform have filled the pages of newspapers and the speeches of opinion makers like no other subject in recent years. In contrast to the reforms of the 1960s and 1970s, which garnered widespread support by extending the promise of more democracy, social services, and education, today's reforms involve the readiness for competition and fears of losing social benefits. Therefore, they provoke resistance and occasionally even protest. In the face of higher national debt, sustained structural unemployment, slow economic growth, low birthrates, and the aging of the population, not to mention global competition, there is practically no area of politics that 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 central government and the federal states.

The now familiar term *Reformstau* (reform gridlock) was coined back in 1997 and became the word of the year. Since then, it has lost none of its relevance and has also been joined by other catchwords, such as “paralysis,” the “German sickness,” and the “immobilized republic.” These expressions attempt to capture a basic condition that is replete with contradictions. Although problems have been identified and the desire for reform clearly articulated, proposed solutions have remained sorely lacking. Various reasons have been suggested by way of explanation. For some, the cause lies primarily in the so-called inter-linkage trap that dominates the political system of the Federal Republic. (Politics occurs on different levels, and these levels depend on

each other to make decisions – thus the term.) This system demands a negotiative brand of democracy that seeks broad consensus and therefore usually proceeds at a snail's pace. Frequently mentioned in this context are, above all, 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. Other explanations for the lack of progress focus on the political class – that it is too set in its established patterns of thinking, does an insufficient job of communicating 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 themselves has not been without 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.²⁹ 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 – almost always proceed on the basis of international comparison. Here, the comparative data that one chooses to employ plays a very significant role: for instance, if one wishes to emphasize that the German economy can meet the challenges of globalization, then it is a good idea to foreground 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 numbers reflecting the high cost of employee benefits, the inflexibility of the labor market, and the slow rate of economic growth can be produced to support the argument. 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 over the last two decades. Opinions differ, however, about whether (and to what extent) the politics of reform – which has since kicked into gear – is merely treating individual symptoms or undertaking important steps to cure systemic disease. More and more voices in Germany and abroad are acknowledging that the political system has certainly made progress in tackling its

tasks.³⁰ 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 an accumulation of 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 far more extensively than is often evident in the course of day-to-day politics.

The question of whether further reforms are necessary is currently not on the agenda. On that point, there is agreement: further reforms are indeed necessary. Dissent emerges when discussion focuses on whether these reforms can be implemented in a timely manner and how far-reaching they have to be to produce the desired result. Success is measured, not least, by the extent to which Germany's economic and social systems can hold their own in international comparisons, and by how well the principles of competition can be combined with social justice.

6. Politics in a Unified Germany

The dilemma of reform has consumed day-to-day politics, amplified political disillusionment, and bruised Germany's collective self-confidence. And to think it all began in 1990 with so much promise. Unification had prompted a boom in the German economy, and Germans were celebrating the coming together of their once divided nation and the accompanying 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: 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 followed the arrival of rising numbers of re-settlers 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 that it was time for a change. And with it 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 (CDU), as a committed European who led the negotiations for a common 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, have 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 faced the new coalition between the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (the Green Party) with democratic composure. Common to both transitions was the feeling of setting out in a new direction. But the 1998 election marked more than just a change of governments: at the top levels of political leadership, a generational changing of the guard was also taking place, 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 sixties and had marched through the institutional ranks. Now, some of its representatives, with Gerhard Schröder and Joschka Fischer at the lead, had come to power.

As was the case with the social-liberal coalition of 1969-1982, the “Red-Green” government was occupied with internal party squabbles and the often underestimated difficulties of day-to-day politics. Political roadblocks between the central government and the federal states 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, SPD and CDU. Virtually all of the major political undertakings of recent years – starting with the commission on reforming the armed forces, through the commission on immigration, 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 include 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 carried out in other areas, with reforms being made to the armed forces, the tax scheme, 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, the "Agenda 2010" – a multistep labor market program – was passed in March 2003. Nationwide protests were provoked, above all, by cuts in unemployment payments and the merger of unemployment and welfare benefits (the implementation of the so-called Hartz IV proposal). Frustrated SPD members and trade unionists founded the Labor and Social Justice Electoral Alternative [*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 in the Social Democratic stronghold of North Rhine-Westphalia – led Chancellor Gerhard Schröder to call for early national elections. A fake vote of confidence, in 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 (CSU), and the SPD had been painted on the wall time and again since 1998, and after the early Bundestag elections of September 2005 it became a reality. Today, this coalition is understood above all as a political opportunity to implement long overdue reforms that have been under discussion for years. The fact that a woman from the former GDR, Angela Merkel, stands at the head of the government as Federal Chancellor is newsworthy and symbolically meaningful, but hardly significant in political terms. The Grand Coalition between the CDU/CSU and SPD, the two strongest mainstream parties, is also a response to a political landscape that has changed considerably since 1990. Not only were these two parties separated by only a few thousand votes in the national elections of 2002 and 2005, in recent years both have also had to give up votes to the smaller parties: Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, Die Linke, PDS, and the Free Democratic Party (FDP). So far, radical right-wing parties have not managed to make it into the Bundestag, but the merger of the eastern regional party PDS with a populist leftist party in the West (WASG) has exacerbated the polarization of the political landscape.

The coalition of "new possibilities," with its focus on "redevelopment, investment, and reform," as put forth by Chancellor Merkel, has the necessary votes in both houses of parliament to implement its agenda. In the case of federalism reform, a new law was finally enacted in the summer of 2006, after years of partisan discord. In other areas of policy, however, it quickly

became apparent how difficult it is to make compromises in a Grand Coalition when each political party also has to maintain its own profile in the interest of future elections.

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. Also among these unresolved problems is violent right-wing radicalism, which makes itself felt time and again, particularly in the new federal states.

7. Transitions: From the Bonn to the Berlin Republic

In 1990, the politicians of the Federal Republic promised continuity in domestic and foreign policy. It is evident, however, that a good deal more has changed for the Republic and its citizens than could have been foreseen back then. Unification came extraordinarily quickly, and affected the citizens of the former GDR in practically all spheres of life. The political, economic, and social reforms affecting Germany as a whole progressed 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 its 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. There has been significant progress in the normalization of the Federal Republic's international status, and the relationship of German citizens to their state reflects a new national consciousness that combines distinct layers of criticism and pride, love of one's homeland, and international openness.

The change from the Bonn to the Berlin Republic was not an abrupt event; 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 Berlin Republic, which has only just begun.³¹ The recent years have been a time of transition – one

that set in just as people had found their bearings in the old Federal Republic. For that reason, too, many political decisions were firstly a response to changes in national and international circumstances and not part of any strategy – the constant attempt to reconcile change and continuity notwithstanding. This balancing act still characterizes the Berlin Republic to this day.

Helga A. Welsh and Konrad H. Jarausch

Translation: Anna Brailovsky

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 "accomplished 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).

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 Lehbruch, "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).

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).

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 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.

²³ On this issue, see J. W. Falter et al., eds., *Sind wir ein Volk? Ost- und Westdeutschland im Vergleich* (Munich, 2006).

²⁴ 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).

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ Helga Haftendorn, *Coming of Age: German Foreign Policy since 1945* (Lanham, MD, 2006).

²⁸ 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 2005-2006), pp. 61-82.

²⁹ 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).

³⁰ The literature on this topic has grown so extensive in the meantime that only a few more recent publications shall be listed 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).

³¹ 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).