Foreword

Roland Bleiker

Germany looms large in international politics, far larger than its size and population would suggest. The Second World War and the battle against Nazi Germany is one of the defining moments of the twentieth century. The Holocaust has become a global symbol of the horror of genocides. The Nuremberg trials were a founding precedent for war crimes tribunals and transitional justice. The Berlin Wall turned into a symbol for both the global ideological confrontation during the Cold War and the successful struggle to overcome it. It is not by accident that US President John F. Kennedy's 'Ich bin ein Berliner' speech (1961) was a defining metaphor for international politics at the time. Today, unified Germany is a crucial force of peaceful European integration and economic development. All this and much more took place against the background of a long history of German literary, artistic and scientific achievements. Many of them have shaped International Relations (IR) scholarship, from the writings of Immanuel Kant, Alexander von Humboldt and Karl von Clausewitz to more recent contributions of German émigré scholars, such as Hannah Arendt, Albert O. Hirschman and Hans Morgenthau.

This volume offers a compelling and highly sophisticated account of the complexities associated with these changing images of Germany in IR. The volume is characterised not only by its conceptual contribution but also, and primarily, by exceptionally detailed and thorough historical and contemporary case studies.

Germany as a contestable and constantly contested concept

One of the key insights that emerge from the contributions to *Prussians, Nazis and Peaceniks: Changing Images of Germany in International Relations* is that analysing the political role of Germany is never just about

political facts and phenomena, but also, and primarily, about how we make sense of them and how we integrate these interpretations into both collective consciousness and concrete political positions and actions. When discussing the negative and positive international perceptions of Germany, Lucian M. Ashworth (in Chapter 4) stresses that they were 'caricatures that often bore little relation to the reality of the German situation.' Likewise, Leonie Holthaus (in Chapter 3) points out how liberal internationalist views of Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century had as much to do with preconceived liberal values as with the actual empirical phenomena being observed and addressed. The same is the case in more recent periods. For Brian C. Etheridge (in Chapter 9), US narratives of Germany during the post-war period had a lot to do with America's understanding of itself: to fit into and support this narrative, certain notions of Germany and Germanness were suppressed, while others were promoted.

Germany, then, is not – or at least not only – the nation-state we usually perceive it to be. It is and should also be seen as a contestable and constantly contested concept: a political construct that is both contingent and in constant flux. This is as much the case with the evolution of German politics and ideas as it is with how this evolution shaped international perceptions. What we can observe here is a constantly shifting idea that contains numerous dimensions: a nation, a state, a historical legacy, a cultural sphere, an intellectual tradition and much more. These dimensions overlap and shift, and are all part of what Germany is and is seen as. To understand the politics of these contested concepts is one of the core objectives of this book, and the authors manage to bring out the associated complexities and their relevance for understanding both Germany and its role in international relations.

Shifting images of Germany in IR

Shifting images of Germany are evident when we examine how political events and developments in and around Germany shaped international thought. Andreas Osiander (in Chapter 2) stresses the need to discuss what 'Germany' actually was at different stages of its historical trajectory. Doing so starts with the seemingly straightforward but in reality highly unstable issue of territorial delineation. Borders kept changing, from the creation of a German state during a wave of nineteenth-century nationalism to the expansion under the Third Reich, the subsequent contraction, followed by national division during the Cold War and then reunification. Some territories, like the Elsass or the Südtirol, were being moved back and forth between different political-ideological-cultural-linguistic spheres.

The same is the case with how the international community has perceived Germany over the past century and a half. Ashworth (in Chapter 4) points out how, between 1900 and 1945, these perceptions changed from great admiration and emulation of German scholarship and ideas to a deep-seated hostility towards raising militarism. There was a rapid move 'from exemplar to threat.' The so-called great debate in international theory, waged in the interwar period between realists and liberal internationalist, was all about how to best deal with the threat of Nazi Germany. The shift was just as swift and dramatic at the end of the Second World War, Etheridge (in Chapter 9) stresses. Occupation forces divided Germany into West and East, and each of them turned from arch-enemy into a strong ally and friend of the respective protective superpower, the US and the Soviet Union. The unified Germany today is again an exemplar of successfully dealing with the problematic legacy of a violent past, so much so that the German word for this process – *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – has become a widely used term. A new 'tamed' and 'civilian' Germany is a model of a peaceful, stable and tolerant state, and an important engine of European integration and economic development. But the ensuing increase in responsibility and power does, as Siegfried Schieder (in Chapter 10) points out, inevitably also lead to mixed reactions – and increased anxiety – from the international community.

The constructed and constantly shifting concept of Germany becomes even more obvious when we follow Richard Ned Lebow (in Chapter 11) and look at Germany not just as a political actor but also as a *Sprachraum* – a linguistic and cultural sphere. Where, for instance, should we place the Nobel Prize winner Herta Müller, who grew up in the German-speaking part of Romania, or the Czech writer Franz Kafka, or the Austrian Robert Musil, or the Swiss Max Frisch?

Among the most widely discussed transnational German influences on IR scholarship are those from so-called émigré scholars, particularly those who left Nazi Germany for the US. Hans Morgenthau and John H. Herz are widely recognised for their contribution to realist thought; Hannah Arendt marked key discussions in international ethics; Henry Kissinger shaped both the theory and practice of US foreign policy; Albert O. Hirschman was central to the development of international political economy; Gerda Lerner made key contributors to feminist international history; and Karl Deutsch influenced writings on nationalism and security. These are just a few examples and there are many more that are explored in this book, such as Edwin Borchard's influence on realism (Jens Steffek and Tobias Heinze in Chapter 6), Friedrich Ratzels' on human geography (Ashworth in Chapter 4) and Carl Schmitt's on constitutional politics (Paul Petzschmann in Chapter 5). One could also trace more indirect German influences on IR theory, such as those of Kant

on liberal internationalism and cosmopolitanism; Hegel and Marx on dependency and world system theories; von Clausewitz on strategy and defence; Nietzsche and Heidegger on post-structuralism; and Habermas on critical theory.

Towards a critical engagement with the role of Germany in IR

Because images of Germany in IR are in constant flux, they also need to be submitted to regular and critical scrutiny. The purpose of this book is not to do so, but I hope that it opens up debates that scrutinise both the potentials and problems entailed in the role that Germany, in all its complex and contested dimensions, plays in international relations. The traditions of thought that this book engages are – perhaps inevitably – dominated by men. Few of them question the gendered nature of both German contributions and international perceptions of Germany. The same is the case with the Eurocentric nature of the respective exchange of ideas. Awareness of the level of privilege, power and subjugation associated with these positions is only just emerging. We need more self-critical and reflective engagements to further explore and question them.

The German tradition of thought is very much implicated in establishing and entrenching dominant modes of thinking, including those that rely on problematic gender- and race-related systems of exclusion. But Germany's intellectual legacy also offers numerous inspiring ideas for critical engagement. I think, in particular, of ideas that emerged in the broad wake of Nietzsche's critical engagement with the nature and legacy of modernity. Here we find innovative inquiries into the links between knowledge and power. We can see how these links frame the political in particular ways. Here we find, for instance, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's problematisation of the violent logic of Enlightenment thought in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*; Paul Celan's poetic rethinking and rewriting of the Holocaust legacy; and Käthe Kollwitz's visual depiction of hunger and poverty. It is this German tradition and spirit of critique that can make particularly powerful contributions to broader discussions about the key dilemmas we face in global politics today. May this book, through its sophisticated empirical and conceptual investigations, provide the impetus for more critical reflections about the role of Germany in IR.