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Bogomil Ferfila and Stefan Dehnert
(Eds.)

**GERMANY AND SLOVENIA:
Socioeconomic
and Political Approaches**

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SOCIOECONOMIC AND POLITICAL APPROACHES**

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GERMANY AND SLOVENIA TOGETHER

Germany and Slovenia enjoy good political and economic relations. Germany is proud to be the greatest export partner of Slovenia. The relationship between both nations is pandered not only by this fact but is based on cordial terms within various other domains.

Germany has a long and various history. Looking at the younger history, after the second world war two separated nations where established: the Federal Republic of Germany in the western part and the German Democratic Republic in the eastern part of the country. The separation of the two parts of Germany culminated in the construction of the “Mauer” exactly 40 years ago on August 13th, 1961. In 1989 a peaceful revolution put an end to the regime of the GDR and both German states were reunified in 1990.

In 2011 Germany and Slovenia celebrate 20 years of diplomatic relations. Germany decided to acknowledge the newly founded Republic of Slovenia briefly after its independence in 1991. After the independence Slovenia developed fast to a stable international partner within the EU, NATO and the OECD. Within only twenty years both countries have become strong partners and numerous events consolidated this young but solid alliance. The latest highlight was the working visit of the chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Dr. Angela Merkel, to the Republic of Slovenia.

But we did not only master common challenges in the past. By working together on shared fields of interest, we are looking forward to face also present missions – globalization and sustainable development, climate change, and social reforms as well as the stabilization of our common currency for example.

In times of globalization education becomes more and more relevant for the progress of our countries. This includes the enhancement of foreign language skills of young people. Education and sciences are one of the core topics of the German government. The numbers of students and teachers who are willing to take part in exchanges to Germany and Slovenia has increased within the last ten years and I am expecting that this process will continue.

This textbook presents useful and comprehensive topics concerning both Germany and Slovenia not only for students of the master programme „German Studies“ but also for anyone who is interested in history, development and singularities of Germany, Slovenia and the German-Slovenian relations.

September, 2011

Werner Burkart
Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Slovenia

GERMANY

German Political System and Party Politics

GERMANY: UNITED, RICH, UNHAPPY

MICHAEL EHRKE

This article authored by **Michael Ehrke** was originally published by **Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, International Politics and Society**, Bonn, 2007

The timing of new centuries and millennia and the objective division of history into epochs rarely coincide. According to Eric Hobsbawm, the »short« 20th century began in 1914 and ended in 1989.¹ Here, Hobsbawm's definition of 1989 as the threshold of a new epoch is more than just the judgment of a historian made after the event. Whilst only a few contemporaries probably experienced 1914 as the end of an epoch – as the end of the »long« 19th century – 1989 was immediately seen by the whole world as a turning point which divided history into before and after. The following remarks, which are made on the occasion of a new millennium, refer more to the significance and the consequences of 1989 and aim less to assess the entire century, let alone the millennium.

1989 saw the end of the state in Germany known as the GDR and the beginning of German reunification. It is no coincidence that the whole world associates the end of the post-war order not with the electoral victory of Solidarnosc in Poland in the summer of 1989, but with the fall of the Berlin Wall that autumn. The image of the people dancing on the Wall has become the icon of the end of the epoch. German reunification is a sort of miniature edition of that larger process of integration which started to bring the former communist countries in central and eastern Europe into the global market system and the political community of the West. It is a piece of »globalization«, and has brought changes throughout Germany. However, whilst people in the western part of Germany have only experienced or will experience these changes as a very gradual process, the citizens of the former GDR have gone through this process in a very short period – even ahead of the western Germans. German reunification resulted in the normalization of the international status of Germany, a country which had enjoyed only limited sovereignty before 1989. It also created the preconditions for a continuation of European integration into an economic and monetary community. At the same time – and this is the point at the core of the following remarks – it overrides, distorts and intensifies the country's internal socio-economic development as it experiences a transition from a Golden Age of economic prosperity and social consensus into something which is at most vaguely defined, which due to a lack of precise definitions we might term post-industrial society, second modern age, or knowledge-driven service society.

A GERMAN CENTURY

For the western part of Germany, the second half of the 20th century (1949–1989) was a period of good fortune. There was no war, no civil war, no manifest restriction of freedom, no significant inflation, no significant economic crisis. As a result of an extremely dynamic economic development, the western part of Germany had already become the third-largest

¹ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes. A History of the World 1914–1991*, Vintage Books 1996.

economic power and the second-largest exporter in the world prior to reunification. People may complain about a lack of competitiveness in Germany, but German firms supply the world with high-grade machinery, telecommunications equipment, cars and chemicals. It can be said with some justification that an average German worker enjoys a higher quality of life than his Japanese equivalent, even though he works 48 days less a year on average, and that an unemployed German has a better life than one of America's working poor. Germany's universities lag behind the top US institutions, but the skills level of its workforce is on average higher than that in the Anglo-Saxon countries. Germany's cities and landscapes are less damaged by industry than those of Japan, and its crime rate is far lower than that of the United States. Hardly anyone emigrates, but hundreds of thousands or millions would like to live and work in Germany – if they were allowed in. Those people who lived in West (or in the last decade in reunified) Germany were, compared with the vast majority of the population of the planet, favored by fortune.

*Table 1:
Non-war-related victims of state violence in the 20th century*

Regime	Number of victims	Duration
Soviet Union (Communist)	61,900,000	1917-1990
China (Communist)	35,200,000	1949-present
Germany (Nazi Third Reich)	20,900,000	1933-1945
China (Kuomintang)	10,400,000	1928-1949
Japan (Imperial-Fascist)	6,000,000	1936-1945
China (Communist Guerrillas)	3,500,000	1923-1948
Cambodia (Communist)	2,000,000	1975-1979
Turkey («Young Turks«)	1,900,000	1909-1917
Vietnam (Communist)	1,700,000	1945-present
Korea (Communist)	1,700,000	1948-present
Poland (Communist)	1,600,000	1945-1948
Pakistan (Yahya Khan)	1,500,000	1971
Mexico (Porfiriato)	1,400,000	1900-1920
Yugoslavia (Communist)	1,100,000	1944-1990
Russia (Tsarist)	1,100,000	1900-1917
Turkey («Ataturk«)	900,000	1918-1923
United Kingdom (Democratic)	800,000	1900-present
Portugal (Fascist)	700,000	1926-1975
Croatia (Fascist)	700,000	1941-1945
Indonesia (Suharto)	600,000	1965-1999

This favorable and exceptional situation is particularly striking if one compares the second half of the century with the first. Anyone who was born just a few years too early in Germany had to experience defeat in two world wars, a failed revolution, two periods of hyperinflation, a severe economic depression, three changes in the political system and, above all, probably the most thorough murderous regime in history – all in the space of the first thirty years of the »short« century. Rarely has a nation's century been so clearly divided into two halves by one year – 1945 – the first of which will for all time overshadow the entire century as an epoch of mass murder. Germany was not only dis-

proportionately involved in the century of mass murder, it was a leading protagonist. In wars against the rest of the world, it produced wonders of technology and organization which put all earlier wars in the shade. But above all, Germany brought a new dimension to the mass murder of civilians quite unrelated to the military campaign. In his economic history of the 20th century, Brad DeLong quoted an estimate of the presumed victims of state-sponsored violence in the 20th century (note: not as part of military action). The top twenty regimes here, according to his estimate, produced more than 155 million victims. DeLong concedes that many of these figures are just rough estimates, and can do no more than indicate the dimensions involved. National Socialist Germany only takes third place on this list, but given the brief duration of National Socialist rule, it proves to be the most murderous regime of a murderous century. Above all, for National Socialism the mass annihilation was not the accepted consequence of a political program, no matter how absurd that program was (as in the disastrous starvation caused by the state in the Soviet Union and China): it was the program itself. And it took place not in a situation of backwardness, underdevelopment and disorganization, but was managed using state-of-the-art industrial technology and administrative organization; it was the responsibility of a nation at the forefront of technology and commerce – and for that reason the century of mass murders will for all time be associated with Germany.

The turning points of the 20th century – 1914, 1945 and 1989 – are »German« years. One can debate who started the war in 1914, but there is no denying that Imperial Germany took the lead in correcting the order of the 19th century by force and thereby drove the world into a war which consigned to the scrapheap all the optimistic assumptions of the 19th century about civilization and progress. The military defeat and partition of Germany in 1945 was the precondition for the establishment of a new bipolar world order, symbolized by the border between the two Germanys. The Golden Age of the post-war decades enabled part of humanity to enjoy unparalleled prosperity, but the Golden Age was also overshadowed by the ever-present threat of the destruction of civilization by a nuclear war. The bulk of humanity paid the price of the proxy wars of the superpowers, languishing in poverty, stagnation and political oppression. Finally, 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall placed Germany in the forefront of world history for one last time.

When the current position of Germany in Europe and the world is defined, the word »normal« predominates. That cannot imply that a line can now be drawn under the past: the past will not disappear, the terrors of the National Socialist mass destruction have not faded with time; in fact, the more German society is able to describe itself as civilized in the Western sense, the more obscene these terrors become. The past does not die away with those who experienced it, be they perpetrators or victims. The historians' dispute, the Goldhagen debate, the Wehrmacht exhibition and the arguments about compensation for slave laborers show that the debate on coming to terms with Germany's past will not cease or die down. Normalization can therefore only be meant in a more harmless sense: Germany has become a normal Western country whose elite no longer aspires to a separate path and a revision of the world order by force. It may be that one can read fresh ambitions to become a major power into the words of German politicians or the cover stories of news magazines, but this is more a question of form than a genuine project; in any case, the country would not have the resources for such a project, even if it aspired to it. Germany is economically integrated and in a security alliance with most of its nine immediate neighbors; as former Defense Minister Volker Rühle put it, it is »encircled by friends«. In 1999, Germany participated in a war for the first time since 1945 – a rather

dubious mark of normalization – but the German involvement in the war in the Balkans was interpreted by its neighbors not as the rebirth of a military monster, but as a sign of a rejection of any separate path, even that of a pacifism legitimized by the past. The war in the Balkans was not a »German war«, and it seems reasonable to hope that the 21st century will not be a »German century«.

BEFORE REUNIFICATION: OLD AND NEW SOCIAL ISSUES

The second half of the 20th century was a Golden Age for the western part of Germany. A growing economy, (generally) full employment, social security and a dramatically rising standard of living for (almost) everyone resulted in a virtuous circle which – not wholly unjustly – was presented as the »German model«. The core elements of the model were a high (by international standards) level of insurance for workers against the risks of unemployment, illness and lack of income in old age, rapidly rising wages, and a consensus resolution of industrial disputes. The social market economy of the 1950s and 1960s was not an egalitarian economic model, but it did at least give the justified impression that the capitalist market economy (and the inequality inevitably linked with it) was compatible with social justice. The dynamism of the prosperity – the prospect that everyone would be able to obtain more and more and better and better consumer goods – meant that the static inequality in the distribution of income and wealth was of rather secondary importance. The participation of the vast majority of the population in a continuously rising level of consumption was matched on the production side by the participation (albeit subordinate) of a large minority of workers in corporate decision-making processes, either in the form of institutionalized rights of codetermination, or in the form of informal code-termination on the production site, particularly by the skilled workers.

As far as the socio-economic situation in West Germany was concerned, one thing at least was clear when Germany reunified: the Golden Age was over. It is hard to tell where the cut-off point was. The first oil crisis signalled that the epoch of prosperity and social justice would not be indefinite. But a genuine turnaround only came in the early 1980s. The change in government from a social-democrat/liberal to a christian-democrat/ liberal coalition did not have the revolutionary dimensions of the neoliberal government takeovers in the United States and Britain, but it too marked a transition: the early 1980s saw the onset of a concentration of income and wealth² – following years when the pattern of distribution of income and wealth in West Germany had slowly but steadily improved.

Back in the days of the social-democrat/ liberal coalition, the CDU had already discovered the »new social question« (Heiner Geissler had thus anticipated Tony Blair fairly precisely). The old battle line between workers and employers, as maintained by the social democrats, was, it was argued, overridden by a far more dramatic split between those who formed part of the system as workers or employers, and an underclass of the excluded without any access to the working world and the welfare state. On the Left, both inside and outside the SPD, the term »two-thirds society« was coined. Both concepts define exclusion as the status of a minority which had been shut out of an established, functioning and consensus-based majority society. They reflect a new reality for the Federal Republic: mass unemployment and, as a consequence, unemployment as

² Cf. Richard Hauser, Die Entwicklung der Einkommensverteilung und der Einkommensarmut in den alten und neuen Bundesländern, in: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte 18, April 30 1999.

a fate which, for more and more people, was no longer a more or less brief interruption between two periods of employment, but dominated large parts of active life. The »new social question«, or the excluded »one-third«, included not only the »structurally« unemployed, especially younger and older people who were unable to get a foothold in or had lost contact with the labor market, but also a growing group of people whose problems were covered by neither labor law nor the welfare state: those in precarious, temporary employment or in quasi self-employment, single mothers, large families, foreign workers, people in social ghettos, marginal groups.

The treatment of the social question as a minority issue placed the majority of those in regular employment and with social security cover at least implicitly on the side of the privileged. Their organizations, the trade unions, apparently took little interest in the fate of the excluded and even fought tooth and nail to defend the privileges of their clientele against the claims of the disadvantaged minority. Since the decisive line of battle was defined not as employer against worker or rich against poor, but as the conflict between an excluded minority and a privileged majority of workers and employers, the tensions within this majority society were presented as secondary disharmonies within a generally harmonious community.

It was not until later that attention focused on two parallel developments. Firstly, the involuntary social exclusion of an underclass corresponded to the increasing voluntary self-exclusion of the elites, i. e. the high-earners and the wealthy. This self-exclusion is a consequence of globalization: due to the policy of deregulation since the early 1980s it has become increasingly easy for the possessors of capital and highly-valued skills to transfer their resources across national borders to wherever the yield is highest and the burden smallest. This is just as true of companies as it is of chemists with money to invest or of tax-evading TV stars. The motto of West German social partnership: »We are all in the same boat«, ceased to apply. Firstly, this had an impact in the companies. The »German model« had been a positive-sum game for all those involved; it could have been described as »high wages, high productivity, high profits« (one might add »high skills, high motivation, high quality«). The consensus in the 1970s was that this was the magic formula for the international success of German industry. But if the consensus between employers and workers starts out as something with a limited shelf life, i. e. the implicit social contract should only apply until a combination of productivity and wage costs is found somewhere else in the world which permits even higher profits, then the corporate basis for the consensus is systematically undermined. The employers would no longer need the corporate consensus. The pressure of unemployment then automatically creates the motivation for the workers who continuously face the threat of redundancy, a motivation which previously had to be generated by monetary incentives and participation in corporate decisionmaking. Secondly, the exit option for companies is not only available at any time, but can also be fed into the wage negotiations, which thereby lose their character of a contest between more or less equals (the withdrawal of larger companies from the business associations representing them in wage negotiations and thus their voluntary renunciation of the basis of conflict resolution and consensus formation is only one aspect of a process whereby companies are fundamentally distancing themselves from the community of which, in formal terms, they are still part).

The more significant impact affects the political system. A democratic political order is not based on all citizens sharing the same values and convictions; it rests on a political process in which differing and conflicting interests are talked through and solutions dis-