



Claus Hofhansel. *Multilateralism, German Foreign Policy, and Central Europe.* New York: Routledge, 2005. 176 pp. \$125.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-415-36406-5.



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The role of Germany in promoting European Union enlargement has been at the center of interest for political analysts. After reunification, numerous questions arose as to whether Germany would end its role as the champion of western-oriented European integration and instead turn east, exploiting its economic influence in central Europe for somewhat alarming political purposes. German foreign policy's transformation after reunification continues to merit study, in order to explain how Germany has prepared to assume greater responsibility through a clearly multilateral framework for action, in the Atlantic alliance, the United Nations, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE/OSCE). Together with seeking to strengthen the European Union, post-Cold War Germany has further developed a vivid commitment to promoting peace and democracy, a genuine respect for human rights all over the world, and a strong sense of obligation toward fostering sustainable development.

In his book, Claus Hofhansel explains post-World War II German support for a foreign policy committed to participation in multilateral organizations with the goal of assessing the likelihood of a continuation of such support. Showing an excellent command of the existing body of literature, Hofhansel declares himself discontent with traditional explanations of this development, which

are very much concerned with institutions and norms (and including collective memories as a source of norms). Norms, he argues, are not sufficient to explain German support for multilateralism. Germany does not simply pursue a multilateralist foreign policy out of principle, but rather out of interest. Hofhansel, who clearly opts for a realist interpretive framework, argues that in the German case, the choice for multilateralism in dealing with central and eastern European issues is overdetermined. Germany, he claims, chose multilateral institutions because this strategy was realistically the most effective way to protect its own interests.

Hofhansel is very careful with his methodological choices. He recognizes that the broadness of his topic poses a problem for a sufficiently manageable definition of multilateralism. He therefore chooses to concentrate on German policy towards Czechoslovakia and Poland, and then narrows his focus to analyze issues in which multilateral organizations or principles are particularly relevant. In doing so, he adopts a very wide-ranging definition of multilateralism. He tends to deal with the institutionalized European Community and with the loosely structured CSCE in much the same way, as both express the same strategy. This choice is not always convincing. The crucial chapter in the book is chapter 3 ("From the 'Policy of Movement' toward Reconciliation"); in

it, Hofhansel analyzes German support for multilateralism in a series of major diplomatic agreements with Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic, and Poland. Here, the most interesting (and more thoroughly argued) part concerns German unification's impact on relations with its central and eastern European neighbors. Indeed, it is very clear that the most relevant issues in both the German-Polish and the German-Czechoslovak treaties were resolved bilaterally and in recognition of the legacy of the historical and moral responsibility for Germany's Nazi past. Polish and Czech membership in the European Community seems to have been the reward for successful negotiations. European institutions are useful for the discussion of specific conflict issues in these relationships, such as compensation for victims of National Socialist crimes and the condition of German minorities in eastern Europe. Hofhansel makes a very effective use of case studies to show the realistic and often self-interested inner motivation of Germany's decision for multilateralism. Although Germany prefers bilateral agreements, multilateral settings prove more effective in dealing at once with a wide spectrum of claims. The chapter on compensation, reparation, and restitution for the victims of Nazi crimes is especially interesting in this sense and very well articulated. It explains in detail the evolution from the global agreements of the 1950s and 1960s to more recent issues, like compensation for forced labor.

Although it points at a long-term perspective, however, Hofhansel's historical analysis is not very nuanced. He tends to underestimate continuity in German policy across the Cold War divide. He does not pay much attention to what is commonly known as Germany's Cold War.[1] The legacy of the 1955 Hallstein Doctrine, in which West Germany threatened to break off relations with states that recognized East Germany, obviously had huge consequences on central and eastern European relations. The fact that until the late 1960s the Federal Republic had virtually no high-level political relations with any of the central and eastern European countries, including most prominently the two discussed in this study, Poland and Czechoslovakia, is barely mentioned, even in passing. Another problematic point is the interpretation of Willy Brandt's *neue Ostpolitik*. It is not clear what place Hofhansel assigns to Social Democratic foreign policy; that is, whether he challenges the widespread view according to which Brandt's symbolic action marked a turning point in West German foreign policy. It seems that his argument runs that no major changes in norms or actual practice occurred under Brandt and Bahr; since

this point is controversial, however, it might have benefited from closer analysis and debate. A further aspect is also missing in Hofhansel's construction: the influence of protest movements on German foreign policy. As recent works have shown, foreign policy-making was strongly influenced by the youth rebellions at the end of the 1960s.[2] Hofhansel neglects this factor, although its relevance for German-Czech relations around the Prague Spring and ultimately for the development of *d  tente* in Europe can hardly be denied.

Finally, by not taking East German foreign policy specifically into account, Hofhansel somewhat underestimates the impact of East German political culture on the culture of unified Germany, taking for granted institutional inertia and continuity. However, socialist countries had their own multilateral arenas at both the state and party level—and had their own strategies for pursuing their national objectives both in multilateral and bilateral discussions. An East-West comparison that could have accommodated a discussion of how issues were handled at multilateral level in the Soviet bloc could have enriched Hofhansel's perspective further. Unfortunately, in the book the existence of the German Democratic Republic is referred to only now and then in connection with discussion of the legacies of the Third Reich.

In Hofhansel's picture, the limits of German multilateralism are much more evident than Germany's commitment to a multilateral approach. The book is challenging in its effort to develop a comprehensive model for interpreting German foreign policy in central and eastern Europe. It deserves therefore the attention of students and researchers of German foreign policy and of central European policies. It also may be of interest to political scientists and historians concerned with *Vergangenheitsbew  ltigung*.

Notes

[1]. Following the title of the book by William Glenn Gray, *Germany's Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany, 1949-1969* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

[2]. Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of D  tente* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); and Bastian Hein, *Die Westdeutschen und die Dritte Welt. Entwicklungspolitik und Entwicklungsdienste zwischen Reform und Revolte 1959-1974* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2006).

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