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**Mark Hewitson.** *Germany and the Modern World, 1880-1914.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. 528 pp. $36.99, paper, ISBN 978-1-107-61199-3.

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"One of the outstanding features of the nineteenth century," writes Jürgen Osterhammel, "was the multiplication and acceleration of … repeated interactions, especially across national boundaries and often between regions and continents." This first phase of globalization, as some scholars have labeled the six-and-a-half decades between the middle of the nineteenth century and the First World War, was driven by new technologies. Steam power and, later, the diesel engine reduced shipping costs and travel times, while the laying of transoceanic cables and wireless telegraphy enabled businesses in London to place orders in New York and a French diplomat in Tokyo to receive instructions from Paris, all within a matter of hours.[1] Despite its late arrival on the world stage, Germany became deeply enmeshed in—and greatly benefited from—these emerging transnational networks. Between 1872 and 1913, the value of Germany's exports quadrupled, and, by the outbreak of the First World War, its share of world trade nearly equaled that of Britain and the United States. Germans also traveled abroad in large numbers. Some six million people permanently left Germany during the nineteenth century, the vast majority to the United States. Others settled in Canada, South America, Australia, and South Africa.[2] There is little doubt that the shrinking of time and space brought Germans into closer contact with the wider world.

In *Germany and the Modern World, 1880-1914*, Mark Hewitson explores the ways in which Germans sought to make sense of themselves and their surroundings in this period of increasing global interactions. In doing so, he does not simply repeat the now familiar set of ideas, developments, and statistics that historians have used to illustrate Germany's growing interconnectedness with the world after the mid-nineteenth century. Nor does he challenge Sebastian Conrad's assertion that "German history did not unfold solely within the boundaries of the nation state."[3] Contemporaries, Hewitson agrees, could hardly deny that the world—and Germany's place in it—was rapidly changing around the turn of the twentieth century. What interests him is instead the impact of globalization on the beliefs and behavior of German statesmen, government officials, businessmen and industrialists, university professors, and newspaper publicists.

In light of the large body of literature that has recently emerged on Germany's transnational connections before the First World War, his findings are provocative: the primary points of reference for Germans, Hewitson suggests, remained within Germany and, if they transcended national borders at all, in western Europe. As a result,

when, after 1871, Germans debated the merits of their "civilizing mission" in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, the basis for their national identity, the constitution of Bismarck's empire, the functioning of the global economy, and even international relations, they invariably did so with reference to Germany's own culture and traditions and by means of comparisons with France, Britain, and, occasionally, the United States. "For the majority of politicians, publicists and citizens," Hewitson concludes, "the primary political task—or a significant secondary one—was to continue to consolidate a German nation-state in the midst of a familiar local and still largely European 'world'" (p. 317).

The opening chapters show that most Germans believed that the ***Kaiserreich***, or the German Empire forged by Otto von Bismarck in three short "Wars of Unification" between 1864 and 1871, belonged to "Europe" or "the West." The economic, military, and technological power of Britain, France, Germany, and the United States reflected, it was assumed, a shared cultural superiority. As more than one commentator wrote, these ***Kulturvölker***, or cultured peoples, were destined to colonize the ***Naturvölker***, or natural peoples, of Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. In Germany, the popularity of Europe's "civilizing mission" was aided by rising literacy rates and the proliferation of newspapers and illustrated journals: by the last decades of the nineteenth century, the exploits of explorers, scientists, and soldiers could reach a much larger audience than in the past. Even before Hugo Zöller's ***Rund um die Erde*** was published in 1881, the reporter's circumnavigation of the world was well known to readers of the ***Kölnische Zeitung*** from a series of over one hundred newspaper articles. Yet Hewitson argues that great-power competition always overshadowed Germany's perceived cultural ties to "the West." As nervous academics and politicians pointed out, by 1914, Britain and the United States controlled a share of the world's surface roughly six times greater than that of Germany. Confronted with such a formidable concentration of power, creating an overseas empire, according to the theologian Friedrich Fabri, was a ***Lebensfrage***, or existential question, for the ***Kaiserreich***. The large numbers of migrants who departed for the "Anglo-Saxon" world at the same time heightened fears that Germany would soon be unable to compete on the world stage. Under the circumstances, some writers sought to establish the parameters of ***Deutschtum***, or Germanness, by defining it as the source of cultural creativity and by contrasting it with ***Zivilisation***, or the British and, above all, American ability to adapt and harness technologies. Despite counting themselves among the world's ***Kulturvölker***, the majority of contemporaries "appeared unwilling to sacrifice Germany's perceived national interests for the sake of vague cultural and ideological affinities and oppositions" (p. 109).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the existence of such a national identity based on shared values appeared self-evident to many Germans. Even though the ***Kaiserreich*** never adopted a national anthem and most socialists refused to participate in the Sedan Day festivities that commemorated the defeat of the French army and the capture of Emperor Napoleon III in September 1870, a distinct set of national symbols quickly emerged following unification. In chapter 3, Hewitson writes that these symbols, ranging from the ancient "Germanic" hero Arminius, or Hermann, to an imperial coat of arms incorporating the Prussian one-headed eagle helped to ensure that "most German commentators treated the Reich as a normal nation-state, comparable to Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland or France" (p. 156). The swift and widespread acceptance of Bismarck's empire as a ***Nationalstaat*** also had political consequences. Before 1914, a series of crises threatened to destroy the delicate constitutional balance that had been established in 1871. The publication of Kaiser Wilhelm II's ill-judged remarks by a British newspaper, ***The Daily Telegraph***, in 1908 raised questions

about the role of the emperor, while the German army's heavy-handed response to civilian demonstrations in the Alsatian town of Zabern in 1913 produced fierce condemnations of the government in the *Reichstag*, or imperial parliament. Surprisingly, and as Hewitson demonstrates in chapter 4, these crises did not lead to a fundamental reform of Germany's political system. Whereas some members of the Social Democratic Party pressed for the transfer of power to the elected legislature, most politicians rejected British or French parliamentarism as incompatible with Germany's tradition of monarchical constitutionalism. This "demarcation of German particularity" (p. 206) added a political dimension to German nationalism and, more importantly, convinced many politicians and intellectuals to offer their support, at least initially, to the government in 1914.

The final two chapters of *Germany and the Modern World* look at the public discussions of the *Kaiserreich*'s economic and diplomatic entanglements with the world. Most economists recognized that Germany was in the midst of a transformation from an agrarian to an industrial state. In this context, some writers worried that an industrialized Germany would become too dependent on the world economy, thereby placing it at the mercy of forces beyond its control. Others predicted that greater and more frequent exchanges of goods, money, and people would require close cooperation between government and industry, with state intervention preserving, and perhaps even strengthening, existing national borders. Nationalist rhetoric, in Hewitson's view, therefore dominated the debate over the *Kaiserreich*'s changing economic relationship to the world: "although some contemporaries—particularly business leaders—also acknowledged that Germany's economic growth had come to rely on an increasing number of interdependencies within the networks of a global market, most appear to have paid relatively scant regard to them, as they trumpeted—or sought to share in—the country's improving economic fortunes" (p. 248). Supporters of "internationalism" and increased cooperation between states to limit armaments and prevent future conflicts likewise found that their message fell on deaf ears before 1914. German statesmen, Hewitson writes, rarely forgot that the *Kaiserreich*'s standing as a "world power" depended above all on the strength of its position in Europe. Whenever chancellors and foreign secretaries dared to adopt aggressive overseas policies—as during the two Moroccan crises in 1905-6 and 1911—they were quickly reminded that German public opinion possessed little appetite for brinkmanship or conflicts over non-European issues. To be sure, in the last decade before the First World War, Germany repeatedly became involved in diplomatic confrontations in which its interests did not appear to be directly involved. Yet, Hewitson argues, "there was a common European thread running through events—a desire to loosen the Entente, to maintain German status, to shore up Austria and to risk war—but not a common colonial one" (p. 294).

Hewitson's findings are supported by an impressive assemblage of evidence drawn from the correspondence and speeches of prominent statesmen and political party leaders, the works of well-known academics and intellectuals, and articles and cartoons published in mass-circulation newspapers and periodicals. His analysis of these diverse sources provides an important reminder to scholars that globalization's reach was both limited and shifting. Germans around the turn of the twentieth century may have acquired far greater knowledge of the world through the press, novels, and newsreels, but most did not travel abroad, converse regularly with foreigners, or purchase goods made outside the *Kaiserreich*'s borders. Globalization, according to Hewitson, was more "likely to be a matter of perception, not the movement of people or things" (p. 248). In foreign affairs, the pursuit of *Weltpolitik*, or the series of ill-conceived and often ham-fisted attempts by statesmen to expand Germany's influence

across the globe, contributed as much as any other factor to the heightened tensions between the European great powers before 1914. Yet few scholars would disagree with Hewitson's conclusion that, "the closer to war Germany came … the more contemporaries forgot about the wider world" (p. 298).

Equally valuable is the author's call for a re-examination of the influence of right-radical associations before the First World War. The Pan-German League and other "German-national" groups, Hewitson argues, were the vocal minority: their members were more often than not ridiculed in the press "as top-hatted, over-weight, bearded and credulous old men indulging in frivolous 'Deutschtümelei'" (p. 131). His claim that the majority of Germans subscribed to a "banal" nationalism, remained lukewarm to hazardous colonial adventures, and rejected war with the world's other *Kulturvölker*, challenges much of the older historiography on the topic. It will hopefully also encourage new research into the relationship between Pan-Germans, Colonialists, and Naval enthusiasts on the one hand and, on the other, the German government, Foreign Office, and military before 1914.

If there is one shortcoming of *Germany and the Modern World*, it is the author's failure to take into account how Germany's tradition of federalism and the resilience of regional and state-based identities shaped nationalism and the emergence of a set of common "German values" in an increasingly interconnected world. Of course, the kingdom of Prussia, as the largest and most populous federal state, exercised enormous influence over decision-making in unified Germany. Nevertheless, over one-third of Germans remained citizens of states that jealously guarded their cultural and social distinctiveness and, in some cases, their political and even military independence from Berlin. Hewitson at times acknowledges the complexity of the *Kaiserreich*, writing that constitutional lawyers considered federalism to be one of the most formidable obstacles to the introduction of collegial government and ministerial responsibility to German politics (p. 173). He also quotes the left-liberal politician Friedrich Naumann, who, when outlining his own objections to transplanting Britain's model of parliamentary government to Germany, pointed to the "politically different dialects in the North and in the South" (p. 199). Neither of these points receives the attention that it deserves, however, and the reader is left wondering whether or not Germany's peculiar political structure, in which twenty-one kings, grand dukes, dukes, and princes retained their thrones alongside the Kaiser and Prussia's unjust three-class voting system coexisted with more democratic franchises in southern and western Germany also served as points of reference when Germans compared themselves to their neighbors and the wider world. One assumes that they did. After all, particularism was not simply a "myth" (p. 148). Instead, and as Abigail Green has shown, even in the wake of Germany's unification in 1871, and "outside Prussia, particularist political culture continued to inform the culture of nationhood."[4]

This omission does not take away from Hewitson's contribution to the historiography of the *Kaiserreich* in particular and modern Germany more generally. By highlighting the ways in which the expansion of transnational contacts and networks shaped—or failed to shape—public discourses on imperialism, nationalism, economics, and foreign policy, he makes a compelling case for continuing to situate the nation-state at, or near, the center of studies of the first phase of globalization. As a result, *Germany and the Modern World* will be essential reading for scholars and students of German history on the eve of the "short twentieth century."

Notes

[1]. Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth*

*Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 710-29, quotation at 710.

[2]. For an overview of Germany's interconnectedness with the world, see the essays by Cornelius Torp, "The Great Transformation: German Economy and Society, 1850-1914," and Sebastian Conrad and Philipp Ther, "On the Move: Mobility, Migration, and Nation, 1880-1948," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History*, ed. Helmut Walser Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 336-58, 573-90.

[3]. Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2. See also the introduction to Sebastian Conrad and Jürgen Osterhammel, ed., *Das Kaiserreich transnational. Deutschland in der Welt 1871-1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 7-27.

[4]. Abigail Green, *Fatherlands: State-Building and Nationhood in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 334. See also Abigail Green, "How did German Federalism Shape Unification?" in *Germany's Two Unifications: Anticipations, Experiences, Responses*, ed. Ronald Speirs and John Breuilly (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 122-38.