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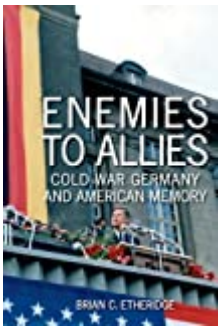

Brian C. Etheridge. *Enemies to Allies: Cold War Germany and American Memory.* Studies in Conflict Diplomacy Peace Series. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016. Illustrations. 366 pp. $45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8131-6640-7.

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After the Third Reich had invaded Scandinavia in 1940, a desperate US diplomat by the name of Alexander C. Kirk urged his government in Washington DC to take up arms against the Germans. The âmove against Norway and Denmark,â he explained, showed that âthe world was confronted with the absolute certainty that the elements of reason, intelligence and practical sense were no longer applicable, that the exercise of force was the sole factor involved and that this factor should be opposed only by force.... The position of America, therefore, is clear. There will be no place for the United States in the world envisaged by Hitler.â[1] A decade later, the screenwriter Nunnally Johnson defended his biopic on German General Field Marshal Erwin Rommel *The Desert Fox* (1951) against criticism. He argued that he had no intention to glorify Rommel but he wanted to show âthat there were good as well as bad Germansâ (p. 56). How did American perceptions of Germany and the Germans undergo such a profound transformation? How did the former enemy of two world wars become an important ally during the Cold War and was the transition as simple and straightforward as some scholars suggest? How did the change shape American identity and what were the causes of this shift? These are just a couple of questions historian Brian C. Etheridge, an expert on the history of foreign relations and public diplomacy, raises in his book *Enemies to Allies: Cold War Germany and American Memory.*

Published by the University of Kentucky Press in 2015, Etheridgeâs study deals with over one hundred years of American interpretations and representations of Germany. Focusing his book especially on the 1950s and 1960s, he argues that âthe story of German representation in the United States is about far more than [just] images of Nazis and Berliners in American mediaâ (p. 2). Instead, he convincingly demonstrates how conflicting US narratives of German history can also serve as a window for understanding American identity and US international relations in the postwar era. According to him, the perception of Germany played âa major role in how Americans understood themselves and the world around themâ (p. 280).

Etheridge identifies two major competing narratives that shaped the American perception of Germany: the Cold War narrative and the World War narrative. The first one, simplified by the symbol of the Berlin Wall, drew a distinction between the National Socialists and the German people, who were rather seen as victims of the Nazi regime. The emerging concept of totalitari-

anism, which became very prominent in West German and American scholarship (for example, Carl Joachim Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski), allowed for the equation of Nazism and Communism throughout the Cold War. As a consequence, the Germans became a valuable partner in the defense of Western civilization, humanity, and freedom, which were threatened by Communism. The political left and the right as well as Jewish interest groups applied the World War narrative, symbolized by the Holocaust, to criticize Germany. This theory implied that, instead of the National Socialist ideology some kind of inherently militaristic, aggressive, and inhumane German character was responsible for the horrors of the Great War, World War II, and the Holocaust. The underlying tone of the narrative was as simple as it was effective: the Germans never change.

Etheridge follows a chronological approach to highlight the adaption, contestation, and alteration of these two narratives. Soon after the end of the Second World War, American and West German officials were successful in promoting the Cold War narrative. With the exception of the Society for Prevention of World War III, all major players who tried to shape American perception of Germanyâincluding the mainstream mediaâfollowed suit. However, at the end of the 1950s, several national and international events challenged this narrative: in particular, the rise of anti-Semitic incidents in West Germany (for example, swastika daubing at the synagogue in Cologne in 1959), the Eichmann Trial (1960-61), and the electoral successes of the West German National Democratic Party (NPD) in the second half of the 1960s. Moreover, the scholarly dispute over Germanyâs responsibility for the outbreak of the Great War, which was sparked by Fritz Fischerâs book *Griff nach der Weltmacht: Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/1918* in 1961, refreshed stories of German atrocities during World War I. In the United States, this debate revived memories of one of the most famous World War I propaganda poster: Germany was shown as a giant gorilla wearing a spiked helmet (militarism), wielding the club of German culture and holding the half-naked, limp body of a woman. In red letters, Americans were prompted to âDestroy this mad brute.â William L. Shirerâs book, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, published in 1960, was at least as influential as the Fischer controversy in promoting the World War narrative. Shirer rejected the totalitarianism theory and stressed the responsibility of the German people by emphasizing a direct line from Martin Luther to Adolf Hitler (German *Sonderweg*). German officials and scholars vigorously opposed Shirerâs thesis for fear that it would only damage German-American relations and trigger an anti-German wave in the United States. Even though authors like Shirer challenged the Cold War narrative, the fear of German scholars and officials was mostly unfounded as the World War narrative was never able to totally replace the Cold War narrative in official circles and the mainstream media.

Etheridgeâs great achievement is to offer much more than just another book on the diplomatic relations between West Germany and the United States on a political macro level. Using a concept of memory diplomacy, which is rooted in the study of both public memory and public diplomacy, he investigates state as well as non-state actors in their endeavor to shape the American narratives on Germany. He skillfully presents a wide array of different actorsâranging from US and West German politicians, interest groups, diplomats, and intellectualsâwho employed meaningful narratives, such as those mentioned above, to influence public opinion as well as the nationâs foreign policy. This approach allows him to highlight the diverse âcultural and political milieu in which these narratives were created and circulatedâ (p. 3). In particular, Etheridge is interested in five different themes as well as actors and their interactions. First, borrowing from postcolonial studies, he stresses how German representation in the United States and thus the perception of the âotherâ is one important tool to construct American identity. Secondly, he examines the attempt of West Germany to influence how the United States perceived the newly created country. His third and fourth focus is on non-state actors, such as the Society for the Prevention of World War III or the American Jewish Congress. Thereby he analyzes their interaction with state officials and looks into the work of Jewish organizations and their rivalry in shaping the narratives about Germany. Last but not least, he examines how these narratives were reflected in the mainstream and underground media and how they were reproduced, contested, and rejected. It might be not too surprising that the American and West German authorities in particular favored the Cold War narrative, whereas veteransâ and Jewish organizations promoted the World War narrative. However, by focusing on these five themes Etheridge is able to illustrate the existence of âinterpretative communitiesâ that often transcend a more simplified dichotomy of a state and a non-state narrative.

The most innovative and insightful parts of Etheridgeâs study deal with his analysis of popular culture to promote either of the powerful narratives. The television show *Hoganâs Heroes* (1965-71), for example,

portrayed conflicts between the committedâbut often incompetentâradicals of the Nazi Party and the German people who were caught up in political events they apparently were unable to control. Other mainstream movies and TV shows also emphasized the humanity and kindness of the average German and thus supported the Cold War narrative. Moreover, Etheridge illustrates how the award-winning movie *Judgment at Nuremburg*, which was directed by Stanley Kramer and released in 1961, mirrored the conflict between the two narratives in the early 1960s. For German and American officials the release of the movie was highly problematic. It âaddressed the guilt of the German people for their crimes against the Jews while at the same time suggesting that the Cold War, specifically the conflict over Berlin in the late 1940s, had helped whitewash that guiltâ (p. 163). While the plot of the *Judgment at Nuremburg* propagated a critical World War narrative, the location of the movieâs world premier, however, strengthened the Cold War narrative: the Congress Hall of West Berlin. The location and the hostâWest Berlinâs mayor Willy Brandtâhelped once again to portray the Germans as heroic people standing firm against Communism only a couple of months after the Berlin Wall had been built.

Based on extensive archival research in Germany as well as the United States and on a wide range of photographs, contemporary literature, TV shows, and movies, Etheridge offers a stimulating insight into the American perception of Germany. His well-written and very informative study sheds new light on how public perceptions were shaped by official policy, non-state actors, and popular culture in the postwar era. He illustrates how various institutions and groups propagated their preferred narrative by using different means, such as cultural exchanges and educational work. However, Etheridgeâs work does contain two minor problems. In his concluding remarks, he states that âthe World War II experience … has a better chance of remaining relevant in the twenty-first centuryâ (p. 282). To prove his point, he cites the collection *Public Papers of the Presidents* as well as major feature films of the last decade (for example, *Valkyrie* [2008]). However, the brevity of the statement does not do this complex topic justice. Etheridge skips the radical changes in international relations and public opinion that have occurred since the 1970s, such as the end of the Cold War, German reunification, or the rise of international terrorism. Furthermore, it is questionable if popular media still plays the same role in enforcing national narratives as it did in the immediate postwar era. The main issue, however, concerns the absence of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in Etheridgeâs analysis. Even though he mentions East Germany briefly, he does not examine ifâand if so, howâthe existence of two German states after 1949 affected the American perception of Germans at all. Scholars have shown how the government of the GDR tried to discredit West Germany as the direct heir of the Third Reich by using a version of the American World War narrative. Of course, from a practical point of view, Etheridgeâs decision to limit his study on West Germany is understandable, but challenging questions remain: How were these attempts by the GDR received in the United States? Were American interest groups accused of being agents of East German and Communist propaganda if they promoted the World War narrative? How were the Germans living in the GDR perceived in the United States? As pure victims of another totalitarian regime? Or were they a poof that Germans would always follow inhumane and militarist regimes?

These last remarks do not detract much from the fact that Etheridgeâs book *Enemies to Allies* is a very convincing and informative study that offers a fascinating insight into the American perception of West Germans as well as the construction of an American identity during the 1950s and 1960s. His work is further complemented by a useful index, a detailed bibliography, and several photographs that help to illustrate his arguments. His study is an excellent starting point for scholars exploring other aspects of German postwar history, German-American relations, and the role of public perception in the shaping of foreign policy.

Note

[1]. Memorandum by Alexander C. Kirk, June 17, 1940, , pp. 2-4, Sumner Welles Papers, Box 61, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Museum, Hyde Park, NY.

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