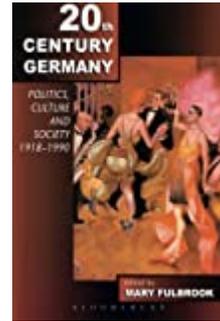


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Mary Fulbrook, ed. *Twentieth-Century Germany: Politics Culture and Society 1918-1990*. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. 320 pp. \$72.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-340-76330-8; \$41.75 (paper), ISBN 978-0-340-76331-5.



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For those teaching courses on the history of Germany in the twentieth century, Mary Fulbrook's *Twentieth Century Germany* sets the standard for a well-conceived edited text. This is not a typical survey text: it does not seek to provide a new "grand narrative" of German history, but rather is a collection of essays that each explore the themes of continuity and change, structures and ruptures in German history. Together, the contributions offer a broad picture of the political, economic, social, and cultural history of Germany's twentieth century, while exploring some of the most important historiographical issues in a manner accessible to upper-level undergraduate students.

The book may be familiar to some as a slightly revised version of parts 3 and 4 of Fulbrook and John Breuilly's *Germany History since 1800* (1997), with contributions from Richard Bessel, Niall Ferguson, Elizabeth Harvey, Ian Kershaw, Mark Roseman, Mark Allinson, Erica Carter, and Jonathan Osmond. New to the volume, however, are Omer Bartov's essay "From Blitzkrieg to total war" and Nicholas Stargardt's completely revised chapter on the state of Holocaust research. The book is divided into two parts: "1918-1945" and "Germany since 1945." The lion's share of the volume—seven of the twelve chapters and almost two-thirds of its pages—is devoted to the period of the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich

and the Second World War, while the final five chapters cover the history of the Federal Republic (FRG), the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and German reunification. Any imbalance this may suggest is somewhat deceptive as each contribution dovetails well into the others, steadily leading students through a widening field of inquiry, encouraging them to draw comparisons and conclusions of their own regarding historical continuity and change of each successive German state. Taken as an overview of the twentieth century this structure works well, though it could be unsatisfactory for those who are interested primarily in the postwar period.

The first part examines some of the most important and long-standing debates in German history, including the role of political and economic crises in the Weimar Republic; modernism, mass culture and changes in German cultural life; the Nazi rise to power; Hitler's role in the Nazi state; total war, German society, and genocide; and interpretations of the Holocaust. For example, Richard Bessel's densely written political history of the Weimar Republic and Niall Ferguson's cogent and accessible history of republican economic policy mesh well, leaving the reader with a nuanced picture of the depth of the crises facing the Weimar Republic. Bessel argues that the twin legacies of the war—a deeply divided society and resentment over the Treaty of Versailles—coupled with

Germans' rising expectations of the duty of the democratic state to provide for its citizens, degraded the state from within. Faced with the Great Depression, traditional elites persistently yet unsuccessfully tried to replace democracy with a more authoritarian government, essentially laying the groundwork for the Nazi rise to power by removing obstacles to their success: Germans' high expectations and a stable democratic government. Yet, Ferguson shows that German policy throughout the 1920s was essentially revisionist: it was more committed to paying "domestic reparations" by means of an artificially inflated living standard and avoiding the burden of war-related reparations than it was to supporting the development of a stable democratic state. Ultimately, government policy exacerbated the economic problems of the early 1920s, worsening the 1923 inflation for fear of unemployment and "the [widespread] belief that financial stabilization would make the collections of reparations easier" (p. 53). Elizabeth Harvey examines another significant strand of Weimar historiography: the development of modernism and mass culture during Weimar, stressing the essential continuity of German cultural life. Germans' leisure time continued to revolve primarily around church festivals and their participation in associational life; the latter was destroyed not by the introduction of mass entertainments, but rather "the destructive impact of Nazi rule" (p. 69). Together, these contributions offer a varied picture of the complicated history of Weimar.

The Nazi period is covered by some of the foremost scholars in the field. Like the contributions of Bessel and Ferguson, chapters by Jill Stephenson, on the rise of the Nazi Party, and Ian Kershaw, on the role of charismatic authority in the process of cumulative "radicalization" of policy during the Third Reich, are complementary. Bartov's chapter explores the relationship between German military strategy (Blitzkrieg) and total war. More than the other chapters, Bartov explicitly draws conclusions about the influence of history on the present, with a provocative argument that is sure to draw thinking students into discussion. For Bartov, the representation of Blitzkrieg in European propaganda, "heroic, fast, dangerous, exhilarating, glorious and sensuous"; "a highly potent counter-image to the other memory of industrial modern, total war, that of the mechanical slaughter on the Western front" has influenced our reception of images of war in the twenty-first century: "there is a link between the anaesthetized image of Blitzkrieg disseminated in the popular media, and the current 'real-time' reporting on war and violence whose effect seems to be

detached curiosity and indifference, rather than compassion and political mobilization" (p. 140). Nicholas Stargardt then explores some of the most important historiographical interpretations of the Holocaust (e.g., intentionalism vs. functionalism), outlines the events that led to the introduction of the "Final Solution," and evaluates the motives and mentalities that allowed genocide to happen. These contributors present a comprehensive analysis of some of the most difficult questions of modern German history.

While the first part of the volume covers the well-established period of 1918-45, the rather newer field of postwar German history is the subject of the second part. In the first two chapters, Mark Roseman and Mark Allinson outline the political history of the FRG and GDR respectively. Roseman's treatment of the important role of the Cold War in shaping the West German state is swift and clear, and, since the specter of Weimar loomed large, the article also appropriately complements Bessel's contribution. Fulbrook's chapter on postwar German social history demonstrates that policy decisions made in the immediate postwar period created the conditions for increasing divergence of the two German societies over the course of the postwar period. Jonathan Osmond's stirring account of the events leading to German reunification in 1990 reveals the complexity of a situation in which "real people (find themselves) in bad and in good situations" (p. 271).

Again, we see the important themes of continuity and rupture underpinning these essays, often in quite interesting ways. For example, Erica Carter's exploration of postwar film and literature tries to explain the "resurgence" of racist attitudes in the unified Germany, as exemplified by attacks on foreigners in the early 1990s. For Carter this is more a *persistence* of racial attitudes that remained embedded in German postwar identity. Despite important differences in the social reconstruction of the two German states, they remained heirs to a common cultural heritage of Enlightenment values. Yet they were set apart as a "community of the guilty" and still conceived of themselves in opposition to others. These "German" identities fractured during the 1960s and 1970s, leading in the 1980s to a "reengagement with hitherto denigrated national traditions" including, in the 1990s, a return to the idea of the *Volk* (p. 267). The combined contributions about the postwar period provide a good introduction to a field that is expanding rapidly and no doubt will undergo some revision in the next decade.

Twentieth-Century Germany is an excellent text with

contributions from some of the most well-respected scholars in the field. It does not share the linear structure of traditional textbooks that one might use in the lower-division survey class but rather offers students a variety of ways to understand particular problems, while offering broad temporal coverage. That is perhaps part of its strength for the upper-division classroom.

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