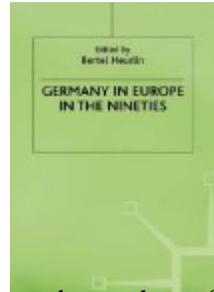


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Bertel Heurin, ed. *Germany in Europe in the Nineties*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. x + 283 pp. \$59.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-312-16148-4.

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Every silver lining has a cloud, as any pessimist knows. So it is with the end of the Cold War and German reunification. This new era of peace brings with it many new opportunities, but also new and daunting challenges. Without the Cold War to provide a comforting framework for international relations, old explanatory models and policy certainties are no longer valid. A new era demands new ideas and creativity, traits that policy makers may neither possess nor want to exercise.

What is true for Europe and the world in general is especially true of reunited Germany. The *Wende* of 1989-1990 answered what had long been considered to be the "German Question." Reunification ended forty years of national division, and both symbolized and hastened the end of the Cold War. Within a few short months, Germany was apparently transformed from a putative nuclear battlefield into the potential dominant power in a new European system. This transformation brought with it the realization that there is a new "German question" that will demand an answer, as formulated by Bertel Heurin: "How will Germany behave in its new position and how will the world react to the new position of Germany?" (p. 2). The difficulties attendant upon answering this question are a product of the bewildering array of possibilities that come with peace. As Josef Joffe asserts: "Never before in history has Germany, in whatever political guise, enjoyed such a benign strategic setting" (p. 264). Searching for a possible point of historical comparison, Joffe suggests that the new European situation can best be compared to that which faced the organizers of the Congress of Vienna, a world freed from protracted conflict but facing an uncertain peace. Such freedom can be deeply disconcerting. The Berlin Republic has no immediate enemies, but also no clear future direction.

The purpose of this book, in part the product of a November 1994 conference organized by the Copenhagen Research Project on European Integration (CORE), is to address the new German question. The eleven essays are combined in four groups, surveying Germany's international position and identity; German policy within the present international system; relations with each of the former occupying powers; and prospects for the future. They include interesting work from a wide range of well-known experts on contemporary German politics and society, especially essays from Joffe, Roger Morgan (on the relationship between German domestic politics and foreign policy), Helga Haftendorn (on Germany's role "in the Centre of Europe"), and Lily Gardner Feldman (on the future of German-American relations).

The essays cover a broad range, but all are animated by a common assumption—that the Berlin Republic will have to find a new world role commensurate with its economic and political potential. Throughout the Cold War, German foreign policy had been marked by restraint imposed both from without and within. The combination of institutional restrictions imposed by the division of Europe and the self-restraint resulting from an awareness of Germany's terrible past had created a paradoxical situation for the Federal Republic, which was once described as "economically a giant but politically a dwarf." This combination precluded the Federal Republic from pursuing an active foreign policy before unification, and has established habits not yet broken, as seen by the controversies over possible German participation in either the Gulf War or peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and elsewhere. The decision by the Federal Constitutional Court in July 1994 allowing "out of area" missions for the German armed forces, combined with continued pressure from Germany's allies—especially the United States—to

participate more actively in international security affairs suggests that the era of external restraint has passed.

If the authors agree that Germany's role will change, however, they have no clear idea of how a new German foreign policy will look. It is by no means obvious that the Germans are anxious to play the larger role some want to assign to them. The tradition of self-restraint is not easily overcome. German policy, even after the Court decision, has been cautious, and neither the German public nor the political class appears willing to shed old conceptions. As a result, in spite of the obvious growth in Germany's relative power with the absorption of the DDR, none of the authors considers a self-conscious German domination of Europe either likely or desirable. The very complexity of Germany's international position makes any attempt at prediction futile. Germany's most important relationships—with the United States and NATO; with France within the European Union; with the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe; with Russia—all place different demands on German policy, and will not easily be brought into harmony. The reader is left with a frustrated feeling that the authors ultimately avoid the question altogether, as Heurin concludes in his own essay: "there probably will emerge no substantial changes in the [sic] German foreign or security policy. [Germany] will remain ... a potential superpower. But the border between the potential and reality will not be crossed" (p. 62). So much for bold new directions.

The publication of this book, and many others like it in recent years, signals the intense interest in this new German question, an interest that has made such collections a growth industry. At the same time, however, as Heurin's conclusion suggests, this book reflects the elusiveness of answers. The collection ultimately fails to deliver on its promise to offer deeper insights into what is to come, except to confirm that Germany's present situation is complicated and its future policy obscure.

Beyond this basic flaw, there are also problems with

the format and structure of the book. Although the dust jacket proudly—if a bit defensively—declares that it "is not just the random output of an international conference," this volume suffers from the characteristic flaws of any collection of essays. The works are of varying length and depth; some of them, such as the otherwise very good essays from Helga Haftendorn and Michael Kreile on Germany's policy toward Europe, have been published in slightly altered form elsewhere. The unevenness of the work makes it difficult to recommend it over other such collections. The first section, outlining "Germany's Position and Role," is the least coherent, including a long yet superficial essay by Richard Muench discussing German national identity from 1770 to 1990, a jargon-heavy "modified neo-realist" analysis from Heurin of Germany's national interests, and an impassioned call from Ekkehart Krippendorf to reject *Realpolitik* in favor of a demilitarized policy of North-South cooperation. The later sections, especially the essays in Part III, which survey German relations with each of the four former occupying powers, are better, though there are some problems with the translation of Yves Boyer's piece on Franco-German relations, and scattered problems with footnotes and editing throughout the text. These shortcomings limit the book's utility for the general reader and are likely to frustrate a specialist looking for new insights.

Thus the overall impression left by this book is mixed. The strength of individual parts is not enough to overcome the weakness of the whole. The individual contributors' success in outlining the complexity of Germany's present position undermines any attempt to answer the questions they pose about the future. The German horizon is bright, but still dotted with clouds which are too distant yet to reveal the color of their lining.

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