

Beyond the national narrative: implications of reunification for recent German history

Jaraus, Konrad H.

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Zur Verfügung gestellt in Kooperation mit / provided in cooperation with:
GESIS - Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Jaraus, K. H. (2012). Beyond the national narrative: implications of reunification for recent German history. *Historical Social Research, Supplement*, 24, 327-346. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-379216>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY Lizenz (Namensnennung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den CC-Lizenzen finden Sie hier:
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.de>

Terms of use:

This document is made available under a CC BY Licence (Attribution). For more information see:
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

Beyond the National Narrative: Implications of Reunification for Recent German History [2010]

Konrad H. Jarausch*

Abstract: »Jenseits der Nationalen Meistererzählung: Implikationen der Wiedervereinigung für die deutsche Geschichtsschreibung«. This essay addresses the interpretative implications of German unification. First, the precise interaction between the international framework of détente and the internal dynamics of the democratic awakening has to be traced in order to explain the surprising overthrow of Communism and the return of a German national state. Therefore part of the history of the years 1990-2010 in Germany, sometimes referred to as the “Berlin Republic”, can be understood as working out the consequences of unification. But then it must also be realized, that a growing part is also composed of other issues such as globalization, immigration and educational reform. Hence the resumption of the national narrative is a backward-looking perspective that blocks the recognition of more recent problem areas that cannot be dealt with by telling a success story about the Federal Republic. Instead a history of the present require an engagement with new transnational issues of postmodern modernity.

Keywords: German unification, détente, democratic awakening, Berlin Republic, globalization, success story of the FRG, history of the present.

The elaborate celebrations of the twentieth anniversary of 1989/90 have contributed surprisingly little to illuminating the meaning of this caesura for contemporary history. During the past year, eye-witness accounts, media specials, international conferences and political speeches sought to enshrine the inspiring dissident narrative of a “peaceful revolution” by East German citizens as the official interpretation.¹ During the current year, commemorations are bound to focus instead on the more controversial recovery of national unity through Helmut Kohl’s leadership and Mikhail Gorbachev’s as well as George Bush’s help by embedding German reunification in a wider restructuring of Europe. In spite of all subsequent difficulties, there is ample reason to celebrate the overthrow of the SED-dictatorship and the accession of the five new states to

* Reprint of: Jarausch, Konrad H. 2010. Beyond the National Narrative: Implications of Reunification for Recent German History. *German History* 28: 498-514.

¹ Geschichtsforum “Erzählen Sie doch Ihre eigene Geschichte von 1989!” <www.tagesspiegel.de/meinjahr89>; Henrik Bispinck et al., eds., *Programm: Geschichtsforum 1989/2009. Europa zwischen Teilung und Aufbruch* (Berlin, 2009). Cf. Konrad H. Jarausch, “People Power? Towards a Historical Explanation of 1989,” in Vlad Tismaneanu, ed., *The End and the Beginning. The Revolutions of 1989 and the Resurgence of History* (Budapest, 2012).

the Federal Republic. Yet such self-congratulation tends to serve a conservative agenda that silences criticism of the process and its consequences.

Far from being settled, the questions of how to interpret the fall of the Wall and the return of a national state have set off a fierce ideological contest over public memory. For instance, the CDU claims that Konrad Adenauer's anti-Communist magnet theory deserves the chief credit for reunification, while the SPD instead points to the subversive effects of Willy Brandt's "change through convergence" in *Ostpolitik*.² Similarly, most Western commentators see the toppling of the SED-regime as overdue liberation while many disappointed Eastern intellectuals complain about being annexed and subsequently colonized.³ Though Cold Warriors tend to blame most of the transition problems on the rotten legacy of the GDR, critics of the Left instead emphasize the mistakes of the unification process such as the rapid privatization by the Trusteeship Agency⁴ At stake in these debates is the chief historical lesson of the failure of Communism – a conservative neo-totalitarian understanding that equates the SED dictatorship with the Nazis or a leftist commitment to anti-fascism that fears the structural and ideological continuities of the Right.

Blindsided by these events, historians have been unable to provide a corrective, since they have themselves struggled to integrate the *Wende* into larger accounts of post-war development. While conservatives like Hans-Peter Schwarz initially hailed the "end of the identity neurosis," moderates like Thomas Nipperdey interpreted 1989/90 as the completion of the national-liberal struggle for freedom and unity of the 19th century.⁵ Distressed that their post-national agenda had been overturned, critical historians like Hans-Ulrich Wehler concentrated on beating back a neo-conservative effort to renationalize German historical consciousness through a "normalization" campaign.⁶ But lack of prior interest in the GDR made it difficult for scholars like Jürgen Kocka to fit "real existing Socialism" into a broader history of Western moder-

² Jens Hacker, *Deutsche Irrtümer. Schönfärber und Helfershelfer der SED im Westen* (Berlin, 1992) versus Heinrich Potthoff, *Im Schatten der Mauer. Deutschlandpolitik 1961 bis 1990* (Berlin, 1999).

³ Richard Schröder, *Die wichtigsten Irrtümer über die deutsche Einheit* (Freiburg, 2007) versus Kurt Pätzold, "Anschluss mit Abwicklung", *Weltbühne*, April 9, 1991.

⁴ See the contradictory interviews by Wolfgang Schäuble and Edgar Most in Adolf Haasen, *Toward a New Germany: East Germans as Potential Agents of Change* (Bloomington, 2009).

⁵ Hans-Peter Schwarz, "Das Ende der Identitätsneurose," *Rheinischer Merkur*, September 7, 1990; and Thomas Nipperdey, "Die Deutschen dürfen und wollen eine Nation sein," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 13, 1990.

⁶ Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Die Gegenwart als Geschichte* (Munich, 1995); and Konrad H. Jarausch, "Normalisierung oder Re-Nationalisierung? Zur Umdeutung der deutschen Vergangenheit," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 21 (1995), 571-584.

nization.⁷ Because they were not trained in East German history, historians like Heinrich August Winkler, Edgar Wolfrum or Eckhart Conze continued to write West German-centered post-war syntheses, hardly incorporating the GDR and treating the events after 1990 as a mere coda.⁸

A recent shift in topical interests and methodological approaches has also kept many historians from engaging the origins, course and consequences of 1989/90. For instance, Holocaust sensibility focuses on the war-time genocide and considers later developments merely in terms of memory; gender studies which look at constructions of femininity and masculinity in longer time frames are just beginning to explore German division; finally, concern with post-colonial questions addresses the imperialist roots of racism, but pays little attention to post-war events.⁹ At the same time the current move towards European, global or transnational issues transcends the nation state and ignores its surprising return in 1990 as something that needs to be left behind in order to move on to broader questions.¹⁰ While social history and cultural studies can contribute to explaining the “peaceful revolution” of 1989 with concepts like “civil society” or “recovery of authentic language,” an analysis of the unification process in 1990 seems to require more traditional political and diplomatic approaches which interest few younger historians on either side of the Atlantic.¹¹

Two decades after the overthrow of the SED and German reunification, the “consequences of [this] undreamt of event” therefore remain surprisingly underexplored.¹² No doubt, its actual unfolding has been well documented by a stream of memoirs as well as numerous empirical studies, based on access to secret documents, primarily in Eastern files.¹³ But in contrast to the acute fears

⁷ Jürgen Kocka, ed., *Die DDR als Geschichte. Fragen, Hypothesen, Perspektiven* (Berlin, 1994) and idem with Hartmut Kaelble and Hartmut Zwahr, eds., *Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Stuttgart, 1994).

⁸ Heinrich August Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen* (Munich, 2000), 2 vols., Edgar Wolfrum, *Geglückte Demokratie. Geschichte der Bundesrepublik von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart, 2006); and Eckart Conze, *Die Suche nach Sicherheit. Eine Geschichte der Bundesrepublik von 1949 bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 2009).

⁹ Konrad H. Jarausch and Martin Sabrow, eds., *Die historische Meistererzählung. Deutungslinien der deutschen Nationalgeschichte nach 1945* (Frankfurt/Main, 2002).

¹⁰ Konrad H. Jarausch and Thomas Lindenberger, eds., *Conflicted Memories: Europeanizing Contemporary Histories* (New York, 2007). Cf. also the debates on “transnational history” on H-German and HSK.

¹¹ Konrad H. Jarausch, “Kollaps des Kommunismus oder Aufbruch der Zivilgesellschaft? Zur Einordnung der friedlichen Revolution von 1989,” and Martin Sabrow, “Die DDR im Gedächtnis der Gegenwart,” in Eckart Conze, Katharina Gajdukowa and Sigrid Koch-Baumgarten, eds., *Die demokratische Revolution 1989 in der DDR* (Cologne, 2009).

¹² Wolf Lepenies, *Folgen einer unerhörten Begebenheit. Die Deutschen nach der Vereinigung* (Berlin, 1992).

¹³ Timothy Garton Ash, “1989!,” and “Velvet Revolution: The Prospects,” *New York Review of Books*, November 5 and December 3, 2009.

surrounding the revival of a German national state at the time, historians have made little effort to reflect on its meaning for their longer term narratives. Typical of this complacency is Andreas Roedder who concludes his survey of this “historical miracle” by stating that the East German civic movement stood in the tradition of national liberal aspirations of the 19th century, by aiming at “popular sovereignty, freedom and national unity.” From this perspective reunification was merely the delayed achievement of Western normalcy, finally ending the *Sonderweg*.¹⁴ But the multitude of unexpected post-unification problems also indicates the need to ponder alternate framings that might provide a more critical understanding.

1. Explanations of Reunification

Since reuniting the two successor states after four and one half decades of division was by no means foreordained, this surprising development requires a more systematic explanation. In contrast to Bismarck’s conquest of Germany, the restoration of the national state in 1990 was neither the product of a powerful national movement nor the result of three successful wars.¹⁵ Instead, scholarship is divided between those analyses which highlight the contribution of the democratic awakening in East Germany and those accounts which privilege the maneuvering of governments in Bonn, Washington and Moscow. Stressing the “self-liberation” of GDR citizens in the “first successful German revolution” has the merit of focusing on the popular agency which overthrew the SED-dictatorship, but cannot explain the form of subsequent unification.¹⁶ Emphasizing the political struggles and the diplomatic negotiations of the “great game” between the major powers has the advantage of looking at the domestic dynamics and international shape of the settlement, but fails to give credit to the initiators of the issue.¹⁷

One of the ironies of the grass-roots explanation is that the “peaceful revolution” did not even aim at reunification at the beginning. The systematic policy of *Abgrenzung* by the SED as well as consistent Stasi vigilance had put any thought of restoring national unity beyond the pale, since Honecker rejected

¹⁴ Andreas Roedder, *Deutschland einig Vaterland. Die Geschichte der Wiedervereinigung* (Munich, 2009), 376ff.

¹⁵ Otto Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany: The Period of Unification, 1815-1871* (Princeton, 1963). Cf. Ronald Speirs and John Breuilly, eds., *Germany’s Two Unifications: Anticipations, Experiences, Responses* (New York, 2005).

¹⁶ Ehrhard Neubert, *Unsere Revolution. Die Geschichte der Jahre 1989/90* (Munich, 2008), 13; and Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel. Die Revolution von 1989 in der DDR* (Munich, 2009), 544.

¹⁷ Alexander von Plato, *Die Vereinigung Deutschlands. Ein weltpolitisches Machtspiel: Bush, Kohl, Gorbatschow und die geheimen Moskauer Protokolle* (Berlin, 2002). Cf. Roedder, *Deutschland einig Vaterland*, 49.

Kohl's reference to a common nationality and chose to interpret his 1987 visit to Bonn as recognition of the existence of two German states. Moreover, within the system-immanent opposition, many dissidents genuinely believed in socialist values and saw some of the consequences of capitalist competition with horror. Only those who voted with their feet by joining the mass exodus to the West in the summer and fall of 1989 sought reunification on an individual level by escaping to the more successful system of the Federal Republic. Contrary to exaggerated claims after the fact, only a few dissidents like Edelbert Richter dared speak of unity, while the great majority of the platforms of the emerging opposition groups like the *Neues Forum*, *Demokratie Jetzt* or *Sozialdemokratische Partei* were oriented towards reforming the GDR.¹⁸

Only with the fall of the Wall on November 9, 1989 did the possibility of unification move from a pipedream to an actual political possibility. The excited population interpreted the partly intentional, partly accidental lifting of the barrier between East and West Berlin by Honecker's successor Egon Krenz as a victory of pressure from below. Moreover, the first visit of millions of East Germans, aided by a *Begrüßungsgeld*, revealed the drastic difference of living standards between a decaying GDR and a prospering FRG, with the latter's glittering commercial surface hiding some of its structural problems. As a result of the firsthand experience of the West and of their warm welcome, the demonstration slogans in Leipzig and other cities shifted from "we are the people" to "we are one people" in mid-November. The formerly silent majority of the population itself began to speak out for unification, forcing the opposition groups to revise their platforms frantically so as to include plans for a step-by-step rapprochement of the two German states. Not the dissidents, but the GDR citizens drove this crucial shift of priorities.¹⁹

It is important to recall that the prospect of reunification had different meanings, depending upon age and relationship to the SED-dictatorship. For the older generation, it signified the restoration of a "natural" state of things before the division. For many of the younger cohorts, it suggested exciting possibilities for consumption, popular culture and travel which had hitherto been denied to them. For political opponents of the regime or committed Christians, it promised the end of obnoxious repression and discrimination. But for supporters of the SED, the bloc parties and the many auxiliary organizations, however, it threatened many hard-won privileges. Unlike in the neighboring nation states, the progression from reforming Socialism to abolishing it altogether imperiled the very existence of the GDR, because as the head of the party's institute for social sciences Otto Reinhold mused, without Socialism there was

¹⁸ Neubert, *Unsere Revolution*, 50, 239ff., 310ff.; Kowalczyk, *Endspiel*, 393f, 461f, 528ff.

¹⁹ Michael Richter, *Die friedliche Revolution. Aufbruch zur Demokratie in Sachsen 1989/90* (Göttingen, 2009), 20, 397, 497, 621, 810. This is the most thorough empirical study of shifting popular sentiment on the local level.

no need for East Germany. In a way, reunification became a collective exodus with citizens leaving the Communist realm for the Western system without changing their place of residence.²⁰ To many East Germans, unification appealed as the quickest road to prosperity and freedom.

Ultimately the election of March 18, 1990 sealed the East German choice of unity by democratic means. The Round Table negotiations between the weakening Modrow who had succeeded Krenz and various opposition groups were still busy searching for a Third Way by turning the letter of the GDR constitution a lived reality. Hence the restive population welcomed FRG leaders like Helmut Kohl or Willy Brandt and the fragmented pro-unification initiatives like the *Demokratischer Aufbruch* were willing to affiliate with Western parties, forming a rather heterogeneous "Alliance for Germany." To compensate for PDS control of the government and media, they also accepted professional advice and financing in the election campaign that contrasted starkly with the imaginative amateurishness of the dissident "*Bündnis 90*." The overwhelming outcome, endorsing rapid unification, was therefore a fairly accurate reflection of the majority's wish to join the successful West.²¹ Hence interpretations focused on the internal dynamics rightly stress that the initiative for unification came from disgruntled GDR citizens, but slight the help of outside leaders to bring it about.

By analyzing domestic politics and international diplomacy an entirely different strand of literature explores Chancellor Helmut Kohl's decision to seize upon this opportunity. It shows that the CDU's rhetorical professions of desire for reunification had grown hollow through the decades and were no longer backed by any practical preparations. West German politicians therefore reacted with confusion to the spectacle of the mass exodus and demonstrations in the East until Kohl began to link the promise of economic help to the need to reform of the GDR. It took the chancellor three weeks after the fall of the Wall to work up the courage to make reunification an operative goal in his famous "Ten Point Plan" of November 28, which sketched a progression of steps from a confederation to an eventual federation of both Germanys. The uproar at home and abroad, caused by this modest suggestion, demonstrated that ending the German division would require overcoming considerable internal skepticism and external resistance, because it threatened to undermine the entire post-war order in Europe.²²

²⁰ Konrad H. Jarausch, *Die unverhoffte Einheit* (Frankfurt/Main, 1995), 137ff. It is important to decode these multiple associations in order to understand the popular motivation which was not free from illusions.

²¹ Richter, *Die friedliche Revolution*, 2: 1035ff., 1294ff., 1452ff.; and Neubert, *Unsere Revolution*, 363ff.

²² Helmut Kohl, *Erinnerungen* (Munich, 2004), vol. II; Horst Teltschik, *329 Tage. Innenansichten der Einigung* (Berlin, 1991); and Andreas Wirsching, *Abschied vom Provisorium, 1982-1990* (Munich, 2006).

Most authors agree that the international community responded rather ambivalently to the prospect of reunification due to historic fears of a strong Germany. While the people in many countries shared in the joy of the democratic awakening, the governments of the victor powers and smaller neighbors remained wary. The only real support came from the administration of George Bush which saw the collapse of Communism as a chance to advance US influence in Europe, as long as Germany remained in NATO. Caught in memories of the Second World War, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher remained opposed, while French President Mitterrand vacillated before deciding to channel the process in a European direction.²³ The key figure was Mikhail Gorbachev, since the Red Army still had almost half a million soldiers stationed in the GDR. Initially hoping that Modrow's reform attempts would help stabilize his client state, the Soviet leader had no fall-back strategy in case they failed. His rhetoric of a "common European house" made it difficult for him to refuse Bonn's insistence on the East German call for self-determination.²⁴

Commentators generally portray the so-called two-plus-four negotiations, combining the World War Two victors and the two German states, as a Western success story. Much to the chagrin of the Italians, Poles or Israelis, this forum excluded the smaller countries in order to be able to reach an agreement more quickly. In these talks the experience of West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher succeeded in resolving several smaller crises, whereas the neutralist influence of East German Foreign Minister Markus Meckel remained negligible. In the issue of the Eastern border of a unified Germany the combined pressure of the international community forced a reluctant chancellor Kohl, who did not want to lose expellee votes, to accept the Oder-Neiße line as final. In the question of the future military alliance, Gorbachev ultimately conceded that the Germans could stay in NATO, since a multilateral engagement would be preferable to armed neutrality in Central Europe. Surprisingly enough, many East European dissidents also supported reunification in the hope that lifting the Iron Curtain would reopen their own road to the West.²⁵

The internal and external strands of development eventually came together in another set of rather unequal unification treaties, symbolized by Helmut Kohl's bulk overshadowing the diminutive East German Prime Minister Lothar de Maiziere. The limited international "window of opportunity" due to the instability of the Soviet Union and the progressive collapse of the planned

²³ Philipp Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany United and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, MA, 1995); and Frederic Bozo, *Mitterrand, the End of the Cold War and German Unification* (New York, 2009).

²⁴ Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union and the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill, 2007). The role of Gorbachev is still hotly disputed with most Russian analyses highly critical and German monographs more charitable.

²⁵ Hans-Dietrich Genscher, *Rebuilding a House Divided: A Memoir by the Architect of Germany's Reunification* (New York, 1998). Cf. also Weidenfeld, *Außenpolitik*, passim.

economy ruled out a lengthy constitutional convocation according to paragraph 146 of the Basic Law and privileged rapid accession of East Germany to West Germany according to paragraph 23, first used with the Saar in 1956. Based on the 19th century precedent of the Zollverein, a currency, custom and social union of July 1, 1990 transferred the DM to the East in order to stem the flood of internal migrants by offering access to Western consumer goods. Even more complicated was the comprehensive unification treaty, which regulated the transfer of the Federal Republic's institutions to the East, because all sorts of unforeseen questions like abortion rights, property restitution and the Stasi files evoked strong emotional responses. Nonetheless, enough agreement emerged so that the five new Eastern states could join the FRG on October 3, 1990.²⁶

A brief comparison with the founding of the Reich in 1871 shows that the second unification differed markedly, since it merely restored a prior national state, albeit in diminished size and chastened form. Instead of being a product of Bismarckian *Realpolitik*, reunification was a reward for the double "fulfillment policy" of Adenauer's *Westbindung* and Brandt's *Ostpolitik* which integrated the FRG in the West and allayed multiple revanchist fears in the East. The second time around it was not Prussia which put the rest of Germany under the authoritarian Hohenzollern crown, but the Federal Republic that brought Western forms of political participation, economic prosperity and cultural freedom to the East by popular request. Even if there was no constitutional convention, the process was democratically legitimated by the overwhelming GDR vote in March 1990 and confirmed by the national election the same December. In contrast to the Second Reich, the acceptance of all borders as permanent and the drying up of ethnic diasporas seemed to augur well for a more peaceful future in an integrating Europe.²⁷

2. Outlines of the Berlin Republic

Since reflection on united Germany's development during the last two decades is just beginning, historians are still groping for interpretations that go beyond media commentary. In contrast to the old Federal Republic associated with Bonn, some authors have adopted the label "Berlin Republic" to signal not just the shift of the capital but also the new quality of political culture and the growth of international responsibilities. Though there is a plethora of social science collections with interesting essays on particular questions, historical

²⁶ Wolfgang Schäuble, *Der Vertrag. Wie ich über die deutsche Einheit verhandelte* (Stuttgart, 1991); Theo Waigel, *Unsere Zukunft heißt Europa. Der Weg zur Wirtschafts- und Währungsunion* (Düsseldorf, 1996). Vgl. Jäger, *Überwindung der Teilung*, passim.

²⁷ Speirs and Breuilly, *Germany's Two Unifications*, passim. Cf. Neubert, *Unsere Revolution*, 438, and Roedder, *Deutschland einig Vaterland*, 117.

narratives like Manfred Görtemaker's recent synthesis are still relatively rare.²⁸ These preliminary explorations suggest that the story can be told in two different ways: Most accounts focus on the rather problematic consequences of unification for the economy, society and culture, highlighting the adaptation difficulties of the new citizens. Less frequent are analyses which also point to an entirely new set of problems related to the effects of globalization, the challenge of international terrorism and the like. How might the confusing events since 1990 be framed in historical terms?

Supporters of reunification usually point out that the transfer of Western political institutions through accession to the Federal Republic seems to have worked relatively well. Certainly the extension of the Basic Law to the new states was a gain, since its protection of human rights transformed an arbitrary legal system into a functioning *Rechtsstaat*. Also the importation of a parliamentary democracy was by and large positive, because it organized political competition between all-German parties plus the SED successor PDS according to accepted electoral rules and produced stable governments. Moreover, the revival of federalism in the East built on the strong regional allegiances in Brandenburg, Saxony or Thuringia, rooting the five new states in popular affection. Finally the adoption of the complex web of official regulations was speeded by "development-helpers" that advised in the renewal of the bureaucracy, even if these were often derided as *Besserwessis*.²⁹ On the surface the new system functioned surprisingly well, but it left little room for the incorporation of Eastern preferences like the right to abortion and therefore hid a lingering unease.

In contrast, transformation critics emphasize that the economic "unification shock" was so pronounced as to trigger a veritable "unification crisis." Although the West profited initially, in the East production fell by three quarters, as exposure to international competition revealed the decrepit state of many state-owned companies. Since the productivity level was only one-third per capita of the FRG, the approximately 1:1 currency exchange rate and the quick rise of wages to 2/3 of the Western level consigned many businesses to bankruptcy. The rapid privatization policy of the Trusteeship Agency did not help either, because it sold healthy companies to investors, while dissolving those it deemed uncompetitive, although some might have been salvaged with more governmental support. The result of such drastic deindustrialization was mass

²⁸ Klaus Schroeder, *Die veränderte Republik. Deutschland nach der Wiedervereinigung* (Munich, 2006); Wolfgang Schluchter and Peter E. Quint, eds., *Der Vereinigungsschock. Vergleichende Betrachtungen zehn Jahre danach* (Weilerwist, 2001); and Manfred Görtemaker, *Die Berliner Republik. Wiedervereinigung und Neuorientierung* (Berlin, 2009).

²⁹ Peter E. Quint, *The Imperfect Union: Constitutional Structures of German Unification* (Princeton, 1997); and Wolfgang Schluchter, *Neubeginn durch Anpassung? Studien zum ostdeutschen Übergang* (Frankfurt/Main, 1996).

unemployment at twice the Western rate, affecting especially women, 9/10 of which had worked in the GDR. Unfortunately most of the huge government transfers went into infrastructure rebuilding and welfare payments rather than into industrial investment.³⁰ Therefore only a few regions achieved self-sustained growth.

Social observers also note that the adaptation from a collectivist to an individualistic society disrupted many well-established life courses. The price of access to Western consumption was the devaluation of all those survival mechanisms essential in a dictatorship and the need to learn a whole new repertoire of behaviors like filling out life-insurance forms. With the arrival of the market, some important public institutions like walk-in clinics, infant care, or youth clubs collapsed as private substitutes generally failed to pick up the slack. The competitive environment produced a new group of winners such as small business owners, civil servants and professionals, but there were also plenty of losers from the displaced SED *nomenklatura* that resented the decline in their status. Due to the communist past, fewer East Germans owned property, lived in single family homes or had sizable savings, making for a more proletarian environment. Though welfare transfers, pensions and unemployment benefits kept most people out of poverty, the drastic drop in the birthrate and continued regional depopulation indicated the severity of the adjustment.³¹

Cultural commentators are still puzzled by the pervasive sense of loss that fueled an unexpected wave of “nostalgia” rather than inspiring a feeling of liberation. Some of this reaction had to do with the biographical disorientation of FDJ-youths who were prepared for a future that failed to materialize. Some of the resentment was also due to the symbolic devaluation of leading Eastern intellectuals like Christa Wolf who were viciously attacked by Western cultural critics in the *Literaturstreit* for supporting the SED. Some of the revulsion was moreover the product of media frenzy in scandalizing the Stasi collaboration of informal informants, thousands of whom had honeycombed GDR society. Finally some of the angry response was the result of displacement complaints of leading apologists of the Communist dictatorship who lost their jobs in the restructuring of the universities and the economy³² Ironically, many East

³⁰ Jürgen Kocka, *Die Vereinigungskrise. Zur Geschichte der Gegenwart* (Göttingen, 1995). Cf. Wolfgang Seibel, *Verwaltete Illusionen. Die Privatisierung der ostdeutschen Wirtschaft durch die Treuhandanstalt und ihre Nachfolger 1990-2000* (Frankfurt/Main, 2005); and Schroeder, *Veränderte Republik*, 199-301.

³¹ Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit. Die Wiedervereinigung und die Krise des Sozialstaats* (Munich, 2006). Cf. Martin Diewald, Anne Goedicke and Karl Ulrich Mayer, eds., *After the Fall of the Wall: Life Courses in the Transformation of East Germany* (Stanford, 2006).

³² Jana Hensel, *After the Wall: Confessions from an East German Childhood and the Life that Came Next* (New York, 2004); Andrew Beattie, *Playing Politics with History: The Bundestag Inquiries into East Germany* (New York, 2008); and Thomas Goldstein, “Writing in Red: The East German Writer’s Union,” (diss. Chapel Hill, 2010).

Germans have come to feel more different from their West German cousins after unification than before, because they resented being second class citizens in a country whose cultural institutions were dominated by Western elites.

But many other developments cannot merely be explained as consequences of reunification, forcing historians to adopt different interpretative frames so to explain their impact. A case in point is shift of domestic power from Berlin to Brussels due to the progress of European integration after the Maastricht treaty. The introduction of the Euro as common currency has replaced the hallowed symbol of the DM and created a new European bank with supreme authority. Even if the effort at streamlining EU institutional decision-making through a European constitution initially stalled due to the French and Dutch referenda defeats, the eventual ratification of the Lisbon treaty has strengthened majority voting and created new European offices in foreign and defense policy. The German Constitutional Court has therefore issued an ambivalent opinion, permitting further integration but at the same time stressing the democracy deficit of European institutions and reaffirming its own ultimate responsibility of judicial review. Since it no longer fits a purely national narrative, involvement in Europe as an emergent polity requires a broader view.³³

In foreign policy new responsibilities have been thrust upon the FRG, rendering it impossible for Berlin to act according to the cliché of being an economic giant and a political dwarf. Fortunately, initial fears of a resurgence of German hegemony have proven excessive, since preoccupation with rehabilitating the five new states has tied up energies otherwise directed abroad. Though the FRG was able to avoid participation in the first Iraq war, subsequent requests from the international community forced a grudging reconsideration of defense posture that led the Constitutional Court to authorize out-of-area deployments in the context of multilateral actions of the United Nations or NATO in 1994. After criticism of the premature recognition of Slovenian and Croatian independence by the German government, the initial posture of non-involvement in the Balkan wars foundered when the July 1995 massacre in Srebrenica made it clear that abstention abetted war crimes on the German door-step. Hence the red-green coalition felt compelled to participate in the military action to prevent its recurrence in the Kosovo four years later, reversing its understanding of the lesson of the Holocaust.³⁴

Another novel dimension has been the increasing pressure of international competition which has required drastic adjustments to the German welfare state

³³ John E. Gillingham, *European Integration, 1950-2003: Superstate or New Market Economy?* (Cambridge, 2003). Cf. Erhard Joerges et. al., eds., *Developing a Constitution for Europe* (London, 2004).

³⁴ Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Die Zentralmacht Europas. Deutschlands Rückkehr auf die Weltbühne* (Berlin, 1994); Helga Haftendorn, *Coming of Age: German Foreign Policy Since 1945* (Lanham, Md, 2006).

in order to retain its export lead. The double oil price shocks of 1973 and 1979 undermined the “German model” of Rhenish capitalism because of its high wage-structure and extensive social transfers. In contrast to Honecker’s Communist consumerism based on foreign loans, Helmut Kohl’s soft neo-liberalism of pruning state expenditures, privatizing some services and reducing welfare benefits succeeded in reviving economic growth. While SPD obstruction complicated the post-unification adjustments, Gerhard Schroeder’s Agenda 2010 finally cut the knot by reducing transfer payments enough to spur renewed job growth, though public backlash cost him the subsequent election. Concurrently German companies increased their competitiveness again by personnel reductions, out-sourcing and union concessions. Hence the weak growth of the economy during the 1990s was not just a product of unification but also the result of a painful adjustment to world market competition.³⁵

A final area that has become increasingly problematic due to popular fear of strangers is the question of immigration. While the growth of foreign minorities began with the so-called “guest-workers” in the 1960s, migration pressures increased drastically in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the arrival of an unprecedented number of ethnic remigrants from Eastern Europe, asylum seekers from the Third World and civil war refugees from the Balkans. Since the Right denied that Germany was an immigration country while the Left believed in multi-cultural *laissez faire*, the CDU/FDP coalition restricted the influx through administrative measures. Only the red-green coalition finally managed to liberalize the citizenship law by easing naturalization for long-time residents and allowing their children to opt for a German passport. Moreover, it also pushed through a contentious immigration bill that tried to offer a regular access channel instead of having to use the claim of asylum. But some outbreaks of xenophobic violence indicated widespread resentment, complicating an active integration policy and hampering the recognition of racial or religious diversity.³⁶

These examples suggest that the history of the two decades since 1990 cannot just be written around the consequences of unification, but that its horizon needs to be expanded to encompass new problem areas that follow different trajectories. The many assessments of the degree of unity reached in “one state with two societies” are an understandable exercise in political rhetoric but they hardly contribute to historical analysis, since they are backward looking and

³⁵ Hans-Werner Sinn, *Can Germany Be Saved? The Malaise of the World’s First Welfare State* (Cambridge, MA, 2007). Cf. Konrad H. Jarausch, ed., *Das Ende der Zuversicht? Die Siebziger Jahre als Geschichte* (Göttingen, 2008).

³⁶ Rita Chin, *The Guest-Worker Question in Postwar Germany* (Cambridge, 2007); Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans 1945-1995* (New York, 2006), 239-263; and the dissertation by Sarah Thomsen Vierra on Turkish-German interaction.

assume a homogeneous nation state as an evaluative criterion.³⁷ Instead European integration, out of area deployment, neoliberal adjustments and immigration conflicts point to different kinds of transnational issues that go far beyond a restored national narrative. Because many of these trends began before the fall of the Wall and only gained additional speed thereafter, they indicate the need to break out of the established teleological framework that culminates in 1989/90. Only when historians make this interpretative leap, will they be able to explore the most recent period of contemporary development with authority.³⁸

3. Transcending National Narratives

The impact of reunification on overarching narratives of twentieth century history has been rather limiting, because the restoration of a democratized nation state has reaffirmed the traditional framework of interpretation in only minimally altered form. Overcoming the division has provided a convenient end-point to a national narrative of imperial hubris, Weimar failure, Third Reich transgression, GDR false start and eventual FRG redemption. From this perspective, the Federal Republic's development was a success story, which started from the nadir of inhuman crimes and shattering defeat, gradually recovered dignity through political Westernization and democratization and was eventually rewarded for its "recivilization" by the overthrow of Communism and reunification with the Eastern states. In contrast to this plot line, also explored in *After Hitler*, lingering reservations of continuing social inequality or a nervous search for security could be ignored as only minor blemishes on a positive record. Even for the most of the Left which previously criticized West Germany, reunification seems to have validated the FRG's course in retrospect.³⁹

A concomitant of such Western self-congratulation was a systematic delegitimation of the GDR by exposing its many shortcomings after the fact. The

³⁷ For a survey of the unification assessments see Schroeder, *Veränderte Republik*, 511-576. Cf. Christoph Kleßmann, "'Deutschland einig Vaterland'? Politische und gesellschaftliche Verwerfungen im Prozess der deutschen Vereinigung," *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 6 (2009), Nr. 1.

³⁸ Görtemaker, *Berliner Republik*, 58ff., 129ff. Cf. Konrad H. Jarausch, "Anfänge der Berliner Republik (1990-2009)," in Ulf Dirlmeier et al., *Kleine deutsche Geschichte* (Stuttgart, 2009).

³⁹ Winkler, *Germany: The Long Road West* (New York, 2006), vol. 2 and Wolfrum, *Geglückte Demokratie* versus Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 5: *Bundesrepublik Deutschland und DDR 1949-1990* (Munich, 2008) and Conze, *Suche nach Sicherheit*, passim. Cf. Konrad H. Jarausch, "The Federal Republic at Sixty: Popular Myths, Actual Accomplishments and Competing Interpretations," *German Politics and Society*, 28 (2010), 10-29.

widely publicized hearings of the Bundestag Commission of Inquiry, the incessant stream of disclosures of Stasi collaboration and the numerous media scandalizations of East German corruption have created a predominant image of the SED-regime as a repressive *Unrechtsstaat*. This negative depiction has recycled Western accusations of Cold War propaganda and captured the deep-seated resentment of the victims of the Communist dictatorships. But it has failed to address the more positive memories of many East Germans who tried to “lead a correct life within the wrong system.” At the same time it provoked the ire of former supporters of the regime who cultivated more positive recollections of their own role in a post-Communist subculture. The laudable academic effort of more discerning scholars to portray the GDR as a contradictory system of both repression and every-day normalcy seems to have had little impact on overall syntheses of post-war history.⁴⁰

The 1990 focus of a resurgent national narrative has also inhibited an examination of the two decades after unification, because these tend to appear merely as a coda to a story that has already been completed. Due to inaccessibility of primary sources and insufficient temporal distance historians are generally reluctant to engage “the history of the present.” Moreover, the current fixation on the “peaceful revolution” has narrowed the focus to an analysis of the after-effects of unification and prohibited an intellectual opening to new kinds of problems. In contrast, the caesura of 9/11 plays a much larger role in the Anglo-American discussion, since it signals an elemental shock to the perception of US inviolability which has triggered a veritable politics of fear. The attack on the World Trade Center seemed to validate Samuel Huntington’s clash of civilizations thesis by replacing Communism with radical Islam as the new enemy. The crusade against international terrorism, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the conflicts with Muslim minorities at home have so far hardly made a dent on German historical perceptions.⁴¹

Another unintended consequence of the prevailing Westernization narrative has been its neglect of the transformation of Eastern Europe, although it played a crucial role in the overthrow of Communism and the acceptance of reunification. Overemphasizing the importance of the Soviet Union, one recent synthesis begins with the assertion “in the beginning there was Gorbachev,” recalling Thomas Nipperdey’s reference to Napoleon. Most interpretations agree that the

⁴⁰ Armin Mitter and Stefan Wolle, *Untergang auf Raten. Unbekannte Kapitel der DDR-Geschichte* (Munich, 1993) as well as Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat. Partei, Staat und Gesellschaft 1949-1990* (Munich, 1998) versus Mary Fulbrook, *The People’s State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven, 2005) and Konrad H. Jarausch, ed., *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York, 1999).

⁴¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, 1997). Cf. Martin Sabrow, “Zäsur und Zeitgeschichte. 9. November 1989 und 9. September 2001” (MS Berlin, 2010). An exception is Görtemaker, *Berliner Republik*, 129ff.

formation of the independent Polish trade union *Solidarność* inspired dissident protests and that the Hungarian lifting of the Iron Curtain helped unleash the mass exodus. But most historical discussions of the Maastricht agreement are preoccupied with the introduction of the Euro and the problems of restructuring of the EU machinery in Brussels rather than addressing the implications of the transformation of the East. All too few scholars have taken up Karl Schlögel's somewhat facetious hint of celebrating truckers as the vanguard of reconnecting Eastern to Central and Western Europe.⁴² The enormous importance of the Eastern expansion of the EU for the restoration of Germany's central position in the continent has therefore been largely ignored.

The widespread satisfaction with the end of the German *Sonderweg* has also tended to block critical thinking about problem areas which have not yet been resolved by it. All too often the return of a diminished and democratized nation state is interpreted as proof that the Germans have ceased their efforts to be different and that the FRG has become a normal Western parliamentary state. Because this development has finished the repeated German attempts at exceptionalism which had such bloody consequences in the past century, it is quite understandable that many observers are relieved. Nonetheless, this assertion is not entirely correct, since the German version of post-Communist transformation via accession of the new states to the existing Federal Republic differs from the internal transformation of existing states in Eastern Europe with commentators divided on the actual results.⁴³ But even if one grants that the *Sonderweg* might really have ended, its conclusion has left an interpretative lacuna: With the old story successfully finished, it is not clear how to interpret what comes next.

Breaking out of the reunification teleology requires a conscious effort to abandon its past-centered perspective in order to look for the antecedents of the problems of the present. In the economic field, such a switch points to the crucial importance of the caesura of 1973, since the OPEC's oil-price shocks ended the long post-war boom and inaugurated a period of recessions and weak economic growth. Instead of just being a product of repeated business downturns, this slow-down signaled a structural transformation to the third phase of the industrial revolution away from smokestack production and Fordism to high technology and services. The concurrent sharpening of world-wide competition, labeled "globalization" in the 1990s, led to widespread deindustriali-

⁴² Roedder, *Deutschland einig Vaterland*, 15. Cf. Karl Schlögel, "Über Räume und Register der Geschichtsschreibung. Ein Gespräch mit Karl Schlögel," *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 1 (2004), Nr. 3; and Philip Ther, "Das 'neue Europa' seit 1989. Überlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Transformationszeit," *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 6 (2009), Nr. 1.

⁴³ Jürgen Kocka, "German History Before Hitler: The Debate about the German *Sonderweg*," *Journal of Contemporary History* 23 (1988), 3-16 and "Nach dem Ende des *Sonderwegs*. Zur Tragfähigkeit eines Konzepts," in Arnd Bauerkämper et al., eds., *Doppelte Zeitgeschichte. Deutsch-deutsche Beziehungen 1945-1990* (Bonn, 1998).

zation in coal, steel and shipbuilding, eventually even shifting the production of consumer goods like electronics and cameras to the Far East. The resulting growth of long-term unemployment strained the welfare-state, eventually forcing Kohl's and Schroeder's moderate cut-backs.⁴⁴ Such headlines of the last decades can only be understood if their origins are explored transnationally.

Another important problem, bypassed by traditional narratives, is the destruction of the environment which transcends national frontiers. In contrast to the fading away of the peace issue and the slow progress in gender equality, the new social movement of environmental activism has intensified in recent years. Growing out of local confrontations about the building of super-highways through neighborhoods or the construction of nuclear power plants in the Badensian village of Wyhl, a translocal ecology movement formed in the second half of the 1970s that led to the founding of the Green Party. It coalesced around quality of life issues, focusing on the reduction of air-pollution, the cleaning up of water supplies and the propagation of organic foods. To combat the oil-crises and the fouling of the air by coal power-plants, activists focused on the promotion of renewable sources in wind-generation and solar power, making the FRG a leader in the field of alternative energy.⁴⁵ Due to the fear of global warming, saving the climate has become an important issue of international politics that has yet to be integrated into larger narratives.

Yet another controversial problem where international pressures have forced overdue reform efforts is the modernization of the German education system. Since the initiatives of the 68 critics were stopped by political resistance and fiscal constraints, changing institutional arrangements has been exceedingly difficult. Moreover, with unification West German structures, themselves in need of reform, were extended to the new states. On the primary level, progressive educators have long criticized the lack of all-day childcare and infant schooling which has made it difficult for women to combine work and motherhood in the FRG, producing one of the lowest birth-rates in Europe. On the secondary level, the PISA comparison revealed that the tripartite segmentation of the German system in *Hauptschule*, *Realschule* and *Gymnasium* for entry to blue-collar, white-collar and professional jobs, was producing inadequate results and reinforcing societal divisions. On the university level, the Bologna-process has compelled the controversial introduction of an intermediary B.A. and a more selective M.A. in order to make German degrees more internatio-

⁴⁴ Anselm Doering-Manteuffel and Lutz Raphael, *Nach dem Boom. Perspektiven auf die Zeitgeschichte seit 1970* (Göttingen, 2008); and Jarausch, *Ende der Zuversicht*, 330-349.

⁴⁵ Andrei S. Markovits, *The German Left: Red, Green and Beyond* (New York, 1993); and the dissertation of Steve Milder on the spread of anti-nuclear protests.

nally compatible.⁴⁶ Such conflicts cannot be analyzed in a national fashion alone.

A final instance of an entirely new problem area is the threat of international terrorism that made it impossible for Berlin to remain an uninvolved bystander. The dramatic pictures of the attack on the World Trade Center of 9/11 triggered a wave of sympathy with the US because some of it had been prepared from German soil. Solidarity with the human suffering led the Schroeder-Fischer government to tighten domestic security measures and authorize participation in the anti-terrorist war in Afghanistan – an unthinkable commitment in the Bonn Republic. Yet the SPD/Green coalition refused to join President George W. Bush's Second Iraq War, since it was not convinced by the claims of weapons of mass destruction or of Al-Qaeda being behind Saddam Hussein. Forming an impromptu coalition with France, Russia and China demonstrated a growing independence in the pursuit of national interests, which secured red-green's reelection in 2002. Though striving to remain a reliable partner by supporting the Eastern expansion of NATO and the EU, Berlin slowly developed a more assertive international role.⁴⁷ Again, dealing with those developments requires a broader frame of reference.

These examples, to which other instances could be added, indicate that more and more long range developments and short range crises transcend the conventional unification narrative. Globalization, environmental protection, educational reform, and containment of terrorism are cross-cutting issues which have developed since the 1970s and affected most advanced countries. This emerging problem constellation has variously been called post-industrial society, post-modernity or risk-society – but none of the labels has stuck so far, because each highlights only one aspect of a series of bewildering changes.⁴⁸ Analyzing German responses to such challenges therefore requires quite a different, transnational approach that compares the general pattern with a specific set of national reactions. Moreover, the incompleteness of developments necessitates an open-ended narrative strategy that relates the evolution of a problem without knowing its resolution – an unusual and uncomfortable stance for a historian.

⁴⁶ Karen Hagemann, Konrad H. Jarausch and Cristina Allemann-Ghionda, eds., *Children, Families, and States: Time Policies of Childcare, Preschool and Primary Education in Europe* (New York, 2010); Konrad H. Jarausch, "Vorbild Amerika. Schwierigkeiten transatlantischen Borgens bei der Universitätsreform," in Manfred Rudersdorf, Wolfgang Höpken and Martin Schlegel, eds., *Wissen und Geist. Universitätskulturen* (Leipzig, 2009), 157-176.

⁴⁷ Gerhard Schroeder, *Entscheidungen. Mein Leben in der Politik* (Hamburg, 2006) and Joschka Fischer, *Die rot-grünen Jahre. Deutsche Außenpolitik – vom Kosovo bis zum 11. September* (Cologne, 2007).

⁴⁸ Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Postindustrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York, 1973); Jean Francois Lyotard, *Towards the Postmodern* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1993); and Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (London, 1992).

Instead of explaining a known outcome, scholars now have to muster the courage to address ongoing processes.

4. A Second Chance

In Fritz Stern's fortuitous phrase, reunification has given the Germans a second chance at constructing a democratic national state – hopefully with more positive consequences for their neighbors and themselves.⁴⁹ This unforeseen event has added 1989 as a new narrative teleology beyond 1933 (“why did Hitler come to power?”) or 1941 (“how could Germans commit such crimes?”), pointing to a joyous moment of democratic awakening that engulfed all of Eastern Europe.⁵⁰ The surprising “peaceful revolution” and the astute statesmanship of Helmut Kohl revived a German nation state at a moment when most Eastern intellectuals were still building a better Socialism and most Western thinkers were hoping to promote European integration.⁵¹ For historians this unexpected development poses a double challenge: On the one hand, they have to find convincing explanations for an outcome which they did not foresee, and on the other, they have to rethink the meaning of a story that previously justified division as punishment for Nazi crimes and as guarantee of peace in Europe.

Rethinking the national narrative so as to keep it from sliding back into a dangerous nationalism will require at the very minimum four interpretative changes: To begin with, such an effort needs to address the causal relationship between the catastrophic first and the more benign second half of the twentieth century. For German history, the enormous suffering of the World Wars and the Holocaust prevents a Whig interpretation of ineluctable liberalization, since that would be an irresponsible oversimplification. While a consideration of the twentieth century can depart from the modernizing aspirations of the late Empire, it must also confront the chauvinism of the First World War, the failure of the democratic experiment in Weimar, the repressive racism of the Third Reich and even the misguided Socialist renewal of the GDR. Given all these problematic manifestations, the challenge is to explain the miraculous transformation through the collective learning processes after 1945 which led West Germans to see human rights and democratic institutions as essential aspects of a civility

⁴⁹ Fritz Stern, *Five Germanies I have Known* (New York, 2006), 194ff. Cf. John Breuilly's “Conclusion” in *Germany's Two Unifications*, 307-316. See also Anne Sa'adah, *Germany's Second Chance: Trust, Justice and Democratization* (Cambridge, MA, 1998).

⁵⁰ Helmut Walser Smith, *The Continuities of German History: Nation, Religion and Race across the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2008).

⁵¹ Konrad H. Jarausch, “The Double Disappointment: Revolution, Unification and German Intellectuals,” in Michael Geyer, *The Power of Intellectuals in Contemporary Germany* (Chicago, 2001), 276ff.

that would improve their living standards and guarantee a more humane society.⁵²

Another task is the writing of an integrated post-war history that does not privilege the FRG as standard for dismissing the GDR, since both claimed to represent Germany during the Cold War. While the Austrians quickly took up the Allied offer to return to independence, the two successor states in East and West asymmetrically competed with each other for constructing a better Germany, even if East Berlin looked more to Bonn than vice versa. How can one tell this double story without reducing it to the contrast between a repressive dictatorship and an attractive democracy in which only the latter counts, since it won the contest after all? One possible approach might be to focus on shared problems such as allied occupation or on cross-cutting external influences such as US rock music in order to explore their similarities and differences. Another method might be to analyze the respective patterns of Eastern and Western biographies, especially of border-crossers like Biermann or Dutschke who experienced both systems. Such perspectives would reveal the growing divergence between both states while at the same uncovering some of the socio-cultural commonalities that eventually made reunification possible.⁵³

Yet another move would be to extend contemporary history to a systematic consideration of the drastic changes during the last two decades that are still masked by an appearance of stability. In contrast to Francis Fukuyama's prediction of the ascendancy of liberal capitalism, history has continued to present all sorts of messy problems that were not foreseen during the euphoria 1989/90.⁵⁴ In socio-economic terms the caesura of 1973 with the end of Bretton Woods and the first oil-price shock has started to loom larger, because it signaled the end of the post-war boom and the onset of a structural transition to the third phase of the industrial revolution. Many of the recent problems such as long-term unemployment, weak growth and the overstraining of the welfare states have their origin in these developments. From a foreign policy perspective, 9/11 is an equally significant turning point, because it inaugurated the present confrontation with international terrorism, the conflict with radical

⁵² Ulrich Herbert, "Liberalisierung als Lernprozess. Die Bundesrepublik in der deutschen Geschichte," in idem, ed., *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland. Belastung, Integration, Liberalisierung 1945-1980* (Göttingen, 2003), 7-52. Cf. Arndt Bauerkämper et al., eds., *Demokratiewunder. Transatlantische Mittler und die kulturelle Öffnung Westdeutschlands 1945-1970* (Göttingen, 2005).

⁵³ Konrad H. Jarausch, "'Die Teile als Ganzes erkennen.' Zur Integration der beiden deutschen Nachkriegsgeschichten," *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 1 (2004), 10-30; and Christoph Kleßmann and Peter Lautzas, eds., *Teilung und Integration. Die doppelte deutsche Nachkriegsgeschichte als wissenschaftliches und didaktisches Problem* (Schwalbach, 2006).

⁵⁴ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, 2006), rev. ed. Cf. Perry Anderson, "A New Germany?" *New Left Review* 47 (May/June 2009), 5ff.

Islam and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. An opening of the German narrative to such new problem areas is already long overdue.⁵⁵

Finally, the writing of German history ought to be transnationalized in order to account for its complex entanglement with continental and global developments. Due to their central location in Europe, German speakers have always been more involved with their neighbors than the national narrative tended to show, whether through wars or peaceful exchanges.⁵⁶ At present the crisis-ridden process of European integration has made this aspect more visible through the growing power of common EU institutions as well as the difficulties of coordinating economic policies to combat the financial crisis in the Euro zone. At the same time, increasing trade and migration have brought the world home to the Germans in the form of new products or residents from different backgrounds that have created both prosperity and insecurity. Misled by assumptions of past stability, German historians have yet to recognize this growing fluidity within and beyond Europe.⁵⁷ Only a denationalized and democratized narrative will more fully be able to reflect such new and complex problems after reunification.

⁵⁵ Thorsten Schüller, ed., *Historische Einschnitte und ihre mediale Verarbeitung* (Bielefeld, 2010).

⁵⁶ Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 2009). Cf. Gunilla Budde, ed., *Transnationale Geschichte. Themen, Tendenzen, Theorien* (Göttingen, 2006).

⁵⁷ Jan Zielonka, *Europe as Empire: The Nature of the Enlarged European Union* (Oxford, 2006). Cf. Andreas Wirsching, *Der Preis der Freiheit. Geschichte Europas in unserer Zeit* (Munich, 2012).